

## An Observation Report of the IofC “Let's Make a Difference” Baramati Youth Conference organized from 14<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> August 2014

The Fifth edition of the Initiatives of Change- Let's Make a Difference Baramati Youth Conference was held at the Agricultural Development Trust in Shardanagar. Over 250 young people from Baramati and its surrounding areas participated in this conference. The main objective of doing a regional conference in Baramati is to continue to spread the teachings of Lmad and also instil a sense of belief in the rural youth that they have a big role to play in the development of the nation and that their world is not limited only to their region (Baramati). The participants are simple young folks who are so down to earth, connected to the soil, self-disciplined and are willing to learn new things. They have always been patient listeners, carrying due respect towards their elders, soberly dressed and they willingly surrendered themselves to the idea which was newly introduced to them. They are not well versed with the latest technology and do not carry a cell phone even in today's environment. It was a beautiful sight to appreciate. They are privileged to be less distracted by the social media, fashion and other artificial beauty and living life in a peaceful environment.

Shri. Rajendra Pawar the President of the Agricultural Development Trust in Shardanagar inaugurated the conference with the traditional lighting of the lamp. The honourable guests included Mr. Abhay Shaha (Successful Architect and social worker), Dr. Sachin Kokane (Eye specialist), Prof. Nitnavare Sir (Training and placement officer, Malegao eng. college, baramati), Adv. Priya Gujar-Mahadik (Successful Advocate and senior Lmad coordinator), Mr. Vipul Shaha (Master in education and senior Lmad coordinator) and Mr. Karan Khalate (Sabhapati, panchayat Samati of Baramati). Lmad coordinator Alok Kakade hosted the evening followed by Nisreen and Bhavana who performed a skit.

In his speech Karan Khalate briefed the participants about IofC-Lmad organization and spoke about his own journey with Lmad since 2011 and the change he had personally experienced in his life by living constantly with the idea. And the same change he wants to see in the people around him and he pledged to help them grow internally to be good human beings. He shared his aspiration to show the people a different and unique way of living a good life and inspire many others by his actions.

Mr. Vipul Shaha shared his experience with Lmad since 2007. He went on to explain that he used to be carried away by foreign culture and was giving less importance to Indian culture, but it was when he got involved with Lmad he realised that he was on the wrong path and he changed his way of living. He emphasised how his Inner Voice had helped him and guided him to reach where he wanted to be. “One should take charge to change her/ his own life” and one should live the life on the basis of morals otherwise we all will become “Machines”. In short surrender yourself completely to the conference.” Priya Gujar who has been involved with Lmad since 1996 stated “You are never too young to be a leader; you need to be the change you want to see in the country”. She spoke about the mindset that one carries

about other on the basis of their appearance and looks. "Instead one should respect the thought and intellectual of the other person and not her/his looks. Sometimes looks are for show off but the real person might be different within. Dare-Dream-Decide-Do".

Mr. Abhay Shaha shared how Lmad has changed his own children (Vipul and Anuj) and encouraged them to help other people. "Be with yourself, do not get carried away by others and act accordingly to be a good representative of the youth." he said. He also expressed that every person is strong to fight if she/he lives her/his life on honesty.

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**The real essence of the conference lies in Quiet Time. The noise level in the cities is at an all-time high and unknowingly we have got used to the noise around us. The rural small towns are in total contrast to the atmosphere in the cities. It is less noisy here. But, even in here, it is important to take time out and listen to ourselves. When the concept was explained to the participants, they were asked to go deep within themselves forgetting the mere existence of things happening around them. One was supposed to be with himself completely and introspect what their conscience wanted to convey and write whatever thoughts and inner guidance they sought in those mesmerising moments of being quite. Later, a session was held on the four absolute pillars of IofC- Purity, Honesty, Unselfishness and Love, by sharing real life stories so that the participants could connect these stories to stories of their life. The importance of getting up early in the morning and adhering to listening to the Inner Voice was also explained. At first, it will be difficult to see our true reflection in the mirror when we first measure ourselves against the four standards. Our ego might stop us from writing but one must overcome her/his ego. An example of Mr. Rusy Lala was shared. Mr Lala used to write his diary every day and on that basis he wrote a book. The participants were encouraged to practice quiet time for at least twenty minutes every morning and that they should eventually make it a habit.**

