

Nagpur Youth Conference 2011

For the first time, a Regional Youth Conference was conducted in Nagpur on moral and ethical values, which was attended by 505 Youth from Nagpur. This conference was held under aegis of Initiatives of Change-Let's Make a Difference, whose mission is to create benchmark citizens who are driven by their conscience. The conference was held from 28 to 30 September at Vasanthrao Deshpande Hall, Civil Lines, Nagpur, Maharashtra.



Dr. Lokendra Singh, Heads Neuro-Surgical Department of reputed Central India Institute of Medical Sciences and also plays the role of Deputy Director of the hospital and is known for his versatile interests in theatre, literature and journalism. In his inaugural address Dr. Singh shared that *“the Youth is not physical concept it's a mental concept, it doesn't have any relation to age or generation, it's an perennial river to which anyone can relate to. A river uncontrolled can bring destruction through floods, it needs check dams to meets its desired purpose, similarly we need to give the right direction and purpose to the Youth, through Conference such as this one being held in Nagpur. Before we think of starting revolution we must first think and know what kind of person I am, what I want to become and how. But most important achievement is to be a good human, which is the basic virtue for any profession.”*



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He suggested that Youth must channelize their deepest fears and insecurity as a positive accelerator towards success. He added *“Don't be ornamental in life, go for substance, choose your role models carefully, be unbiased. Power of Youth is the only power that can change the whole system of corruption that exists today in the country”*. After which he recited several inspiring poems composed by him which was applauded by the young audience from thirty colleges and higher secondary schools of Nagpur.



Following session was conducted by Viral Mazumdar, fondly know as Viral bhai who introduced what Moral Re-Armament, Initiatives of Change (MRA-IofC) stands for, he sensitized the participants and teachers on his own journey of introspecting himself on the four absolute values and correction steps taken by him. He asked all the participants *“How many of you have lied to your parents? When we do so what do we feel within? If something within is not happy and constantly reminds even on suppression then that shows your conscious is alive and somewhere deep within that inner voice is telling you to take the correct step, MRA-IofC is all about listening and listening to your own self. This conference will show you a path on which in the past you have not walked, definitely it will be challenging but trust me making a habit to walk on this path will give you a smile and peace which no amount of material accumulation will ever give. Choice is yours, live the way you are living or subscribe to what we are going to unfold in the days to come and then decide the path which you would like to take.”* He explained *“Listening to one's conscience can give direction and clarity to resolve. A guided thought can be of any nature, just have courage to follow it and do not expect instant success as listening is a journey”*.

Participants were sent to their groups, where they discussed their relevance of the sessions to their lives and what their thoughts are about living on these values. These youth also participated in their Goal Setting exercise with respect to their Family, Health, Wealth creation, Hobby Career, etc. Participants



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found this session extremely beneficial as it gave them clarity on planning their career, relationships and life ahead.

Sept 29th morning began with time of silence, and when one takes courage to listen and follow the guidance which flows from within one starts seeing a different "I". But do I have courage to accept the new dimension which I am seeing of myself; in most cases people are scared to see the new "I". It takes you down into an alley which is dark full of past secrets, which you have never revealed and now all of a sudden quiet time will highlight and put focused light on what you are and what you are portraying, the moments starts now and am I ready to see the new "I". Listening to personal experiences of Viralbhai, who shared his first interaction with his conscience which pointed what kind of person he was and gave him courage to correct them. Participants were glued to this session, as they could observe how they too were like every other person who wants to look good from outside but the real challenge lies within which is filled with muck, dirt, sorrow, joy and many impressions of past. He shared his own examples of internal cleansing by practicing quiet time and how the four absolute MRA values of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love and the concept of Quiet Time have given him everlasting guidance. Participants spent several hours introspecting based on the inputs in this session and after which the dais was kept open for sharing.



1. A young participant from a leading Higher Secondary School shared how he realized his mistake of mischievous behavior in his school, for which his father was ridiculed by the Principal. He shared how much he wanted to apologize to his father for this mistake and how much he loved him.

