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## 23<sup>RD</sup> LET'S MAKE A DIFFERENCE - NATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE - 2017 REPORT

*“The youth of a Nation are the trustees of prosperity- Benjamin Disraeli”*

### About Let's Make A Difference (LMAD):-

The youth today can be empowered by achieving their potential using their complete abilities and talents. When this happens the youth gains the ability and authority they need to visualize, plan, implement, critique and re-organize life around them. A lot of people want change in their lives, or even to change the world. We place the responsibility of how things are on governments, destiny, luck, other people, society, our looks, and our genes. But, however, ***the change in our world first begins with change within ourselves.***

Our inner world and our outer world are associated. They are both connected and when we start focusing on managing our life from within, it is easier to see the beautiful way in which everything is connected. Trying to control the external world is like trying to pull out weeds of an enormous garden; as soon as you get rid of one, two new seem to pop up. For many years *lofC* has been instrumental in working for change which has brought various communities and countries together.

Let's Make a Difference (LMAD) is a National Youth Conference (YC) which is being conducted under the aegis of [Initiatives of Change \(lofC\)](http://www.iofc.org). The vision of LMAD is to empower the belief that lies within us and to know our self at a deeper level.

Every year from the 1<sup>st</sup> June to 8<sup>th</sup> June, the LMAD conference embarks us on a beautiful journey of making a new family and a **way of life**, full of care, affection and love, making us engrossed in a life connected with nature and with ourselves, away from the city, at [Asia Plateau, Panchgani](http://www.iofc.org), centre for Initiatives of Change [lofC]. The youth conference was held for the first time in 1994 and has now completed its 23rd year.

Amongst the most important concepts throughout the conference, are the concept 'Quiet Time', 'Inner Voice' and 'Conscience'.

The conference revolves around one major concept, i.e. 'Quiet Time', which can be used as a tool for achieving answers to questions within us which never arose as questions in the first place.

Quiet Time includes ones personal space, as well as listening to none other but ourselves. Actions speak louder than words, and actions appear only when we reflect on who we really are! How we look at our own selves not in correspondence to others! Reflecting on the purpose of your life makes a better, brighter and a brilliant human being. Quiet time making us engrosses in the beauty of nature, leaving the footprints of what really matters in our lives and gives a clearer view on what should be thought upon.

The conference moves around analyzing oneself from within, introspection and evaluation against the four absolute core values of Purity, Honesty, Unselfishness and Love (PHUL), these are of utmost importance in every aspect to live a blissful life.



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An understanding of each of them is required at a deeper level about what they mean and how we can use it as an unconditional tool.

**PURITY-** It is not about how pure you are from the outside, but it is important how pure you are, by your thoughts from within. When there is Unity between thought, word, and deed, one can acquire purity and realize divinity.

**HONESTY-** Have we ever wondered, how honest are we? To ourselves, towards family/friends? A typical question which arises in our minds, but on an outer level, we train our mind to believe, yes we are honest and at no time are we dishonest.

**UNSELFISHNESS** - We all have a conversation with ourselves and a question which normally occurs to us is, what the nature of unselfishness really is? It means extending the will to not only serve oneself but also to serve others. We normally recognize an unselfish behavior when we see it. It is projected as acts, thoughts and emotions (amongst other things) that is in the interest of others separate from oneself. Coordinators shared giving their life examples and their encounters with unselfishness.

**LOVE-** 'Love as we know it'. One cannot deny the simple truth, that we are the ones who have been constantly shaping the reality of life. No one is born with evil within, we are born, filled with love towards everyone and everything around us. But instead of just following our hearts full of light, we keep feeding ourselves with darkness over and over again.

Quiet Time is a disciplined approach and should be followed consistently with sheer dedication and only then its results would reap benefits, in getting direction of our lives, setting goals, improving family relations, career and our contribution towards the society starting with the process of change.

A question and thought which typically comes into our minds are, 'What do you mean by the concept of Inner Voice?', 'Why should we listen to our Inner Voice?'. Concepts on Inner Voice were explained at deeper levels and how one can achieve to listen to their Inner Voice. Listening to our Inner Voice helps us, *remove agony, it escorts you back to the right purpose, it guides us on our inner journey, it saves us time and helps us create and serve, it safeguards us.*

Conscience is the voice of the Self which says 'yes or 'no' when you are involved in a moral dilemma. It raises the voice of challenge whenever anything is thought of or done contrary to our interests. Conscience is a form of truth. It is the knowledge of our own acts and feelings of right or wrong. It is a sensitive balance to weigh actions. It is the propensity or principle by which we distinguish right from wrong. It is a guiding voice from within. It is a disciplinarian command to plunge deep into the depths of ethic, or to rise high above the level of our immoralities. The core values of LMAD, which adorn conscience, are PHUL. Understanding the difference between mind and conscious and then putting it to test during Quiet Time against the four core values of Purity, Honesty, Unselfishness and Love.



This year having a large number of participants attending LMAD, summing up to 221+ walked in the gates of Asia Plateau, to get the real feel of what magic actually is, all belonging to different caste, creeds, cultures and parts of India and globally, all curious to know what would bring unto them over the next eight Days. An online 'Youth Survey' form was also filed in by the participants during the registration process, the results of our analysis on the Survey conducted is displayed on the website.

The inauguration had hosts, the artists and speakers, from the LMAD Organizing Team, who welcomed the participants for the program. The evening was thoroughly enjoyed by all present with a number of dance performances, laughter filled skits with gave a meaningful message and a lamp lighting ceremony.

A few coordinators, who have been past participants, shared their experiences, on how LMAD has helped them evolve and grow at various stages of life. A brief introduction about LMAD, along with the Do's and Don'ts of the conference were well explained to the participants.

The exciting day ended with enthusiasm and a smile on each face before a brief self introduction within their respective groups.

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***'We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time. T.S. Eliot.'***

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It's a daily routine of LMAD, that each day of the conference begins at 06:00am, with all assembling for general prayers and light exercises, which follows with a brief pre-quiet time input session, quiet time, sharing by participants, breakfast, news sessions, small inspirational videos and many beautiful MRA Songs which were sung by a few from the organizing team.



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The essence of the conference lies on this day, where many new concepts were explained to the curious new unaware faces sitting in the auditorium. The sessions of each day are known for analyzing the inner conscience, through the practice of 'Quiet Time'. An introductory understanding of the concept and meaning of 'Quiet Time' was explained.

