

Uttarakhand Youth Conference

Background

In all the 27 years of conducting Youth Conferences, out of all the diverse participants who have come to Panchgani to interact and learn a practical approach to moral values, not one participant had come from the state of Uttarakhand. The course convener in his visit to Parmarth Ashram, Uttarakhand in 2019 envisioned a conference at the venue where students of the state would be sitting in silence on the Ganga Ghat, with their diaries, deep in introspection. This was a powerful thought which would bring the concept of inner listening to the youth of Uttarakhand. The Covid-19 pandemic delayed the process and did not allow the team to bring the thought to reality.

In November 2021, the Let's Make A Difference (LMAD) Fellowship began and the six fellows arrived at the LMAD Home in Delhi. After the conclusion of the induction, the first project that they took up was to make the Uttarakhand Conference happen. There was very little clarity about the area, the kind of people, and how we would gather participants for the conference. The team had only one contact, an Acharya by the name of Naresh. He was closely associated with Parmarth Ashram and also had shown interest in helping out with the conference.

The First Trip To Uttarakhand

The Fellows, along with a small team from across India were all set to make their first trip to the districts of Haridwar and Dehradun. The purpose of this trip was to take the lay of the land, make a few contacts and finalize the dates of the conference. The team arrived in Rishikesh on the 28th of November 2021. Acharya Naresh welcomed the team in his wellness center which also has accomodation called "Hitam Home". We discussed the plan of action and set out to various schools and colleges that we had identified to be the best in the area. Local volunteers from the Acharya's team helped us with the transport and connections in some institutions.

More than eight institutions were visited in the five day visit including some prestigious colleges that have a history of more than hundred years like **Gurukul Kangri Vishwavidyalaya** where we spoke to the Pro Vice Chancellor, Mr Roop Kishore Shastri, the former head of the department of Ved. Some government schools were also visited like **Shri Bharat Mandir** where the students face extreme poverty. The team addressed close to 2000 students on this trip.



The LMAD Fellows along with the team from across India visiting various institutions in Uttarakhand

The team also visited Parmarth Ashram multiple times. They got the relevant contacts who would help LMAD with the estimate and booking of the various facilities that the ashram had to offer. This was an important step as the entire conference along with the logistics had to be thought of. For the previous regional conferences, these preparations would usually be taken care of by the local team. It was a new challenge to take up this aspect as well. The team also got a chance to meet Puja Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji Maharaj and Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati, the leaders of the Parmarth Niketan Ashram.

Registering Participants

After getting back to the LMAD Home, the Fellows processed the information that was collected during the first trip and decided on the dates of the Uttarakhand Youth Conference - 13 - 16 January, 2022. With the dates decided, it was time to maximise the number of people attending the conference. A fee of Rupees 150 was decided only for the reason of accountability. The registration process was decided and four of the Fellows made yet another trip to Rishikesh.

They were once again accommodated in Hitam Home. This time, there was a clearer goal. They mapped out the area, divided it into two and started visiting the schools and colleges in the area, talking about the conference and the deep impact that LMAD has made in their lives. This inspired the students to register for the conference. They visited a total of **32 schools and colleges** in the nine-day trip. They spoke to close to 2600 students and convinced more than 200 people to register for the conference. This was an experience filled with challenges in terms of oratory skills, and will power to push themselves in the cold December weather of Rishikesh. Having had this incredible journey and achieving beyond what they thought, the four fellows headed back to Delhi to the LMAD home.



The Four LMAD Fellows Meeting With Principals And Addressing Students Of Various Schools and Colleges

Tying the Loose Ends

The following week, another trip was made to the Parmarth Ashram to finalize the stay for participants who would be visiting from far off towns/areas. The conversation with the local vendors for lighting, sound and food also concluded. The initial plan was to have a conference for 1000 people. At that point, due to the rise in the Omicron variant of Covid-19, the decision was taken to scale back the preparations for 500 people. The venue for the conference was finalized - an indoor hall called the Yoga Hall. The small team, after a short two-day trip, returned to Delhi.