2. A young graduate from Hislop College shared that all her life she never had apologized to her mother for all the mistakes done by her. She regretted for the frequent back answering to her mother, for prioritizing her friends than her own loved ones, for breaching her trust by frequent lies. She told the audience that she spoke to her mother during this conference and apologized for all the mistakes done by her, and expressed to her how much she loved and cared for her. She shared that how jealousy crept up between her and younger brother, when he was allowed to pursue higher education at an expensive college and in her rage had expressed hatred to her mother for being biased. She promised that she will speak to her younger brother and apologize for all the harsh words she has spoken to him which were based on jealousy.



3. One under-graduate from Raisoni College thanked her father for encouraging her to study, providing inspiration to her and being there with her in spite of her poor academic results. She regretted for choosing expectations from friends rather than listening to her teachers and parents. She said that *"I am sorry, and ask forgiveness from my father and teachers, that I was not able to fulfill their dream of me getting into IIT. Now I am convinced that I will be one of finest Engineers based on my hardwork and dedication."*
4. A coordinator from Baramati shared *'I come from small village 100 kms from Pune, after my Graduation, me and my friends decided to do something for my village, so we contested in elections to work on basis of honesty, but may be somewhere our efforts felt short and we lost elections. After this defeat I was extremely depressed, but my mother consoled me and told me that you have not offered greed or cheated anyone to win this election and I am proud of you for that. This gave me so much strength that for life I am in debted towards her love and care. Today I am very far from them, and I am missing them a lot, my mother is my role model'*



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5. Student from Gondia said that *“My first day in this conference, I felt directionless with my career and relationships. Now I have decided my aim in life, I want to be like the pure water shown in the session, I realized all my mistakes, I am double faced in my relationships, I now want to build my life on these absolute values. I am thankful to LMAD to make me realize all this; I will share with everyone this experience of change.”*



6. A coordinator from Nagpur shared a story of her friend who came as participant in National Youth Conference in Asia Plateau, *“In my group discussion, he spoke about his relationship with his father, he said that he loved his dad, but because of his ego and youth he used to have frequent arguments about business and attitude, he always wanted to reconcile with his father but never took the first step. After two months of coming back from the national youth conference, he met with an accident and broke his spine and was quadriplegic. For twenty two days he struggled with life, he would see his father and the family every time but was not able to express his love for his father, his eyes showed how much love he carries within him but today I want to but I cannot. After twenty two days he passed away, and his younger sister used to call me in the night and ask do you have my brother's number I want to talk to him, please. He had attended these session 4-5 times, just like you, it's not that we don't love our parents, don't hold yourself back, express to them and reconcile as one does not know what lies at the roundabout”.*
7. A young girl shared that *“When I was five years old, I lost my Dad. After his death, my mother has played an important role in my life. She has compromised a lot in her life to meet my needs, when my father was alive he did not allow my mother to take up a job and kept her as a queen.*



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MRA - Initiatives of Change

My elder brother was sixteen year old and he started to manage father's business. From my childhood, we have struggled a lot. I attended one of the outreach sessions and was jumping at home persuading my mother to send me for this conference. I told her that you arrange Rs: 500 anyhow I want to go for this conference. Last morning she mortgaged her gold bangles, and because of her I am here today, after coming here there are several changes in me. Every rupee spent from our parent's pocket is very precious, request you to please not waste their money, save that money, future is unpredictable".