All the inputs given to the participants before the morning quiet time, guide the participants to listen to their inner voice and reflect and evaluate on it, in a manner, where they would come across many questions/options in their minds which previously never prominently arose.

Few of us write down the thoughts that come across our mind, but with a disciplined Quiet Time practice, one will be able to hear the thoughts coming from our conscience which our inner voice tells us. At this juncture, the relevance and importance of 'The Diary' was explained and further inputs were poured in, about how writing thoughts in a diary with a disciplined approach is of utmost importance and how the same has bearing on one's life.

One of the co-ordinators shared the importance of a Diary in his life and quoted, *"How easy it is to give up and move on, but if we listen to our inner voice and just give a thought about it- there is something that holds us back- that is the reason why I am here in front of you today after a long break though but yet trying to know myself better!"*

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**"The diary is very important. Remember, it is the tool. It not just a diary- it memorizes. It's the CONSCIOUS DIARY" .**

***'Fill your paper with the breathings of your heart' -William Wordsworth.***

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The participants proceeded for their first 'Quiet Time' with those inputs, throughout Asia Plateau, each one free to find their own cozy comfortable spot, where they would like to spend time with themselves, amidst the scenic heaven of Asia Plateau , nothing but them and their diary.

The sharing varied from being amidst nature, greenery, thoughts about friends and family to passion.

One of the sharing was from a participant about the feeling connected to IOFC and how it has helped her, her poem read as following:

***"Just below the tree, Where I feel so much free. It provided me the shade, That made my pain fade. When I met you sir, I was so low self-esteemed, You sent me to a team, That made my participation keen. You introduced me to quiet time, That made my thoughts so fine. Small age-trapped in a cage, Problem big size- that's when you taught me to choose wise. A thank you is sure-but less meant, So I just want to promise upfront, The way you have taught me and shaped, It's all in my mind taped. The roots you have set in me by putting a LMAD seed, I promise to do a good deed. To you today I can assure, I will serve with my heart and mind so pure. Together hand in hand, we can ensure LMAD HAS THE CURE." ~ANONYMOUS***

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Many participants shared their first hand experience on 'Quiet Time', a few of which are quoted below:

***"I have never observed nature so closely, the birds chirping and the green leaves are what I really admired today in my quiet time."***

***"I am being introduced to my quiet time for the very first time today and I honestly did not know what to think about."***

***"I was so confused about my thoughts today, I had so many thoughts pop up and plus they varied so much."***





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***“I was very confused as my thoughts just did not connect.”***

***“I like the idea of quiet time, I don't know whether I was able to listen to my inner voice. But I am sure I was able to know peace for a while”.***

The sharing concluded, before breakfast, with many understanding some of the concepts of Quiet Time at their firsthand experience, but more or so, thoroughly enjoying and spending time with themselves, amidst the eye soothing scenic beauty where Asia Plateau stands tall.

In the session, ABC of IofC many questions which normally arise in the minds of many new participants on this day are, What is the concept of LMAD? What is IofC?. To explain the same at a deeper level, this session was held, wherein a few from the organizing team shared their first hand experience upon their evaluation and introspection of themselves against the four pillar values of Purity, Honesty, Unselfishness and Love (PHUL) and how change has been effected in the stories of their life.

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***‘Purity and impurity depend on oneself, no one can purify another.’- Gautam Buddha***

***‘Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom’ – Thomas Jefferson***

***‘Unselfish and noble actions are the most radiant pages in the biography of souls – David Thomas.***

***‘Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier’ – Mother Teresa.***

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Many participants asked many interesting questions for clarification of four core values of PHUL and other related questions.

The exciting event of the afternoon, was the Group Photograph symbolizing the ‘LMAD Family’, a family not related by blood, but related by thought.

The participants gathered for their first Group Discussion (GD) which began with an Introductory session, but this time a more detailed introduction about everyone. The rules and ethics of the GD's were explained to the participants by their group coordinators before the topics of discussion were shared.

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***‘Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much’ – Helen Keller.***

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It was discussed with the participants on the various profound sessions held in the morning and reflection of it, as to how, the same have affected their thoughts. Certain questions were put forward for introspection. Many from the group shared about their encounters in life, when evaluating themselves from this perspective.

Each day the participants were given free time in the evening, which was spent enthusiastically, with many wanting to play outdoor recreational games/sports and many looking forward to develop a bond by interacting and meeting people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. The free time is very important for participants to relax, have fun with some singing and many exhibiting their hidden talents by performing for a small yet appreciative audience.

Later that evening was filled with laughter, fun and frolic moments when the participants were introduced to the Ice breaker games hosted by organizing team. The fun element left a lovely smile by the end of the games as the day ended.



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Many getting used to the LMAD daily traditions and routine, participants always seem excited about each day. Every morning is a new dawn and a fresh start, so discipline is very important in our lives for which mornings are the best time to focus and be with yourself. The journey to listening to our inner voice is a beautiful journey, which is not a conclusive journey but a continuous and an un-exhaustive one. With this thought the participants proceeded for their second Quiet Time of the conference.

One of the participants shared, “ *The first Quiet Time was fighting with Purity, Honesty, Unselfishness and Love concepts, there is beauty in everything, Negative and Positive.*”. This is where Change begins and that’s what Iofc stands for, ‘*Initiatives of Change*’.

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***‘ Vision without Action is merely a Dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world’. – Joel A. Barker.***

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Post breakfast followed with the introduction of the ‘Pledge’ to the participants. Its importance, commitments and punishments were explained. It was only for the participants to read the contents of the pledge and understand the importance of it over the days to come, before the pledge would be reinforced and signed by those who want to abide by it on Day 5. Signing the pledge, served as a constant reminder that they have committed to a certain way of life and should follow it no matter what.

Power of vision, the powerful session, began immediately after the Pledge was introduced, but before that a small inspirational video of a poem was shown. The message intended to reach the participants by this session was about one’s ‘Power of Vision’. One of the senior co-ordinators discussed that, many youngsters today have this confusion about the career they envision. Today a lot of us have a passion for a lot of things, have a separate set of skills and areas of interest, but due to many other restrictions/responsibilities, incorrect options, we end up taking decisions of our career life which leads to regret. Participants, during the interactive session replied and answered to the certain questions like, ‘What are your Skills and activities? What is your Passion ? What would you like to set right within your community or country? And ‘What the world will pay you for? There were varied responses, to these questions which be co-related by almost all.

