



Kuch Lamhe Kuch yadein

A Report on MRA Youth Conference 1999 - 2000

April 1999

Calcutta

Early Morning, Lakeside Park

Few youngsters jogging along the lane, occasionally bursting out in fiery hot exchange of words. The passerby's are wondering what the quarrel is all about? Well that's the planning meeting of the coordination team of a Moral Re-Armament Youth Conference suppose to be held at Asia Plateau, Panchgani. They all are from different background, young entrepreneurs, banker, students or housewife but the common bondage among them is the belief in the value-based lifestyle of MRA. There is a sense of restlessness within them and a strong believes that a complete change is required to create a better world and that's why they have taken up this endeavor to assemble around 120 young participants from different parts of the country and convey them the eternal messages of Moral Re-Armament.

June 1999

Mumbai

Afternoon, College Campus

A young girl, with intelligent eyes and husky voice trying hard to convince her fellow batch mate why they should come for a MRA Youth Conference leaving apart those gala millennium celebration. She is distributing the conference brochure and given a small presentation of what MRA meant in her own life. She is really enjoying her new responsibility as the regional coordinator.

In another part of the city, few youngsters are chasing some researchers in Mani Bhavan. They really want them as faculty for a session on Gandhiji in the conference. They strongly felt that his messages are still relevant in today's life and should be conveyed to the participants.

August 1999

Hyderabad

1.00PM, Charminar

Manoj: Hey Yaar! This is great stuff. Wonderful structure. In Calcutta we have Victoria Memorial.

Vajhi: My dear friend, I am least interested in structures rather you tell me how far is the planning of the Youth Conference.

Manoj: I will give you the details, tell me how many participants you are bringing? And when we are having those delicious Hyderabadi Biryani. By the way, you will be having your Ramzan fasting that time of the year.

Vajhi: Aare Yaar! To gain something we have to sacrifice these small comforts. That will not be a problem.

September 1999

Dhaka, Bangladesh

One of the senior member of Bangladesh MRA chapter received an email message inviting young participants. Five of the students become very enthusiastic but they were a bit skeptics about the journey to a foreign land. Then came the telephone of one of the organiser who is a Bengali girl assuring them about all the necessary facilities. Suddenly they realise that they are not heading for a foreign land but just another part of their own country which is marked by some geographic lines. Now they are all ready for an exciting trip to the pilgrim where only humanity is worshiped.

October 1999

Nagaland

A media journalist from Mumbai, whose passion is to work for the cause of Northeast region of India, corresponds to some of the schools of Nagaland and they responded. Two Students and their young teacher felt the urge to participate in this effort ignoring the hardship of very long and hectic journey

December 1999

Calcutta

Midnight, Satya Bannerjee's Residence (Unofficial MRA Center)

The final preparation before the Grand Finale. The organising team is working hard to chip in all the material in their final blueprint of the conference. Someone is busy in computers for feeding in data, some busy in settling accounts others drafting all the plans and structures into pens and papers. With the arrival of every application form they are all cheering up with childish joy as if they got a very valuable present. They are all trying to achieve perfection leaving no loopholes in the planning. Lot of effort had been given into correspondence, through ordinary mails, emails, and telephones. In almost 20 cities around the country, the regional coordinators with their whole team also working hard to select the best participants from their region. They are all set right for the forthcoming challenge.

25th December 1999

Panchgani, Asia Plateau, MRA Training Center

Well the long awaited day has come, the Two-day Training for the Coordinators started. Almost 25 Coordinators from different parts of the country arrived in Asia Plateau. They are full of enthusiasm and energy. Some are tired due to long journey but refreshed by the joy of meeting old friends. Mr. Amit Mukherjee one of the trustee and backbone of the MRA Jamshedpur team has come as faculty.

Oh! Something is going on in the Mami's Room. It's a soul-searching session aimed at bringing in a greater clarity of thought why they are in to this business of MRA. Each individual expressed their dream and aspiration of a better world and their roll in the whole process. Some are very practical in their approach, some very philosophical but everyone is optimistic. They felt this conference is a small little step towards evolving that greater consciousness in every facets of the society and they want to have a positive role in the whole endeavor.

26th December 1999

Early Morning, The Campus

The easterly sky is lit up with fire. The soft rays of morning sun reflecting on the gray clouds created a heavenly atmosphere. The Co-ordinators are taking their morning quite time. They assembled in Austrian room to share their thoughts. They are pouring out all their doubts, anxiety, pains and sorrows. In the cool shades of close friendship they are slowly coming out of their cocoon. The whole day they engaged themselves in discussions, sharing life's experience and the obstacles faced in implementing the principles of MRA also the excitement in confronting the challenges it offers. They are exercising some team building games but even without it the formation of a strong team with the bond of life long friendship is clearly visible.