8. One of the participants shared that *"I have younger brother, who gets more love and more attention, for which I have jealousy towards him. I remove all my frustration of school friends and parents on him. I have hit him several times, one time his whole back turned blue, he used to keep crying but I was never sensitive to him. My father works very hard to earn money, and I have been spending that just to show off. In today's morning quiet time, I have started to write all things that I have been doing wrong; I started crying and requested the coordinator to speak to my father. I apologized to my father and he said he was very happy that I have realized my mistake. After coming to this conference I have developed courage to go and ask for forgiveness"*
9. One student from Sandipani School said that *"All of you have a family, but I am left with my father. My mother and sister have separated from us and I have been living alone. Right from when I was three years old I have seen family problems, whatever wrong my parents used to do they used to blame me. Family is like a shoe and we must be the shoe lace that ties it together, please hold your family close to you, I don't want to see another family like mine. I have been smoking, even today morning I was smoking outside this campus for which I regret."* He went on to share a short poem-



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“My pen wrote my thoughts, my parents always fought,
I kept on lying, my morals kept on dying,
There were no dear things, as I lost all my feelings,
I don't want to lie anymore, so I don't want to die anymore,
My life is now going to be based on moral interests”



10. One of the coordinators from Baramati shared an incident that happened 6 months ago—“My brother wanted to marry his girlfriend. We belong to a large extended family of at least 100 people. We were called for family meeting of all elders and extended relatives, in which my parents, brother and me were made to sit in a corner. My parents were told that if your son wants to marry this girl, than all of us will cut off all relations with your family. My mother has been an anchor of our extended family; she has organized and helped in family weddings. For her own son, she decided that it will be grandest marriage in our town, it was indeed one of the largest weddings, but none of my relatives attended this marriage. That night both me and my mother cried, I realized everybody attended this wedding but not my own relatives, what's wrong with them, my sister in law is my best friend and she is the best. My MRA family was there for the wedding but not my own cousins who I used to meet every day, they even have stopped talking to me. I know someday all of us will be united but this decision of elders to outcaste us has resulted in huge loss of happiness that we could cherish together. My elder brother doesn't deserve this, when I used to study in Pune, he used to walk for work so that I could use a better

motorcycle; he has sacrificed lot of money so that I can pursue my education to be a lawyer. I pray to God that all of us come together soon"

11. Girl participant from Chandrapur said that *"After listening to Viral bhai's story of his relationship with his younger brother, I am able to relate to my younger sister. Recently both of us were playing with knife, and I intentionally threw the knife on her feet and she got a small cut. I went one step ahead, as in the night on my way to the washroom I intentionally stamped on her hurt feet, to give her pain, I have kept ignoring her, I will first call her and apologize"*



12. Another girl participant spoke *"I have never respected my mother from childhood, Today morning at 5.00 am my mother gave me breakfast to eat, but due to my ego I shoved her away, I want to apologize to my mother for never recognizing her sacrifice and love"*

13. Youth participant said that *"I am small in age, small in size. But I have realized some big things today, I have realized that there is world beyond Facebook and beyond friends; I have realized that there is my mother, my father, my sister who always have loved and care for me. I thank you Viral Sir, for first time in my life, I have seen in my inner self, the first thing I will do is go home and give them huge hug"*

14. A young lad always been a pain in his mother's life but when this relationship was being discussed he could not control his self and mid-way of the conference went to his home and cried his heart out for being a bad child, and apologized for what he has been. Next day his

mother called and mentioned *“what I tried doing towards him did not work for last eighteen years, IofC did it in moments. I cried more than him and never before there had been such an outburst of tears in our home. On the first day of the conference when he came home he mentioned that if I do not like this conference then my conference fee will be refunded and the mother replied then we are sure that we will get back our refund but today seeing my son in a new avatar is un-believable. I only pray to God he remains like this”.*



15. Viralbhair shared that one of the participant's father came to meet him on the last day of the conference stating *“My daughter has never kissed me?”* Viralbhair shared that *“the day earlier she mentioned to me that how ego has taken me away from my father, I asked her why not go to your father touch his feet and show how much you care and love your father. She replied in our culture girl child does not touch the feet of father and mother. I mentioned why not hug and kiss him and show your love, next morning before coming for the conference she kissed her father on the forehead when he was sleeping this gesture of her made her father think what compelled by daughter to do something which she has never done before. He came to the conference and met us to see what was happening. He expressed by saying how poor he is and since last fifteen days he has not be able to set up his food stall on the footpath and does not know how long this will continue, he expressed he has lot of hope from her daughter and waiting for her to become an engineer, conference like this give hope to the family where we start believing that our children can change for good”.*