The Power of vision was one of the most interactive sessions giving a feeling that every participant could connect to it. One of the coordinator, shared his story of how he loved to bunk his college when he took the commerce stream and was surrounded by doctors, CA’s and always thought where did he go wrong? He explained about his journey of choosing a career and with time he was sure of choosing professional journalism as a career or he thought maybe I can be ‘THE CHANGE MAKER.’ “It’s difficult to go from the ‘OR’ paradigm to the ‘AND’ paradigm. But I think it’s a thought we should all work on” he quoted. The session ended with a quote, ***‘The meaning of life is to find your gift and the purpose of life is to give that gift.*** Many connected with this session of ‘The Power of Vision’ with a thought on achieving and reaching where they see themselves in the future.

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***‘If you have a strong belief in yourself, in what you are doing and what you want to do, no adversity is too difficult to overcome’ – Napoleon Hill***

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This day was a very exciting day for all, as this is the only time in the 8 days journey that the participants are taken outside Asia Plateau for a day outing, at beautiful places in the Panchgani and Mahabaleshwar Hill stations. The exciting, fun filled outing concluded with reaching back at Asia Plateau.

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***‘ You bring your own weather to the picnic’ ~ Anonymous***

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**Mrs. Shruti Rajan Kamble (W/o. Late Mr. Rajan Kamble), Mumbai.:-**

Mrs. Shruti Rajan Kamble, who was invited by LMAD, to share certain experiences, achievements and hardships of her life. The 26/11 Mumbai Terror Attacks in 2008, one of the incidents which happened at the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai . One amongst the LMAD TEAM, also shared how death seemed in front of the eyes during the seizure at the Taj Hotel and how one courageous man, stood up against terror, to save the lives of many. The man whom he spoke of was named Mr. Rajan Kamble, husband of Mrs. Shruti R. Kamble and an employee at the Taj Hotel. Mr. Rajan is an unsung hero, by sacrificing his life, in order to save the lives of many trapped in the seized hotel. He believed in duty over anything else.

Mrs. Kamble lost her husband in the terror attacks on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November, 2008. Mr. Rajan Kamble fought bravely for the life of others, saved many lives including that of children and was then shot by one of the terrorists. She shared the event when he was admitted to the hospital, later which turned out to be a critical situation for his life and he lost his life in the hospital formerly suffering from a heart attack. She shared 'It was so difficult to make my kids realize that the person they waited for dinner every day won't be able to reach home now forever.' The heart throbbing story of Mrs. Kamble shed tears in every individual's eyes with sadness and sorrow.

Mr. Kamble was not only a hero, who saved the lives of many, but also a father, who left a message for his children, of being fearless, conducting one's duties well and serving for the people till the end.

The example that Mrs. Kamble has set in, is not only for the youth, it is for every human that feels the pain of losing some one dear and near and still has the courage to stand out off the crowd. Being a proud mother and a wife she exclaimed that Mr. Kamble earned it for us and was also felicitated by an award by the Government of India.

A few questions were asked by those present, one of the questions being, '*Which thing gave you most strength during the difficult days of your life?*', to which this brave lady very politely replied, '*I am only one and it is my duty to stand for myself and my children, the same way how my husband stood for his duty and sacrificed his life*'

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***'It is the cause, not the death, that makes the martyr.'* - Napoleon Benoparte.**

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In today's scenario, where we are all so dependent on the use of technology, with the increase in use of WhatsApp, Facebook, emails etc, we have faded away from the old school techniques of mode of communication. One such mode of communication is the Post Cards, which can be sent to your loved ones with a fixed space for the message one wishes to send them. Though a traditional technique, the feeling and excitement upon its arrival cannot be completely described in words. These post cards are then posted to the address mentioned by the participants even before the participants leave Asia Plateau. *In this world of technology, we usually call up, text or just post the finest moments of our life on the social media to be liked by others. I feel it gives a totally different feeling if we pen down our thoughts to someone we love,* quoted one of the coordinators.



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**Mr. Mahesh Muralidhar Bhagwat, IPS Officer, Commissioner of Police, Rachakonda Commissionerate, Telangana: -**

The next speaker of the evening was Mr. Mahesh Bhagwat, IPS, who is currently the Commissioner of Police, Rachakonda Commissionerate, Telangana State. Mr. Bhagwat is a native of Pathardi village in Ahmednagar, District of Maharashtra State. He has completed his B.E in civil engineering and has also studied law. In the past he has worked as a social worker with many famous social activists and movements, a few being the Narmada Bachao movement among many such others.

In his journey of life he once attended a felicitation ceremony of the top rankers of the civil services examination in Pune. The impact of their speech was so great that it changed the course of his life by making him dream of joining civil services. However, he chose to chase his dream and work very hard towards achieving it and thus left no stone unturned to turn his ambition into reality. He scored 360 marks in his IPS exam, thus securing second position in the 1995 batch. He firmly believes that our triumph and defeats are in us.

He is actively involved and interested in community Policing, tribal area development, superstition eradication, Marathi literature, best practices in government service and passionate about giving good name to police service through community policing. In his journey as an IPS Officer, Mr. Bhagwat has demonstrated remarkable commitment to the fight against organised human trafficking. He has participated in anti-trafficking operations that have removed hundreds of victims from situations of trafficking, and with the help of other government departments and civil society organizations, rescuing more than 1000 women and children and has ensured their placement in rehabilitation programs. In addition to being a central figure in trafficking deterrence efforts, Mr Bhagwat's dedication to the fight against the menace is further demonstrated by his innovative and effective approach in investigating such cases. He has pioneered the use of legal provisions to close sites where trafficking is known to occur. Through the Police Mekosam model, he carried out several development activities like road formation, drinking water supply, electricity to villagers, youth excursion tours and employment programmes. In just 3 years, he could control 90 percent of the Naxal activities without losing any officer on duty which is commendable. Mr Bhagwat has launched an initiative called 'SHE' team in Andhra Pradesh which involves protecting women from eve teasing.