After couple hours of silence participants were asked to share their experience. A participant shared that she is very talkative and never ever keeps quiet but this quiet time experience meant so much to her and she felt happy about herself. Another participant shared how at home he fights with his parents using foul language, wastes a lot of time doing unwanted activities and also ignores his parent's hard work. He realised that he was wrong in his approach. Emotions rolled over and he decided to be positive in life and decided to work hard to set up his own industry. Another participant who had attended the conference two years ago expressed things that he decided to change and now reflecting on the same, he had successfully achieved many of them. One Participant shared his desire of getting rid of tobacco and to get up early every morning. Few expressed that they had stage fear but their team had given them strength to face it and they were thankful to the local coordinating team for organising this conference.



**Participants having a Quiet time**

There is a saying that “Speech is Silver and Silence is Gold”, “Discipline weighs in Grams and Regret in T tonnes”. One can achieve success through discipline and perseverance. The participants were told not to build their life’s foundation using shortcuts, but on the basis of honesty. With good foundation we can build a strong building. Nowadays many people use shortcuts and SMS language in writing (e.g.-You=u) which is not a good sign. An honest person should always challenge others from being dishonest. The person who fights for good will build a good character.

Purity means being clean and hygienic not in appearance but from inner-self. How one thinks about others. A better question to ask ourselves is “Are we happy from within”? Purity in eyes, thoughts, words and in all respects is important. Our words might hurt others; they might take us away from someone. If our words are sweet and good then we can achieve anything. If your language is pure with your sweet words then all doors will open automatically. We can be impure by vulgarizing what we see with our eyes and ultimately it can go to our mind. Because of the culture in which we have been raised we cannot watch vulgar scenes on television with family but on the other side many youngsters are making bad use of technology by watching “pornography”. An example was shared regarding a boy studying in a school of Bombay where he used to watch pornography spending his pocket money in a net cafe with his friends. He decided to come out of it after getting involved with Lmad and he got courage to tell his

father about this habit. On hearing about this, his father slapped him and got very angry but the next day his father gave him a tight hug and ever since then, father and son share a great bond together.

The convenor gave his own example (regarding unselfishness) about how he was so selfish towards his elder and younger brother and how he troubled them a lot in school and college and home by making them work for him in many ways. He later apologized to both his brothers for ill treating them.

Now days it is very easy to say “I love you”, but carrying love for someone for a reason or condition is not what actual love is. “Can I see anyone with unconditional love”? The convenor further said that IoFC had taught him to love everyone, help others and support our dear ones unconditionally. He gave an example of his maid- she did not know what pizza is! One day he called her home as a guest and ordered pizza and coca cola and asked her to sit on the dining table. She was so overwhelmed with emotions that she could not take a bite because of the love and respect he showered on her which she had never seen and felt before.

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Another session was conducted around the important elements of life such as health, career, relationship and wealth creation. At this young age students should give utmost priority to career and work hard to reach their desired goal. If you can work hard for this crucial four years in life then for the next forty years one can lead a great comfortable life otherwise one has to struggle for forty years to create her/his life. It can make you or break you forever. So one needs to decide and take baby steps accordingly. There is no shortcut to success. Daily consistent actions lead to staggering positive results. One needs to nurture a hobby which will help her/him busy during old age. The participants were told to always be open in life to learn new things. Rural folks should not feel shy looking at other children from city because of their cloths, language and attitude which they carry, behind that there is nothing, it is just like a show off that they are adopting western culture which Gramin people are spared of. One can see the real Bharat in rural people as they are hardworking and sustain our culture. Participants were encouraged to keep high goals while starting with small jobs. An example of Shawn Farnandes has given- who after attended Nagpur Youth Conference five years ago. And while setting his goals, he had decided to join the National Defence Academy and now he is a Cadet and is on his way to become an Army Officer. This was his achievement.

