



ASIA PLATEAU

PANCHGANI - 412805
MAHARASHTRA, INDIA.

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CABLES: NEWORLNEWS

Report on " Let's Build The Nation "

Youth Camp, Asia Plateau, Panchgani 20th - 30th May, '96.

" I will live by honesty, responsibility, respect for others, a willingness to share and to care. "

These words are part of a pledge taken by the participants of the Youth Camp, on the concluding day - 30th May '96. Students between the ages of 15 and 24 years had gone through an interesting and varied 10 day schedule with an aim towards broadening their horizons and inculcating in them discipline and moral values.

Viral Mazumdar, a diamond exporter and jeweller from Mumbai and his wife, Neha, co-ordinators of the camp, distributed certificates of participation to each young man and woman the certificate to act as a reminder of their commitment to uphold moral values in society. Coming from different parts of India - Ahmedabad, Ahmednagar, Aurangabad, Baramati, Baroda, Calcutta, Hyderabad, Jamshedpur, Kanpur, Mumbai, Nagpur, and Pune - they made a total of 110.

Rajmohan Gandhi, one of the principal initiator in the building of Asia Plateau, inaugurated the camp on the evening of 20th May, '96. His speech dwelt mainly in reading extracts from the book, 'The Good Boatman' a portrait of Gandhi, which he has recently authored. Pointing out how Gandhiji had shown leadership qualities even at the young age of 19, Rajmohan Gandhi wished to impress upon the youth the concept that age is no bar for showing leadership. Focussing on Gandhiji's honesty and concern for others right from childhood, he inspired the youth with the idea that seeds sown at this stage could bear fruits later.



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The hectic daily schedule began with yoga at 6.00 am. Kaivalyadham Yoga Centre at Mumbai has been regularly sending their trained personnel to these camps. Shrikant Shapurkar and Prabha Shetty have almost become fixtures at the youth camps and the MRA family is grateful for the dedication and enthusiasm with which they train the participants each year. Mrs. Agarwal from Kaivalyadham was an additional instructor this year.

Inner Development and ' Quiet Time ' one of the principle precepts of the MRA practice of listening to the Inner Voice - followed Yoga. These sessions conceived by Vijayalakshmi Subrahmanyam a full time worker with MRA- innovatively examined the purpose of living, the barriers to spiritual growth and the personal as well as social benefits that accrue from soul-searching.

The morning sessions from 9.30am to 12noon offered a varied fare of subjects conducted by those who had special expertise in the topics, viz,

V.C.Vishwanathan, adviser to J.K Industries N.Delhi, took a session on man management and marketing.

Russi Lala, official biographer of J.R.D. Tata and author of several books, including ' In Search of Leadership ' , threw light on the characteristics of leaders and showed the distinction between leaders who have exerted a positive influence and those who have exerted a negative one, on humanity over the centuries.

Mr. Nandkumar Moghe, who is an authority on environment and wild life, not only held indoor sessions, but also took the campers on nature trails through the Asia Plateau woods.



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Mr. Kishore Mehta, another keen environmentalist, made a brief trip to Panchgani, specially to impress upon the students the urgency of environmental consciousness.

Dr. Kale and Dr. Mrs. Kale, took a special session on Health Education and Diet.

Mr. Shridhar Kamath, a self-made man, led a session on Personality Development.

Ms. Sushobha Barve, a full-time worker with MRA, who has been actively working in Mumbai for communal harmony, spoke about her experiences in Dharavi after the '93 riots, and how it was her quiet times that had led her to make the right choices and face the situation courageously.

Ms. Zarin Virji, a high school teacher, Ms. Jyothi Subrahmanyam Programme Co-ordinator at Asia Plateau, Mrs. Devi Basu, a Red Cross nurse from Malaysia, and Mr. Viral Mazumdar, expounded on the standards of Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love and their applicability in daily living.

Mr. Gaurang Mehta, a film maker and management consultant, conducted a workshop on a film made by him on Gandhi, called "Influencing without Authority - A New Model of Leadership"

The eighth days session was on Families and God's spirit was at work that morning! It started with one sister apologising to another about her non caring attitude and ending in an embrace ! other simple sharings in this strain made many conscious of their own attitudes towards one or the other members of their respective families. It was a moving experience specially when so many shared, "This is the first time I am speaking from the stage. . ." One Hindu boy apologised to his Muslim brother saying that that morning had brought him in touch with his prejudice towards Muslim and his apology was full of grace.