16. A young software engineer got very adamant and waited till 9.00 pm in the night and mentioned *“I will not go home till I do not get a solution to re-unite my family; my uncle and father are not talking and everybody is unhappy. The family does not look the same what it used to look before. I am getting crushed between my uncle and my father, I love all of them and want to re-unite my family, due to certain bad habits of my uncle there has been this deep division in our family and*

due to this everybody is sad. I see my father, he too is missing his brother and same is the case with my uncle but still why we are separated, I want old days to return back". Viralbhai expressed "we humans are unique and make all possible attempts to go away from the family which has been given to us by God and once we have gone away from the family we cry, we sulk, we regret but still we do not have courage to keep aside the big ego which we carry within and such act deprives endless families and relations to mend and live in regret"



17. Young lady participant living in a hostel in Nagpur but scared to go back home in holidays, she expressed that *"I do not want to go home when my father is around, he has damaged me permanently and I live in fear when he is around, when I shared the same with my mother and expressed what has happened to me she mentioned that she will take it up with her husband, but I feel sad that the perversion of my father is still visible and I feel why my mother is not addressing a serious situation where her own daughter is getting abused, I get a feeling that she has not spoken to my father, I want to stay away from all the males because they all are same as I have experienced similar behavior by my brother-in-law. I had to help her in believing that all males are not alike and today you have shared your deepest feeling with a male member so please do not close yourself towards the opposite sex, generalizing is dangerous but being a vulnerable target you have to become strong and protect yourself"*.
18. *Everybody enjoys freedom but one forgets with freedom comes responsibility and when that responsibility is not executed one tends to move towards abuse. Staying in a hostel is fun with all the liberty and freedom and not being under the watchful eyes of parents. Such moments create two opportunities one is being responsible, by building a strong character and clarity not to be vulnerable and the other is 'who cares I am going to enjoy my freedom' and that is exactly what a young lady did by building her foundation on lie, mistrust towards her parents and roaming all night staying away from the hostel in the false pretext that of being in the hostel and studying. Truth always rises above dishonesty and her mother came to know that she is cheating and lying on her, mother has no choice but to believe her, telling her husband and the family will only cut*



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short her daughters career, all she could do was support her. Daughter took full advantage of the situation and never cared for her mother and what she was going through, her life was her friends and her fun, but how long can one run away from a family where you belong, sitting in the session started showing her, her own movie which was reeled on all the wrong doings. She started crying uncontrollable and could see and feel her mother's pain. She could not stop herself and called her mother and shared all her wrong doings and how freedom was abused beyond words. She promised her mother to be a child the way she desires her to be, both mother and daughter have decided to be part of the National Youth Conference at Asia Plateau in 2012.

Viralbhai summarized the session on family by saying that *"each one of us have an apology in our heart, towards our family, but the bigger question is do we love our family unconditionally. Family is all about love, so don't restrict yourself in not communicating your love to your family. Love is beautiful, love is God, a little bit of love from your side towards your parents or siblings, you will receive a lot more, so don't be miser to express your love. All of us can relate to all that has been spoken from here by the participants on the dais, we see in them our own life. This session was all about family, all about love"*



On Sept 30th, participants spent extended hours introspecting themselves as to *"what kind of person they have become and where they want to go"*. In the morning session, concept of Quiet Time with regular introspection on these values, keeping ego in control and reconciliation was reinforced. All 505 participants then offered multi-faith prayer, where they chanted prayers from all religions and faiths. This was a unique experience for the Youth of Nagpur, as they had never heard prayers from all faith.

All participants were trained on Right to Information Act; session was run by senior coordinators Rajiv Agarwal and Navendu Shirali. Several participants identified issue's they will follow-up to file an RTI application, such as Flyover near Nagpur Railway Station which is ongoing for several years, Academic institutions that provide admission based on capital donations-60 lakh for medical seat, etc.