Uttarakhand Youth Conference 2022

Despite the sudden rise of Covid cases at the time, the historic conference was inaugurated in Parmarth Niketan Ashram on the afternoon of 13 January with 260 participants seated in the hall. Three volunteers had travelled from Coimbatore, Nagpur and Pune to come and help for the conference. The powerful thought of having a conference of Moral Values and Inner Listening at Parmarth Niketan was finally unfolding in Rishikesh. It had taken a little over two years but **persistence and collective will power** made sure that the thought did not die.



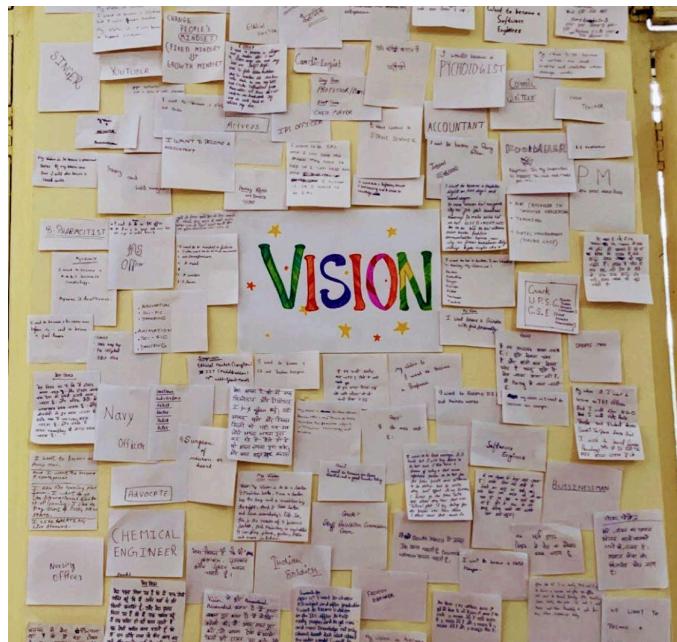
260 Participants Seated In The Yoga Hall For The Uttarakhand Youth Conference 2022

The entire LMAD volunteering team was invited to the Ganga Ghat to do the daily aarti. This was an honour that few people receive. Sadhviji spent some time speaking about the work of Initiatives of Change (IofC) and LMAD. She spoke about how people nowadays sit around blaming other people for what's wrong in the world. She highlighted how important it was that apart from studying the normal syllabus, what the youth need is to have *Sanskar*. The LMAD team was doing that by propagating a life of Moral Values - Purity, Honesty, Unselfishness and Love.

"The LMAD Team has brought together so many youth, learning how to really become the change. This is what Mahatma Gandhi taught us so beautifully - become the change you want to see in the world."

- Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati

While visiting schools and colleges, and interacting with the students, it was evident that not a lot of students had visited many places outside of the area they stayed in. They met the same people all their lives and their scope of knowledge was limited to their surroundings. The team identified this and worked on a session to expand the **vision** of the students. This was a powerful session as the students realised that the world was huge and there were a lot of things they could accomplish in one lifetime. They realised that being a part of this generation where the powerful tool of the internet is available is a privilege as long as they made productive use of it. They benefited by listening to the various professions that the volunteer team was pursuing.



The Vision of Participants Who Attended The Conference

The most important part of any LMAD conference is **Quiet Time**. The process of remaining silent and listening to one's inner voice. This was introduced to the participants on the 14th morning along with the diary where the participants would put in their conscious thoughts. The students present in the Yoga Hall listened intently in the session and moved out to experience their very first time of silence. They spread across the campus to find a silent spot for themselves. Everyone was seen writing profusely in their diaries.

The importance of sharing was also emphasised as many came forward, sharing their Quiet Time thoughts with the larger gathering.



Students Seen Sitting In Silence With Their Diaries For Their Quiet Time

There were various other topics on which sessions took place like the importance of **family** in one's life, how **good habits** need continuous **perseverance** and also taking a pledge towards not wasting resources like food, water, electricity, money, etc. A session on the various Government Schemes that the students can avail of and benefit from was also conducted.