He is a winner of the Indian President Police Medal for Gallantry on 26th January,2004, Police special duty medal of Manipur, India, Aantarik Suraksha Padak of AP,India & 2004 International Community Policing finalist award & special honor in Homeland security category of International Association of Chief of Police, USA. Currently he is working for prevention of human trafficking & domestic violence in A.P.,India . Project Aasara launched by him in Nalgonda District is winner of 2006 International Civil Rights award & IACP/ Motorola Webber Seavey Law Enforcement award of International Association of Chief of Police,USA received at Boston in October,2006.

His session left the audience with immense pride and respect towards him for his work and exemplary contribution to the society.

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***"A hero is someone who understands the responsibility that comes with his freedom"- Bob Dylan***

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At LMAD, June 4<sup>th</sup> is celebrated as Khadi Day every year. *Khadi* – the word conjures up images of Mahatma Gandhi and the Swadeshi movement he led. *Khadi* is a term used for fabrics that are hand-spun and handwoven, usually from cotton fiber. *Khadi* serves as an appropriate example of technology, independence and identity. In 1918 Mahatma Gandhi started his movement for Khadi as relief programme for the poor masses living in India's villages. Khadi is not mere a piece of cloth but a way of life.

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***“The Khadi spirit means fellow-feeling with every human being on earth”.- Mahatma Gandhi.***

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The next session aimed at writing one positive commitment which the participant would adhere to once he or she gets back home. Commitment is more than a promise to do or give something. It is the state or quality of being dedicated and maintaining an attitude of someone who works extremely hard to do or support something. The participants experienced change at a deeper level and it is important that they commit themselves to change as they leave Asia plateau. A record of some of the commitments can be seen in **Annexure I** to this report. On this day the participants get a clear and in-depth understanding on the concept of Quiet time.

The participants on this day seemed very excited as all geared up in their shoes for a short trek to the table land. The trek was thoroughly enjoyed by the participants, witnessing and enjoying a feast to their eyes, the beautiful Panchgani Valley and a view of Asia Plateau.





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**Mr. Bindumadhav Khire, Gay Rights and AIDS Activist: -**

During the conference, the participants had a privilege to meet a few people who through their efforts tried to bring a change in the society, one such powerful personality was Mr. Bindumadhav Khire. Mr. Khire is a techie who gave up his career in the US to return to India and got involved with issues close to his heart. Based in his native place Pune, ever since his return, he is a gay rights and AIDS activist. He has been speaking about queer issues at various forums in India, particularly in Pune. In 2005, Bindu donned the hat of a Marathi writer with his novel, 'Partner'. He said, *'Being gay should be a non-issue in an ideal world. What were the milestones, and highs and lows till you reached a point of self-acceptance, when you could acknowledge your 'gayness' to all without it becoming a confessional? What would you do if you were born as an Intersex? One would be teased, lead a horrified life, no proper legal remedies? How would you treat them?, Why should they have all the rights and liberties to live a life everyone deserves?'*

He is the founder of Samapathik Trust, in Pune, whose mission is to provide legal, medical and social empowerment services to LGBTHI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Hijara, Intersex) community through education, training, advocacy and partnership with the greater Pune community and the community at large and with a vision, an India in which LGBTHI communities live a life of dignity, free of stigma and discrimination. Mr. Bindu explained various concepts and aspects of sexuality in detail.

From 2008 to 2015, Samapathik Trust has been able to improve health seeking behavior of Men who have sex with Men (MSM)/Transgender population in Pune city, PCMC and suburbs. Significant impact can be seen in Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV prevalence in the target population through effective coverage and service delivery through the project in Pune city, PCMC and suburbs. Surveys showed nearly 70% decrease in STI prevalence and 50% decrease in HIV prevalence among Men who have sex with Men (MSM)/Transgender community in Pune.

The session with Mr. Khire, ended on a very powerful footing and a message, that acceptance of an individual's sexuality will ensure a healthy society where everyone irrespective of their sexuality is considered equal. We are all human beings and have the right to be treated with respect and dignity. Whether they are our relatives or friends, colleagues or strangers it is important to do away with our biases and accept everyone as equal in the main-stream society.

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***"To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity – Nelson Mandela***

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If Quiet Time is not practiced with discipline, it would lead to the same life which was followed by one, and the fruits which were gained through quiet time upon constant evaluation against the four basic pillars of Purity, Honesty, Unselfishness and Love, would completely vanish. A few questions on inner dryness, needs and greed, spirituality needs, materialistic hungers and desires and differentiation and difficulties involved in the inward and outward journey/personality of a person were put on the participants for them to reflect, introspect, realize and in time correct. One of the participants shared that, *"Upon evaluation of myself against these questions, I believe a person is valued much more for he/she is, rather than that person, who he/she pretends to showcase to the outer world"*

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***'The power of one is above all things the power to believe in yourself, often well beyond any latent ability you may have previously demonstrated. The mind is the athlete, the body is simply the means it uses to run faster or longer, jump higher, shoot straighter, kick better, swim harder, hit further, or box better. -Bryce Courtenay.***

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The next day held a lot in store for the participants, who were curious to hear the powerful and inspirational speakers that kept them waiting. An inspirational video was shown to the participants before the start of the session which was designed to send a strong message across about, '**The Power of One**' which followed with a motivational MRA song, '*Kaun Hai Zimmedar*', sung by a few from the organizing team.

**Mr. O.P. Chaudhary, IAS Officer, 2005 Batch, Collector, Dantewada District, Chattisgarh, India:-**

**Mr. O.P. Chaudhary**, is presently the collector of Raipur. He was the 1st IAS officer from Chhattisgarh and was posted as a district collector of Dantewada, Chattisgarh (South Bastar District), since March 31, 2011, which is a left wing extremist affected area and a Maoist hotbed in the tribal Bastar region of Chhattisgarh. This district is currently a part of 'Red Corridor' which is a region in the eastern, central and southern parts of India that experience considerable Naxalite-Maoist insurgency.

For his contribution in development of Naxal-affected areas through education, Mr Chaudhary has been honored by the prestigious Prime Minister's Award for excellence in Public Administration for the year 2011-12.