27th December 1999

The Campus

Today they are focused on the coming 8days of the conference. The organising team is giving a presentation of all the details of the planning. All the coordinators are being delegated some independent responsibilities; some are group head some are in charge of events or certain functional areas. The whole purpose is to learn to take decisions and enhance emotional abilities. Even with small mistakes to bring in a total growth. A thorough training to be the future integrated leader in their respective fields.

28th December 1999

The Campus

The coordinators are giving the final touch to the whole preparation. The participants have started to arrive. The reception team headed by that beautiful Pune girl is busy welcoming them. That computer whiz kid from Calcutta is tensed while taking conference fees from the participants.

The auditorium is decorated well for the inaugural ceremony, almost 120 participants from different parts of the country and also from Bangladesh have gathered. The music is on, a group of dancing guys and girls singing the famous Maori welcome song *Hai Re Mai*. Guest of honor Padmashree Prof. Govind Swaroop, in his inaugural address talked about the importance of parental love, education and books in the development of confidence in a person. He also mentioned the importance of Emotional Quotient in individuals in building of society. This followed by lighting up traditional lamp and the Chief coordinator's address to the participants.

The campus rejuvenated with the vigor of the youth. The young minds and hearts with their loud cheers and laughter had brought in bright colors to the whole place. The Safar had taken a sparkling takeoff.

29th December 1999

The Campus

Everyday is devoted to a single theme and throughout the day all the programs are related to that. Today is **MRA- An alternative way of living or the right way of living**. The morning slot is allotted exclusively for quite time and the briefing on it by Leslie Nazareth.

The day started with a walk up the forest in a human chain in absolute silence. Then they are asked to express their feeling during the walk. The idea is to introduce to the participants with basic MRA practices of being quite, teamwork and **non-judgmental sharing of feelings**.

The whole batch of participants are eagerly listening to the sharing of that tall guy from Hyderabad how MRA helped him to be honest with his brother and changed his approach towards life. When the Lucknowhi guy narrates how he along with the MRA team in Pune helped in creating environmental awareness in their area they are convinced that **ideas can be changed into action**.

It creates a ripple when that lanky boy from Delhi begins to share how MRA has helped him to face some of the perplexing moments in his family or for that matter the simple story of a local resident who work in the center proves that **ordinary men can do extraordinary things**.

Afternoon in the group discussion almost everybody is convinced that **MRA is practical**. They all want to give it a shot.

30th December 1999

The Campus

Almost all the participants are urbanised. To give them an overview of the environment they live and how the so-called **development** affects it, Peter and Mona Patrao the faculty for the **environment** day started an open interactive session with the participants. With active participation from all front it was quite a brainstorming one, which concluded that sustainable development, should lead to social justice and conservation of resources.

Leslie draws our attention towards alternate way of living, which would lead to better conservation of our environment and Mona speaks about the imbalance created by the industrialisation of agriculture.

In the evening few young girls from Jamshedpur gives a lovely slide presentation of some beautiful birds and insects in the backdrop of Himalayas. Stargazing in the open ground follows this. Who would know that guy from Mumbai, where skies are always enveloped in pollution, have such vast knowledge of those faraway galaxies? With his loud voice he guided us to an amazing exploration of heavenly bodies. Everyone is enjoying the total darkness, the chilled weather and the cold earth. It's a lifetime experience for most of them.

31st December 1999

The Campus

Wow, it is fun time on the last day of the year with a picnic to Mahabaleshwar. In the evening, some friends who have been long associated with MRA for decades looked back at their experiences and had some valuable

advice for the next generation. Mr. Rajendra Gandhi shared how he enjoyed life long friendships through MRA. Mr. Suresh Vazirani said that everything that we learn today need not be immediately relevant, but it does come useful sometime in the future.

The Coordinators served a grand dinner to the participants to celebrate the New Year's eve and loads of fun and dance led to the midnight hour. As the New Millennium arrived, everybody lit a candle as a token of one's personal resolution.

1st January 2000

The Campus

The dawn of the new millennium started with all faith prayer, the foyer is echoed by those heart-rending voices.

History cannot be changed but relationship can with this positive note today's session on relationship starts off. Mr. Bhanu Kale and Mrs. Varsha Kale emphasised on family relationship. He said that finding one's life partner is like looking for needle in a haystack; when you find one, it pricks!

Mrs. Anasuya Gargate and Dr. Raj Anand shared their view on the importance of relationship with one's own self and God.

All are engaged in an exercise of analysing different degrees of closeness in their relationship. In the evening they assembled in the Australian Room to share their feelings. There is something in the atmosphere which pulls out all their pains and suffering. With the able guidance of Mr. Mahendra Shah many realised where they went wrong in maintaining different relationship and shared openly to apologise. Almost everyone is into tears.

In the campus while wash-up and services or in any other group activity they got a hand in experience in building relationship.