Documentary of Nero's Guests was shown to the 505 youth participants from Vidharbha, which sensitized them on farmer suicides and agrarian crisis which has been covered extensively by eminent



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journalist P Sainath. In an open forum discussion, Youth participants were then questioned that what they are doing about their society. Several participants shared their genuine ignorance for not knowing about the agrarian crisis in India which has claimed thousands of farmer suicides. Many of them decided and organized themselves to contribute in addressing this issue through awareness, fund raising etc. Five days after the Nagpur Youth Conference, 150 participants mobilized themselves without any facilitation from the Coordinating team to launch a movement Nagpur Against Farmer Suicides.



Participants undertook lofC-Let's Make a Difference pledge that they will abide by their conscience to live in a sustainable manner and build their life on moral and ethical values. Participants were then felicitated with Certificate, Disha Magazine and Change for Better Journal. The dais was kept open for feedback. Several participants spoke with great confidence and thanked the coordinators and Viralbhai for this life-changing experience. All coordinators and participants thanked the Nagpur Regional Coordinator, Anirudh Jejani for his relentless hardwork, courage to organize this large Youth Conference. The entire Nagpur Youth team, was commended for their perseverance and exhibiting personal sacrifice in organizing this first of its kind Youth Conference in Nagpur.



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Viralbhai's expressed his thoughts-

"The role of the Nagpur team was significant and not mentioning some of them will not do justice to what is been written and shared. Pawan Sarda played an important role in the overall logistics, always willing to help and accommodate. His presence as an Inaugural Speaker and adding value to all the group discussions was appreciated. The visiting team was hosted by him where love and care was prominent. He is one of the pillars along with Sonu and Avinash who helped built the foundation of Nagpur youth conference. Not mentioning the names of others, does not mean that they did not add their bit to build the foundation, presence of every soul was precious and cherished by all."

"The duo team of sister-brother, Anuradha & Anirudh nurtured the thought of organizing the Nagpur youth conference and worked hard for more than a month to make it happen. Under their guidance and leadership Nagpur team rose to the challenge of strengthening their hand and worked hard along with them to make it a reality to host the biggest youth gathering. What surprised me the most was their sincerity and unshakable commitment to make it possible against all odds, one start to realize how easy it is to host a programme at Asia Plateau and how extreme it is in the field, every moment was a challenge and the entire team was constantly firefighting till the moment arrived."



Their home got converted into the youth office and every nick and corner of their home was occupied by a team of thirty five youth volunteers from across the country and this went on for weeks together and peaked few days before the conference. What inspired me the most was to see their generosity and sacrifice which went on and on for days together, which is a rare sight in today's time. They had lost their own space and privacy in their own home and money was spent like flowing water. When the thought was conceived to have a Youth Conference, Anirudh immediately went and booked the auditorium and paid one hundred and ten thousand from his pocket, at this moment not a single participant was registered for the conference, but the enormous amount of faith he carried within him shows dedication towards the youth movement. He moved ahead in faith and left the rest on his hard work and dedicated support from the team, at the end of the Conference he has inherited a huge deficit. I am sure in the



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days to come the team will work hard and see to it all is been taken care off. When you have a team and dedication of such kind the most challenging and difficult goal looks within sight.”

“Life is so simple and can be made happy all the time, but human mind is complex and make the simplest thing look as complicated like maze. Listening to the younger crowd I could sense that they are good in inviting trouble and for no reason making their life complicated and completely diverting themselves from their only goal of studies and career, due to this most of them are mediocre and a huge portion of their mind is occupied by content and material which is not required. I immensely feel there is lack of good educators in the system and the role of parents is over all diluted and coming under the pressure of their own siblings. I do not know what kind of society we are going to create in the next decade but definitely we are ending this Conference with a concern and organization like MRA-IofC will have to work tirelessly to constantly guide the younger generation telling them every moment listen to your inner self closely”



The pursuit of this conference is to encourage young people to live a life which is consistent in all facets of life, and not change as per need and convenience. We will work tirelessly to create benchmark citizens, who will give alternative in thinking to ordinary citizens.