Through a presentation prepared by him, he described his journey, the problems and challenges he faced in Dantewada and a brief historical background of the developments and non-developments in that area. A few problems being, (i) *Spread of Naxalism* (ii) *Poor socio economic conditions;* (iii) *Lack of Education (Mere 42% literacy rate as per Census 2011)* (iv) *Unemployment* (v) *Large Administrative units etc* (vi) *Increase in violence* (vii) *Fighting against the corrupt district administration etc.*

In his stint as collector, he changed the face of Dantewada from an underdeveloped district into a progressive and vibrant one. His initiatives here were really path breaking and non-traditional.

He mentioned how education was one of his weapons, to tackle the major demonic issue of Naxalism, in the district of Dantewada and how various programmes/projects/approaches, under his leadership, were used and implemented, a few being, Residential Brief Courses in Permanent Residential school, collaborating Science Camps with IISER, Pune, Talent shows, music and dance shows, strategic centralization of education system and many such projects which changed the lives of many in that region.

A few of his major initiatives have been listed below :-

- **Tamannah:-** Under the project, a science museum, district library, and a state of the art audio-visual theatre were set up with a view to broaden the horizons of all levels of students in the district. This helped to **bridge the gap between citizens and administration.**

- **Nanhey Parindey** :- The basic admission process in the region was suitable to the population that is relatively aware and exposed, they invariably end up enrolling only those children who are more aware, exposed to the world rather than the worse off who languish in the wilderness. To tackle this issue, project 'NANHE PARINDE' has been started, under which residential facilities were created at district headquarter and 105 children from interior villages belonging to marginalized background were provided special coaching for Navodaya and Sanik School entrance examination with 5th class regular schooling.
- **Choolo Asman**:- There was a lack of highly qualified professionals and there also lacked trained science professionals in that region, so therefore he initiated this project called Choolo Asman which mainly focused on this issue. He decided to bring the district-wide science based intermediate level education under one roof at the Dantewada Education City to improve the prospects of Dantewada's 400 science students.

The Dantewada district is now rightfully the upcoming 'Education City' and the KPMG had already named it among the world's 100 innovative projects where an 'Educational City Hub' being developed by the State Government would house 5,000 children in an area of 97 acres comprising a total of 13 educational institutions under construction and being built at a cost of `100 crores.

The 40 minute powerful session of Mr. Chaudhary, ended with mention of his future vision and goals which comprised of a holistic plan for the coming generation and a strong message of the 'Power of One' by quoting, 'People will decide the result of this battle and we have to empower the people to make a decision, we have to create a voice in a speechless society'.

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***'The best teachers are those, who show you where to look, but don't tell you what to see'-  
Alexander K. Trenfor.***

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**Ms. Reema Sathe, Social Entrepreneur, Founder & Director of 'Happy Roots':-**

Ms. Reema Sathe, a Pune based Chemical engineer by profession, who chose the path of social entrepreneurship marrying her aspirations for building a business with providing employment to thousands of farmers. She has spent over three years working with tribal farmers in Gujarat & Maharashtra. She has built sustainable value chains across fresh produce and cereals & grains. She is a recipient of Nari Shakti Puraskar' 2016 from the Hon'ble President of India, for her work to empower rural women in Maharashtra. She is also the winner of Pheonix Leading Lady Award'17 (Social innovation) and is an UnLtd India Fellow.

Her venture, 'Happy Roots', a health food company, sells its products across India and in the process gives marginal farming communities a sustainable income. They also empower women in villages by teaching them skills in processing these chemical free foods.

Happy Roots, recently received a presidential award for empowering rural communities.

Ms. Reema Sathe's intent to build a health food company, that not only encourages people to eat healthy but also secures the future of so many farming families, is a fine example of the '**Power of One**'.



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Ms. Reema began with a beautiful quote, *'I am only ONE, But still I am ONE, But what I cannot do, will still try to do as ONE.'* She narrated the beginning of her career, with how she worked in a US Based firm in the United States of America and returned to India to do what she really wanted to. She narrated the struggles she faced in the initial stages, immediately after she had an inner had an inner calling to work for and with the rural communities.

In 2014, she returned to India and decided she wanted to try something different and volunteered with a Mumbai based firm in the field of culture based organic farming. She narrated how farmers lived a life in poverty, where the fruits of their hard work would only reap them a meagre price and the major earning went to the intermediaries involved. The companies were earning more money, but the farmers were not benefiting. Because of such disparity, regions like Vidharbha and Akola, in the state of Maharashtra have become the suicide capital for poor farmers.

Over a period of her work with farmers in Gujarat and Maharashtra, she got a sense of what was going wrong with small-scale food processing units, run by farmers and rural women. “These micro-enterprises are a hope for our small farmers to earn better incomes and find sustainable livelihood to offset risks associated with farming. Lack of marketing skills and product knowledge to match up to the rapidly changing consumer preferences (in urban markets), has forced a lot of these micro-enterprises to shut down or operate on losses,” said Reema.

Many hurdles were faced by her during her journey to success, this led to an emotional breakdown for her then, but the spirit within her did not die, she worked on ways to find success and researched for over 4 months until she began with the concept and idea of ‘Happy Roots’ in early 2016 and took six months to develop products by August 2016. With the use of technology, she tried to resolve and understand the problems of the poor farmers, in the remote locations of Maharashtra, to make them self sustainable and self reliant. Many farmers have planned their production of millets and grains with Happy Roots. Their vision is to today is to build co-owned food value chains with marginal farmers & rural women that helps them generate sustainable, profitable incomes.

They manufacture premium healthy snack food products. Their raw material is sourced directly from small & tribal farmers and our final product is handmade by trained rural women’s groups. They also manage tech-driven contract farming where farmers are equal partners in the value chain.

They aim to –

- Focus on skills development & local employment for small holding farmers and women
- Protect crop biodiversity by using locally grown produce, which often involves endangered crops & seeds
- Reduce farmer income risks by developing alternate livelihood sources

Today they have a network with more than 15,000 farmers, 2000 Rural Women Co-Operative societies, 25,000 sq. mtrs of cultivable land and soon to come up with a factory which has a 10,000 tonne cultivable produce production capacity with a per day capacity of upto 100 tonnes

‘Happy Roots’, today in association with farmer groups, local non-profits and Industry partners works on building food value chains.



Again, this 45 minute scintillating session of Power of one, ended with a very powerful footing by Ms. Reema quoting *'Start Young, believe in yourself, build your support system and more than that be honest'*

During the interactive session, many young participants who had a lot of questions in their pockets, asked both the speakers simultaneously, on the work done and landmarks achieved by them which has changed and influenced the lives of many today.