"Is dharti par aai hu, toh kuch achha karke hi jaungi. Mamuli jeevan nahi jeena hai muje."

- A Participant

The first Uttarakhand Regional Conference concluded on a high note with all the deserving participants receiving a certificate for participating in a conference of Moral Values and Inner Listening.



All The Participants Standing Outside The Yoga Hall For A Group Picture

Annexure I

All the participants wrote down their Vision on a piece of paper. They were captured both in Hindi and English. Some of them are as follows:

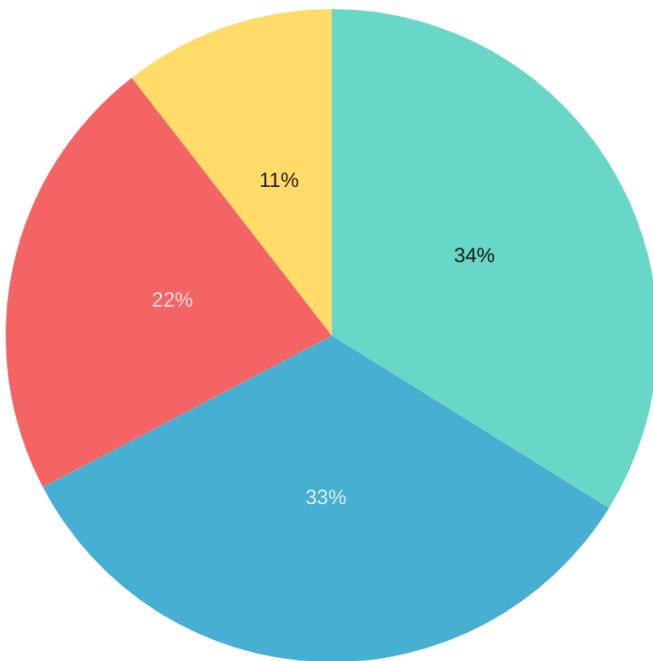
- Yoga Teacher
- Lawyer is my vision
- I want to join Tollywood
- *Mera vision police officer banna hai*
- *Mera sapna bank manager banna hai*
- My vision is to be a dancer
- *Mujhe ek engineer banna hai*
- *Mera vision hai army officer*
- *Mera bachpan se sapna hai ki mein IPS officer banu*
- Fashion designer
- Cardiologist
- *Mera vision hai ki mein ek shikshika banu*
- My vision- Accountant
- Doctor
- I want to become a software engineer.
- *Mujhe doctor banna hai*
- Businessman
- I want to become a Katha orator.
- Actor
- *Mein artist banna chahti hu*
- *Mera vision CA banna hai*
- I want to become a singer
- I want to write a book
- Wrestler