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Loud cheers and claps were given to a Baroda boy who had the courage to confess that it was he who had criticised another city's team with an anonymous letter on the notice board ! As Mazumdar pointed out, the MRA spirit not only helps families unite, but even regions to be more understanding of one another

A young social worker from Jharkhand, Bihar, who is involved in an educational programme for Adivasis, was so thrilled with the spirit of the camp that he pledged himself to work even harder so that by the year 2005, all the people in his region would be educated.

The afternoon sessions were divided into five different workshops, viz

Computer Basics	Mr. Shridhar Kamath
Journalism	Mr. Pravir Bagrodia
Meditation	Mr. Desai, Mr. Shah and Mr. Bhat.
Pottery	Mr. Chandrakant
Cooking & Baking	Mrs. Norma Suvarna

Students were free to choose to be part of the workshop that they desired; most of them appreciated the workshop sessions as it gave them a taste of what the subject entails.

A trip to Mahabaleshwar was arranged as a special outing for one day.

The last night of the camp was given to a cultural programme. Enthusiastic participants were so many that only a limited number of items were selected. These were individual as well as group items which drew spirited applause.

Some of the participants feedback on the camp, follow :
Renuka Kapadia, a law student, Mumbai:

" It was very nice that so much importance was given to Each One Teach One (E.O.T.O) and our adivasi friends from Bihar.. On the whole the camp was a success. When I asked people what they liked the most, they referred to the team effort they put into wash-ups and other practical work "



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Janak Joshi, Final year B.Com student Mumbai :

" I feel that the speakers who were invited were not that stimulating, due to which the topics to be discussed sometimes went off the track, and some students lacked interest in the lectures.... With better screening at the selection of students, we could have maintained proper discipline "

Jeetu, student from H.R. college :

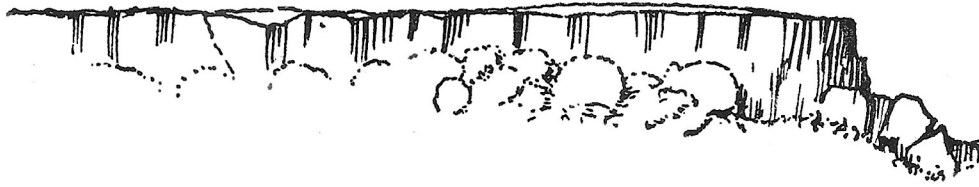
" I think it is my fault at not being able to control the freshers to follow all the rules.... A promise from this 'sutho sindhi', that carelessness would be avoided and the future camps would see a better me !! "

Abhishek Raina, 12th std student from Ahmednagar :

" To be really frank I enjoyed the camp thoroughly as a captain. I think I was very lucky to be chosen as one amongst the rest. It was nice to keep working whole day and then retire to bed in the night. Now after returning home I feel uneasy and restless as I have no work except to sit and watch TV "

Nehal Gandhi, student from Xavier's Mumbai :

" Detached from rites, rituals and other religious practises and yet attached to the Supreme Lord, the entire camp kindled a flame of hope in the hearts of every adult on observing the youth interacting in perfect harmony with one another, cutting all barriers of religion, region, sex, language and age..... Finally I would like to add that this camp was a place where I had nothing to gain without giving my sweat and tears and in return I've been hooked onto this wonderful feeling called M.R.A. It was an avenue for me to change the world in my own small way and the way to start was by changing myself and becoming a more aware, caring and active citizen ! "



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Kaushambi Shah, student from Mumbai :

" We could have planned an exhibition where everybody had some thing to show which we learnt at the workshops. As for the group discussions again they were considered casually, we did not speak about serious topics expect family. I guess the cultural evening practise held a priority during these hours. We were supposed to have a debate, but it was cancelled. Such things should be encouraged, we were there to " Build the Nation ". We could have debated and discussed on the Indian environment, population, religion, tourism..... This would have been very knowledgable for everyone. At the same time we would have had a chance to express are views and learn to convince which I understand is a must to be a leader - " To Build the Nation ".

Such was the ten day camp that ended with an avocado tree planted by the Mazumdars - a symbol of the Hopes, dream and commitment of all those present.

Khorshed Ghandy.