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***'An industry that feeds you is an industry worth fighting for – Anonymous.'***

***'Leadership is the power of one harnessing the power of many – John C Maxwell'***

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The GD for this day was for the participants to share their thoughts on their **'Power of One'** and how they can identify their passion which can become their Power of One.

**Yugpurush - Mahatma na Mahatma (The Play) (Language: Hindi):-**

This event was one of the historic events at LMAD as the entire auditorium was chock-full.

The Initiators & their Cause : - Yugpurush: Mahatma Na Mahatma, is a 2016, Gujarati play, based on the relationship between Jain philosopher Shrimad Rajchandra and Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi. The play depicts the spiritual journey of Gandhi Ji. It is written by Uttam Gada and directed by Rajesh Joshi. It is produced by Shrimad Rajchandra Mission, Dharampur. The play is also adapted in other languages including English and Hindi. It won the Best Drama award at the 16th Annual Transmedia Gujarati Screen and Stage Awards 2016 The Play has completed 591 shows as of mid June 2017 with more than 4,07,000/- viewers touched.

The Play: - Shrimad Rajchandraji, honoured as the spiritual guide of Mahatma Gandhi, had a tremendous and formative influence on the Father of the Nation. Gandhiji met Shrimadji for the first time in Mumbai, upon his return from England as a barrister in 1891. Shrimadji's inner equipoise, absorption in spiritual pursuits, enlightening wisdom, knowledge of the scriptures and moral earnestness left a deep-rooted impression on Gandhiji. Their relationship blossomed over profound interactions in the two years that Gandhiji spent in Mumbai. Upon moving to South Africa, Gandhiji corresponded with Shrimadji through letters. Shrimadji's insightful thoughts ignited the fire of spiritual inquisitiveness in Gandhiji. Their close association contributed in molding Gandhiji's moral fiber. Shrimadji's inherent adherence to the principles of satya, ahimsa and dharma later crystallised as the fundamental tenets of Gandhism. Although Shrimadji left His mortal body at a young age of 33 in 1901, Shrimadji's letters and compositions were Gandhiji's dear companions. He contemplated upon them time and time again. Gandhiji would write about Shrimadji, speak about Him in speeches and discuss him with close associates. He continued to be deeply inspired by his bond with Shrimadji and his spiritual works.

Yugpurush - Mahatma na Mahatma is a captivating representation of this special relationship between Shrimadji and Gandhiji, depicting the making of the Mahatma what began as an honest friendship, progressed to Gandhiji proclaiming Shrimadji as his spiritual mentor.



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The play enacted by professional theatre artists was a delight and everyone who witnessed it were mesmerized by the wonderful enactment of the characters.

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***'In my moments of spiritual crises, Shrimadji was my refuge. – The Story of my Experiments with Truth (Ch. Raychandbhai)***

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**Musical Evening – The Aneesh Vidyashankar Experience – Wireless Walking Violinist:-**

The next ecstatic event of the evening which began at 08:50 pm, was most awaited by all present at Asia Plateau. It was a musical event performed by 26 year old musical prodigy, **Dr. Aneesh Vidyashankar**, from Bengaluru, India.

About Aneesh : - Aneesh Vidyashankar is hailed as India's most melodious infusion violinist. A Qualified architect, he is creative mastermind in designs. Aneesh's infectious music transcends age, genre, and even nationality. His music is strongly rooted in Indian traditions and classicism and is presented with a very contemporary, global sound. From touring 27 Plus countries, playing for over 35,000 people in his home country & big music festivals around the world Aneesh has done it all. Aneesh Vidyashankar gained his musical inspiration at the tender age of 3 from his father & guru, Violinist S.R.Vidyashankar. Ever since his first violin solo concert at the age of 6, Aneesh has not looked back, but has moved on with creativity and improvisations. He is also a TEDx speaker.

The unique blend of classical & contemporary music without compromising on melody is his USP. Today he is known as the "Wireless Walking Violinist" for his unique ability to walk and play Indian music curves on the violin. At Just 25 years, Aneesh has won the National level award for the best violinist, a youth icon award, and even the prestigious young achiever award for his music on the strings, apart from several others.

He is also honoured with honorary Doctorate (P.H.D) in wireless walking violinist and is the youngest to have one.

The event began with Aneesh walking into the auditorium playing his violin and an awe of happiness and joy was filled onto the faces of all present in the auditorium. The musical genius was successful in charming the audience with his absolute control on his wireless violin and played a few Hindi film musical tunes. Soon after, he introduced himself and shared his life journey and hurdles, he faced in achieving the heights and feat he has reached today.

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***'Where the words fail, music speaks' – Anonymous***

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Later, he continued to entertain and charm the audience with his breath-taking musical tunes of various genres, a few being, Israeli, Arabic, Bollywood, Western Classical, Carnatic Classical, European Music, Global Fusion, Jazz. The exhilarating performance of the evening left the audience in awe who thoroughly enjoyed Aneesh's scintillating performance and the auditorium was filled with an applause.



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The evening ended at with smiles on everyone's faces and a musical tune which touched their hearts forever.

Moving further, everyone takes a step towards their outward journey, but most neglect or do not wish to take a step within themselves. A short story of two brothers which depicted the famous painting of 'The Praying Hands' was narrated to the participants, the purpose of which to send a message across to the participants on the bond, sacrifices, happiness and sadness which a family shares with each other. However today, because of our ego, most of us feel disconnected with our family in many ways and have connected ourselves with the virtual world.

We all belong to a family and it is our family that keeps us together through thick and thin. Without having a family, no person is complete and the completeness comes with good family bonding. There are many values that one must learn to get the family bonding in the right manner. Bonding does not happen overnight. It forms with every second, every minute that you spend with your loved ones. The understanding, the acceptance, the belonging and the security all enclosed together is how a family bond is formed, it is through a family that we learn the values of love, trust, hope, belief, cultures, morals, traditions and every little matter that concerns to us. A strong foundation for any individual comes from being with a supportive family.

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***'You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them.'* - Desmond Tutu**

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Before the morning Quiet Time, certain strong introspection questions were put across onto the participants on their broken/brittle relations with their family, where their conscience would speak louder than their words put together.