Annexure II

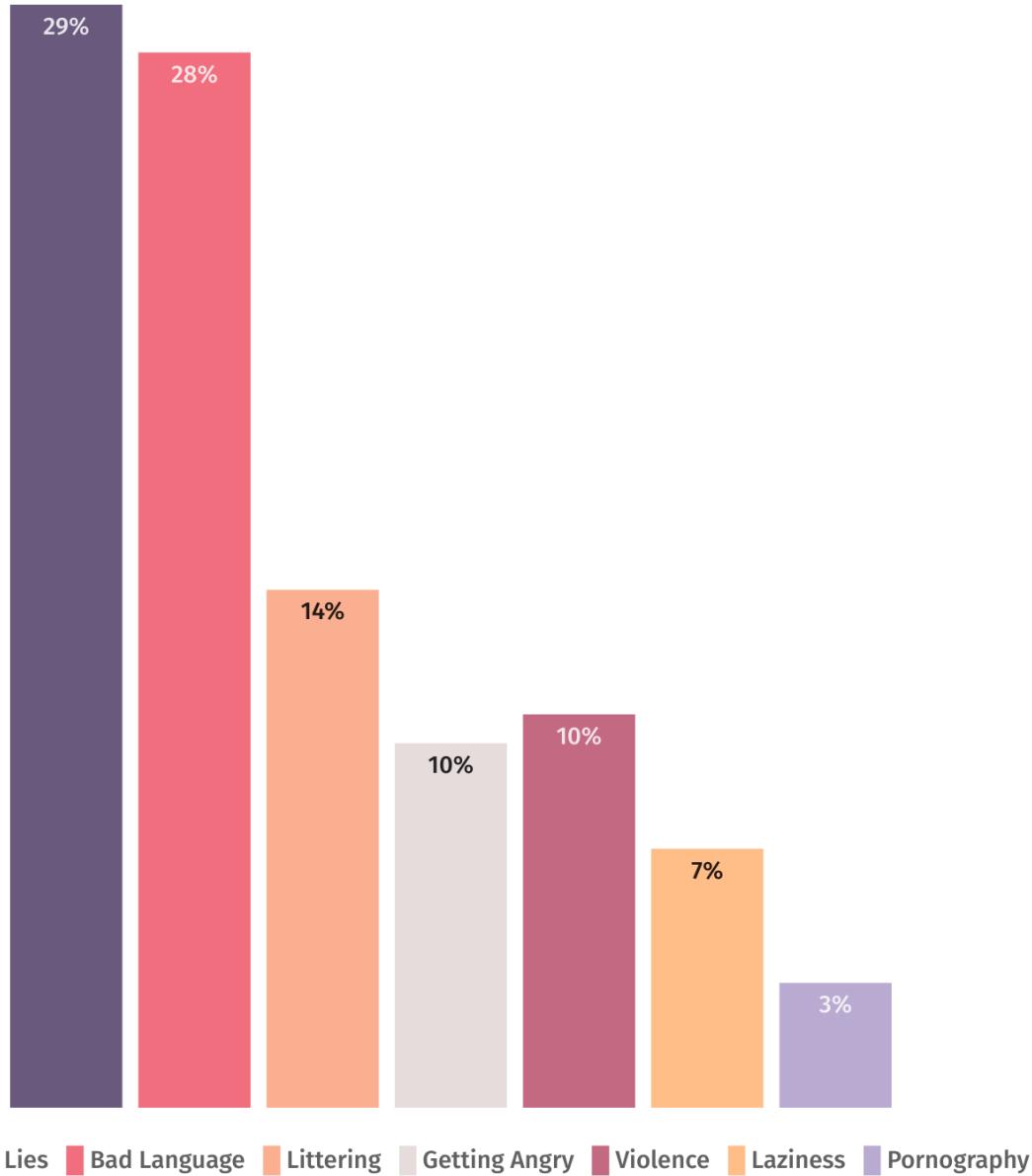
The survey that the participants submitted yielded some interesting results:

- 1) How much time do I spend on my mobile phone?