In the late evenings while enjoying the hot cocoa they all are mixing up, making new friends, and discussing among them their encounter with this noble idea of MRA

2nd January 2000

The Campus

That young little charmer from Jamshedpur is updating the news in the morning.

After a sobering day on Relationship, today is to take everyone on a state of merriment as never before. On the day of **Communication** the speaker Mr. Arun Wakhlu and Mrs. Anu Wakhlu made everyone realise the joy of being in the 'here and now'. He asked everyone to lose inhibitions, just be, and laugh to our heart's content.

He could even inspire everyone to write poetry at the spur of the moment. The participants re-discovered their hidden creative talent. Everyone is amazed by the Urdu shayari by that spectacled boy, romance is in the air when that tall guy from Mumbai recited.

In a one-to-one exercise the participants learn to remove their blocks in communication.

Heart dances in the night are also thoroughly enjoyable. Besides there is also discussion in smaller groups on various forms of communication. Each group presented the summary of their discussion in the form of skits and songs.

3rd January 2000

The Campus

The platform is now ready to stir some deeper and complicated issues like spirituality. Today's theme is **religion spiritualism**. Rammohanji along with Dr. R. K. Anand slowly and subtly takes us to a backward journey in search of the question, who is the creator of this universe and what is the purpose of His creation? Like a spider that uses resources from its own self to create the web probably God also created the universe from its own self. So the constituent of everything in this world is made of His content. In lieu of that argument we can assume God is omnipresent (present everywhere), omniscient (knowing everything) and omnipotent (all-powerful). The deeper understanding of the concept of God created a liberal attitude in the

participants and they become more open and respectful towards other religion. They can understand that religion is just a belief system, which leads to a state of total awareness.

It's a vast topic and many questions are still unanswered. But the seed of inquisitiveness is planted and that will work in everyone's sub-conscious.

4th January 2000

The Campus

Mrs. Bharti Mazumdar spoke on **Gandhi's life as a message**. She narrated some of the turning points in his life. She expressed her concern over the existing state of corruption, poverty and decline of value. She felt Gandhiji's life and messages could offer some guidance to us.

Mr. Rajmohan Gandhi looked at the life of Mahatma Gandhi for all the times. He talked about how he had fought not only for independence, but also against communalism and caste system. He was probably the first one to have an all India reach.

His principle of non-violence and listening to the conscience are relevant to all ages.

His message to the young people was that they must write down an agenda that is larger than their self. To fulfill this purpose, they must, find a teammate and a mentor whom one can look up to.

In the evening they went to the tableland to get a feel of the nature.

Whew, see those youngsters in their colorful outfits, like flocks of butterflies wandering around in the beautiful landscape of plateaus on the Western Hills.

The effects of all the inputs are slowly crystallizing. With all the ideas clear and clarified they want to transform it into some kind of real action.

So are they doing. You can see those, long human chains going around in the market place of Panchgani town, roaring with a powerful song, which would energize even the feeblest person. They are all supporting and participating in a project by the young students of Red Stone, a home school in Panchgani. It is aimed at bringing a greater conciseness about the ills of plastic waste and how to segregate the non-biodegradable waste. The students performed a street play, mingling a modern Ramayana with the theme in a highly imaginative and entertaining manner. The responses from the local shopkeepers and residents to the idea of reducing the use of plastic containers are really very encouraging.

In the evening the Bangladesh team who are already in a deep love affair with India gives a marvelous presentation enriching everyone about the language movement in their country and some soulful Bengali songs. They also present a token of love to Asia Plateau. They are all into tears when Mr. Rajmohan Gandhi accepted it with a word of appreciation.

5th January 2000

The Campus

Whiz! Past the seven days of the conference. Enticingly the time for closing ceremony has come. In his concluding address the Chief Coordinator emphasised on the continuous process of introspection and self-development. He exemplified this event as a great success of team effort and the power of conviction. He asked everybody to devote one hour of his or her daily life for the cause of MRA.

As in the logo of the conference all the participants are now flocking towards a brighter world. They are going back to their own places but sure they will kill the geographical distance with the warmth of their heart.

The real Safar begins now.....

The Safar Continues.....

Mustafa Yusuf (Roussoe)

DHAKA BANGLADESH 20 JANUARY

It's a memorable day for Bangladesh MRA chapter. Inspired by great days of Youth Conference we five of us had opened a MRA office in the city. Many members have joined us in this noble effort. We are overwhelmed by the support from our seniors also.

Tapan Parekh

MUMBAI 14 JANUARY

I have created an E-Group in the Internet. Its named Safar Ka Sathi. All the persons with email address have been included as members. Those of wants to add their address get immediately to Safar Ke Sathi.

Sonali Jog

PUNE 24 JANUARY

The whole of Pune team went to the same lake, which Sourabh mentioned in one of the sharing session.