Until breakfast and post the routine news session, many shared about their Quiet Time thoughts and most personal feelings on the introspective question put to them, which gave them an opportunity and platform to share what each felt, about their broken/bitter/distant relations with their parents, siblings other relatives, the platform was open to all. It was an emotional outburst and many shared their journeys of life about how they had made certain mistakes knowingly and unknowingly to which they turned ignorant and they realized how wrong they were and expressed their wish to connect with them.

LMAD focuses on relations in one's life, in many different ways and means it tries to focus that real relations are more important to survive than virtual or disconnected relations.

The participants were given an opportunity to connect over phone with the people whom they wished to reconcile and mend the brittle bridges of relations which they had making the ambience poignant. That feeling on each of the faces who were connected with the people they missed the most, or with those with whom relations were faded, was simply indescribable. The participants made a promise and a positive commitment to meet and connect with their loved ones and reconcile their differences. The contentment, realizations and a glow on the faces of many, just gave a simple message ***'the love of a family is life's greatest blessing'***.



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Lunch was taken in silence, post which Shavasan was followed, much necessary for all, for mitigating the hysterical morning session.

Post Shavasan, a significant exercise was to be undertaken, before which a brief explanation through a presentation was given to the participants. The exercise helped one understand better, how their equation and relations were placed currently and what necessary steps should be taken to improve and strengthen them.

The importance of the next session, mainly focused on the commitments, promises, change, introspection, adoption of four core values of LMAD and the sum of all other positive thoughts which were realized better at LMAD until that day. This was a Letter to the most important person, 'Our Self'

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***'Dear Self,***

***I know you struggle but in case I don't know you enough, you are beautiful. Thank You, for being so strong and transparent, the world sees you even when you feel invisible. I appreciate your heart and stubbornness. Your willingness to love even after being discarded and forgotten is admirable. I am so proud to know that you have grown to acknowledge your worth.***

***With Love,***

***Self' ~ Anonymous***

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The next session mainly focused on the three-letter word called 'EGO'. A brief understanding and sharing was given by a few from the organizing team, explaining the significance of each the various multi-colored balloons used for the exercise.

Though there are many dimensions to life, ego is one of the big factors that consumes majority of the human bandwidth. There are many dimensions to this pervasive thing like ego.

Ego has no room in any loving relationship, as ego is the cause of all conflict. It is a wall preventing entrance to the truth. There is no real connection or communication when ego or pride takes precedence. Relationships are all about compromise and understanding whereas pride is an assertive stance which does not back down. The only relationship where ego wins is a destructive one. The significance of this exercise was to '**LET GO**' of the various types of Ego which we all have within ourselves. All we need to do is give back love to others, even if it's just a smile which can makes a big difference in someone else's life. It's all about offering our selves selflessly, truly, and whole-heartedly. Things in life will change dramatically. When we follow our ego we become selfish and isolated.



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***“LOVE IS STRONGER THAN PRIDE” – Marquis De Sade***

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The last 24 hour day at Asia Plateau, again seemed very exciting for everyone.

A bond was created amongst many, who were strangers on the first day, but confined in a special bond today. The joy and happiness with the way of living at Asia Plateau was evident and a glimpse of sadness showed, for it being the last full day to spend with all the lovely souls present there.

Post the morning Quiet Time , many shared their thoughts and reflected and connected with most of the core values of LMAD. Many mentioned they had a confusion between the thoughts coming from the mind and the thoughts coming from the conscience.

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***‘Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained at the bottom, but an oceanic circle whose centre will be an individual’ – Mahatma Gandhi***

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How I can balance my life and become the successful person I wish to become is the question which comes to the minds of all. How can we focus on habits, career, family, wealth, hobbies, passions and how these one can have a good balance amongst all of them. The Goals / Objectives should be made for all stages of life, short term goals, long term goals, other goals. The short-term goals/objectives should be everything you need to do in order to achieve the larger long term goals. A presentation was shown to the participants, to give a clarity on all such aspects. Participants were asked to write





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down their road map in the session and also their goals under various aspects of life. Intelligence Quotient is important, but unless we have a good Emotional Quotient it all seems irrelevant.

The next session, was to delete all the negative habits, thoughts from our life which we often get but putting on paper and obliterate completely from our mind and conscience and take positive steps towards achieving it.

***'The hardest thing in life is to learn, which bridge to cross and which to burn.'* – David Russell; *'Life gets easier when you delete the negative'* - Anonymous**

The last Group Discussion amongst the groups was post lunch; all were emotional about leaving this place the next day and would miss the bond that everyone shared during the last 7 days together. The participants were made to experience and relive the entire conference since their arrival at Asia Plateau to all the different things they experience during their journey of last 7 days. Many felt something magical about the entire journey.

The evening had a bit of fun and frolic for all. DJ Music and dance was organized which followed with a last special formal candle lit dinner for the participants, organized by the members of the LMAD team. A talent show was organized for the participants post dinner, which gave them a platform to showcase their talents which was enjoyed by everyone thoroughly. All had a great time and the evening concluded with a photograph session and desserts served in the Foyer.

***'Always find a reason to laugh, it may not add years to your life but it surely will add life to your years'* – Anonymous**

The last part of the conference, many had mixed emotions of joy, of meeting and communicating with their loved ones after eight whole days and many expressed sadness of missing each other, of the bond that everyone developed during the conference. The day began with the normal routine, however the prayer for today was a half an hour multi-faith prayer organized in the foyer where prayers of all religions were chanted by those present.

The last exercise of the conference was the Concentration Exercise. "Why is Concentration important? Why do I need it?" Concentration is the ability to direct your attention and to sustain it so that it becomes collected and unified. When concentration and mindfulness are combined, you learn how to direct and sustain your attention on a single experience, rather than letting the mind jump from one thought or feeling to another. Everybody possesses some ability to concentrate. Everybody does concentrate to a certain extent when he reads a book, when he writes a letter, when he plays tennis, and in fact, when he does any kind of work. Participants were made to do an exercise by which they can improve their concentration.

There are many abstracts of human nature and feelings along with various aspects towards an inner journey of our lives, which are deeply and profoundly felt by each one of us. In our daily robotic chaotic life it would not be possible for many of us to realize this. We often end up in a conflict with our mental intellect, ego, practicality, rationality and the four core values which LMAD believes in. It is our conscience and Inner Voice, upon evaluation against that four core values, which makes us realize of the person we have been and Quiet Time is the tool for achieving it.



