

Let's Make A Difference 2007

- ❖ Came 1st June and with it came the much awaited Annual Youth Conference, Lets Make a Difference bringing the campus of Asia Plateau alive with 132 participants from 28 different cities across India.
- ❖ The very first day gave an idea about the sanctity of the place as participants experienced their first Quiet time. In a never before experience everyone enjoyed the lush green surroundings, tempting them to be with oneself and reflect back on their life. Artistic people came up with wonderful poems and everyone shared honestly about their experiences while making an attempt to listen to their inner voices.
- ❖ The beauty of the first session was the practical way in which it introduced everyone with the four absolute standards, without any preaching. People gave situations where a lot of suffering had to be faced by standing for these standards and felt that justice was not done to such people. The answer to their query was given through examples of prominent leaders who had suffered and sacrificed a lot but stood as role models to the followers of these standards. A participant mentioned about speaking white lies in situations to save people from trouble, to receive an answer that a lie is always a lie, be it in any color. After a healthy interaction, most of the participants could understand the importance of these standards in their life. They had still not faced any real life situation where they would be challenged against the absolute standards, but most of them had created a situation in their mind and were answering logically or asking hypothetical questions, one could draw a conclusion that they were use to short cuts and are afraid to challenge the system or walk on the path of righteousness. Even before starting their real journey in the outside world, they were willing to walk on the path which is quick, fast and compromising, but the four absolutes challenged them that life cannot be built on shortcuts and to build a strong and lasting foundation, it has to be built on values and inner guidance.
- ❖ Dr. Manish Naithani, from Maulana Azad Medical College, gave a talk about why the reservations policy in India needed to be rethought and how it was hindering the socio- economic development of India. The point of focus was not to totally abolish reservations but to review the policy being followed on the basis of the 1931 census. The video that he showed on the hardships faced by the doctors during the strike against reservations, brought back memories of the Satyagraha movement. After a healthy interaction with the doctor, most of the participants were convinced and felt that steps need to be taken to bring social equality in the country. It could have added to the occasion if a presentation from someone in favour of reservations could also have been received.
- ❖ That night Mr. Niwas Nanaware, from PCGT Mumbai, along with the coordinators explained the youngsters about the very powerful tool, the Right To Information act, and how it helped in solving problems by merely asking for the right information. At the end of the session there were numerous RTI applications framed and everyone promised to file them in their regional Public Information Offices, once they were back.

- ❖ A session was also held with Swami Brahmacharya Pawan Chaitanya from Chinmaya Mission, Mumbai. Swamiji gave an idea about the importance of spirituality in a young man's life and how one could become a millionaire through spiritual means.
- ❖ Family is a very profound word and still the most neglected; a young lady expresses it humbly that one has to make the most when one has it, before it is too late, because it is too late in my life. Sisters from Chennai who never hugged each other nor expressed their love, the younger one took a step towards the other all she could say that how good and beautiful was that first hug, and one could see the feeling of bliss on their face. When ego disappeared, realization dawned and that's what happened to a young man, tears down his cheek realizing the value of mother and father, calling them and asking for forgiveness, this act took the family by surprise and they drove down to Asia Plateau to be with their son and be with him to experience the change, it was a site to watch. Every soul was moved and one could get the feeling that they have been able to make the most out of their inner journey.
- ❖ A documentary was shown on global warming and the threats posed to the earth because of the selfish interventions of humans towards nature. The film shocked everybody and participants came up with different commitments to preserve nature. One of them promised to gift saplings to her friends on every occasion.
- ❖ On the last day, after all the fun during services and wash-ups, all the sharing during group discussions and all the peace experienced during quiet times, everyone wondered how the same thing could be experienced back at home. With a heavy heart, youngsters left Asia Plateau on the 8th June 2007. Truly the impact of the conference on everyone's mind was prominent and a difference in every individual was visible, we hope and pray that they sustain the process of change.