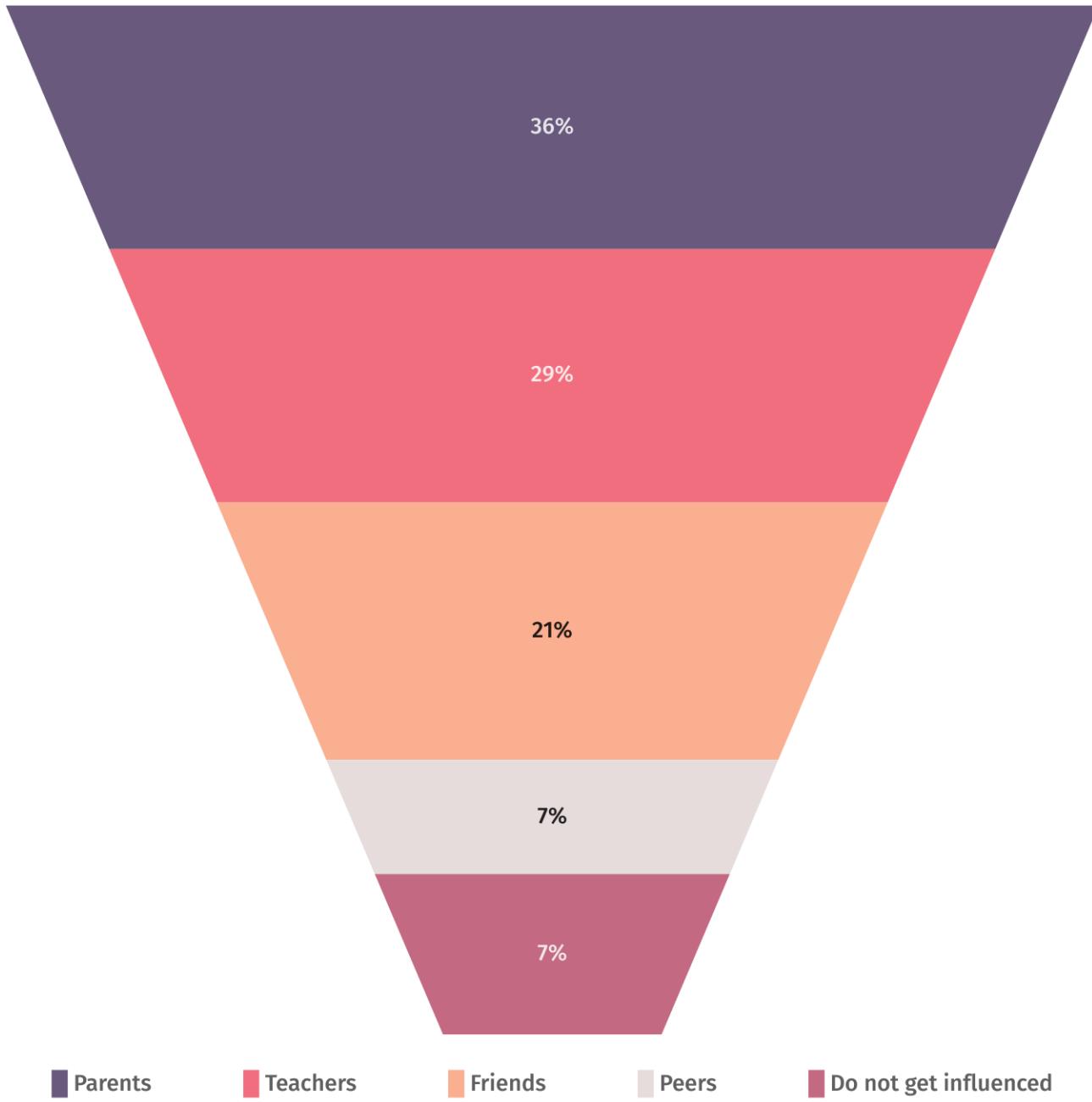
■ Less than 1 hour ■ 1-3 Hours ■ 3-5 Hours ■ 5+ Hours



2) What are my bad habits?



3) Who do I get influenced by?



Annexure III

The schools and colleges that the team visited throughout all the trips are as follows:

1. Shri Bharat Mandir Inter College
2. Saraswati Vidya Mandir Inter College
3. Purnanand Degree College
4. Purnanand Public School
5. Omkaranand Saraswati Nilayam
6. Shri Bharat Mandir Public School
7. Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya
8. Gurukul Kangri Vishwavidyalaya
9. Patanjali University
10. TES High School
11. Happy Home Montessori
12. Swami Dayanand Saraswati SCP Inter College
13. Omkarananda Institute of Technology
14. MS Himalayan
15. Rajkiya Inter College
16. Pt. Lalit Mohan Sharma Govt. PG College
17. Nirmal Ashram Deepmala Public School
18. Agape Mission School
19. Rishikesh Public School
20. Bal Vidya Niketan
21. Punjab Sindh Kshetra
22. Swami Vivekananda School
23. Modern School, Dhalwala
24. Omkarananda Montessori
25. Shri Jai Ram Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya
26. Government Girls Inter College
27. Smt. Pushpa Vadera Saraswati Vidya Mandir Public School
28. Modern Institute of Technology
29. UIPS Yoga Academy
30. Sanskrit University