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Whenever we go through a slump — whether it is from boredom, failure, or depression — we're forgetting how to live a meaningful life.

The memories we make in a place, bit by bit, laugh by laugh, experience by experience, thrown in for good measure, make it seem inconceivable to ever abandon that place itself, such was LMAD and Asia Plateau for the participants. We say that it's the memories and people that make a place beautiful, not the things in it or the structure itself, yet we're forced to leave a treasured place behind, which stays in our hearts till eternity.

By afternoon, the participants left Asia Plateau, strangers on Day 1, became friends for life. The journey of 8 days of the conference was to inculcate that feeling and initiative of a positive change, which remains in our hearts until the very end.

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***'The real trouble is within us. Our true enemies are our own destructive tendencies' – Dalai Lama.***  
***'Your conscience is the measure of the honesty of your selfishness. Listen to it carefully.'*** - Richard Bach

***'If you compromise with your own conscience, you will weaken your conscience. Soon your conscience will fail to guide you and you will never have real wealth based on peace of mind'***- Napoleon Hill

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**'Let's Make A Difference' 23<sup>rd</sup> Youth Conference**  
**Asia Plateau, 1 - 8 June, 2017**





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## **ANNEXURE I**

### **“Positive Commitments”**

During the conference, the participants were asked to make at least one commitment which they will follow henceforth. A list of some commitments by the participants is given below showing their top concerns.

Say sorry to my Sisters, Mom, Dad. Talk more to my grandparents. And not to be fake person; show the real me

*“No more bad habits*

*I will spend more time with my parents*

*I will work consistently on my passion, love and family. I'll not leave a single opportunity to make these aspects better for me*

*Start trusting people again. There is hope*

*As soon as I leave I am going to start my own business and stop smoking. Do charity*

*I will quit smoking or I will tell my mom that I smoke*

*Once I get back home, I will hug my mom and say sorry for not being an honest one, what she always want me to be. Miss you mom*

*Improve myself every moment with PHUL*

*The day I will be leaving from here I will make sure that I will try to be an honest and non-egoistic person*

*Express towards loved ones*

*To leave my laziness*

*Live a disciplined life*

*I will not hold any grudges and help other people*

*Start praying regularly*

*I will never cheat anyone*

*I will focus more on studies than other things*

*I would give a day break to my mom and cook for her*

*Will try to help those who are in big problem and need my help*

*Change life towards happiness, success and discipline*



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*Offer food to maid is she is around when I have my food or sharing sweets during festivals*

*I am going to stop judging myself on the basis of other individual's criteria and perception*

*I will stop being egoistic and start accepting my mistake. I will always keep calm while having conversation and won't unnecessary get angry*

*Over the years with increasing work hours, I started becoming person who reduced sparing the time with family members and others. I now make it point to make it a part of my routine and do what others like as well*

*I will stop smoking, drinking asap and I will start with my gyming again and now more focussed and serious about it.*

*I will try to spend less money. I will try my best not to get angry on every small things. I will*

*Will try not to judge people*

*Maintain balance between family life and business pressure*

*Stop swearing*

*Communication will help you to "avoid" the guiltiness afterwards*

*Let go the negativity, which is there inside me*

*Will never lie to anyone. Will never argue with my parents. Will say sorry to the people who I have hurt*

*Don't ill-treat with your parents from they you are if they are not then you are nothing, they are the God.*

*I will not disrespect anyone. I will always apologize keeping my ego aside. I will try to find happiness in the smallest thing. I will not stop trusting people based on the past bad experiences. I will try to be the best son I could be. I will be the change I want to see.*

*No matter how harsh the condition is, I will always try to find a solution and stay happy. I will also bring smile on others face and will be always ready for their help.*

*Quit Smoking. Will be happy with what I am. I will never regret about my decision.*

*Confess my dishonesty to one of my friend in context of examination.*

*Will improve myself by cleaning bad thoughts and have healthy thoughts.*

*I will apologize to my sister for not respecting her, how I have realised that I have I love her so much when she has gone after marriage. Would leave putting money on cricket. Be honest with my parents would honestly follow what they want me to do. Leave behind the last person in me.*

*Take every day, one at a time, every step , every commitment, every mistake, every moment of happiness and sadness, failure, success , forgive myself more on. Live in the present and create the future every single day.*



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*Speak out exactly what is going on in my heart and mind politely.*

*Stop lying and evolve myself.*

*Use the time productively. No more lazy.*

*To learn the art of expression and presentation, to remove hesitation from my being moreover, changing or transforming myself to a new refined me.*

*It is very difficult to love someone, if loving them helps always love them and this I am gonna do it to all the people who matters to me. Even to the people of the world. That is the commitment I am gonna make to myself.*

*I will stop being selfish after leaving LMAD.*

*I will learn English how to speak, and I will totally give respect to my parents; because I know their value now.*

*I want to educate and bring change to a child's life.*

*Go speak to grandmother and make sure I sit with her and speak to her at least try.*

*My commitment to myself is to under promise and over deliver, creating 'tiniest goals' and then achieving them.*

*Keeping ego beside I ll say sorry to what I did to my boyfriend and friend. Make my friendship with pure love. No expectation from everyone. Hopefully I ll do my best as I can possible.*

*I am getting very good knowledge here. I will try to follow this knowledge in rural side.*

*No one can take the place of the mother. A girl's love is limited but mothers is unlimited.*

*Stop Self-Obsession and overconfidence, stop speaking up things. Just achieve it and no show off. People get impressed to the mind to hold it.*

*I want to educate and bring change to a child's life.*

*I will try to be always positive, happy and make the entire world positive and happy.*

*I ll reconnect with people who I lost due to my anger and ego.*

*I will try to restart my life. Trying to forget what hurt me and forgive the people who hurt me. Hug my parents and said them a big sorry. I will try to stay in positive thoughts only.*

*I will go home and hug my mother father and my little brother. I will try to be better brother to my younger brother and i will never fight with him.*

*The very first thing I will do is say sorry to my mom because I hurt her really badly because of my anger. Anger which I only do to my mom so I want to apologize her that I always get angry on her."*