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**Participants listening to a session in progress**

Later, everyone wrote a “Positive Commitment” on a chit of paper and committed themselves to do it once they went back to their homes. Moving ahead we had Debate on the issue of “Caste Reservation” for which an example of Dhangar Samaj (Farmers of Maharashtra) was given. On 14<sup>th</sup> August 2014 they damaged busses and blocked many roads. Everyone was found to be expressing their feelings on social networking sites but no one took the challenge to stop it practically. Every Indian can make her/his point but not this way, but by the way of peace. Because of this the workers who work on a daily basis go home empty handed. In Lmad everyone from different castes and backgrounds come together and work for a cause. Today our country is independent because of “Satyagraha” but what are we doing now? We are fighting amongst ourselves only. Some participants expressed their thoughts as follows-

- 1) With violence we cannot achieve anything.
  - 2) Don't fight as a caste but fight together as human beings
  - 3) Togetherness is our power.
  - 4) We can achieve everything through hard work and perseverance.
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We asked everyone if there was any question about “caste” in the application form. They all said that they did not find a question pertaining to “Caste. Even while sitting next to each other, each participant only asked the other person’s name and home town and not her/his caste. The participants also appreciated the fact that the fees for the conference was equal for everyone.

One participant expressed his thoughts and said that it has been sixty seven years since India became an independent country but as a country we have not been able to grow because of our internal differences.

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We always try to show ourselves to be presentable from outside, but what is within us is not reciprocated. Ego is a major roadblock and the more we listen to our ego, the more destructive our thoughts and actions become. The convenor shared how he cheated an airline company by asking them more money for his few lost things. A young girl shared that she never wrote down her bad deeds but this time she wrote it on paper and realised her bad behaviour which she decided to change henceforth. One shared his experience of getting extra money from office but how he had returned that extra money back. A young boy shared that even after getting involved with Lmad since 2012, few days ago he cheated his mother for money and also cheated a man at a hotel by not paying his bill regularly. But when that man needed money for his mother’s treatment, he rose to the occasion and apologized to him for what he did. All this he could do because he was governed with his conscience after being associated with Lmad. Many of them realised their mistakes about using bad words to others, cheating parents, getting jealous of others, troubling their siblings and lying for their own convenience. They promised to apologise to the people who have been hurt because of them and also forgive others who have wronged them.

Family is a powerful word in all respect and we all are a part of a family. We are known by our family name and our actions are mostly revealed by the way we have been brought up and raised our parents. In Lmad we all live like one large family and share a deep bond based on the teachings and quiet time. It is seen that people belonging to a different age spectrum have become cold to their family members or take them for granted at times. Family session is the crux of the conference. It started with a skit portraying a practical example of a girl behaving rudely to her grandmother, cheating her parents by telling lies, spending more time with friends and giving less importance to career.

One of them shared about his mother who has recently recovered from “Cancer” and how GOD in HIS own way created an opportunity for him to take care of his mother and help her recover soon. One of them shared that she was not talking to her brother for many days just because she feels jealous of him and decided that after going back she would apologize and not fight with him anymore. Others shared that henceforth they would care for their parents and would touch their feet everyday. Many participants shared that they lied in front of their parents and also spent money on other activities which was of less significance. The entire session turned out to be very powerful. Almost everyone got emotional and their heart went back to their family and loved ones. After expressing their thoughts and pouring out their emotions, they felt light from within and this session left a great impact on the minds of young people. They also contemplated on the steps they would take to bridge the gap with their family members that has come over a long period of time.

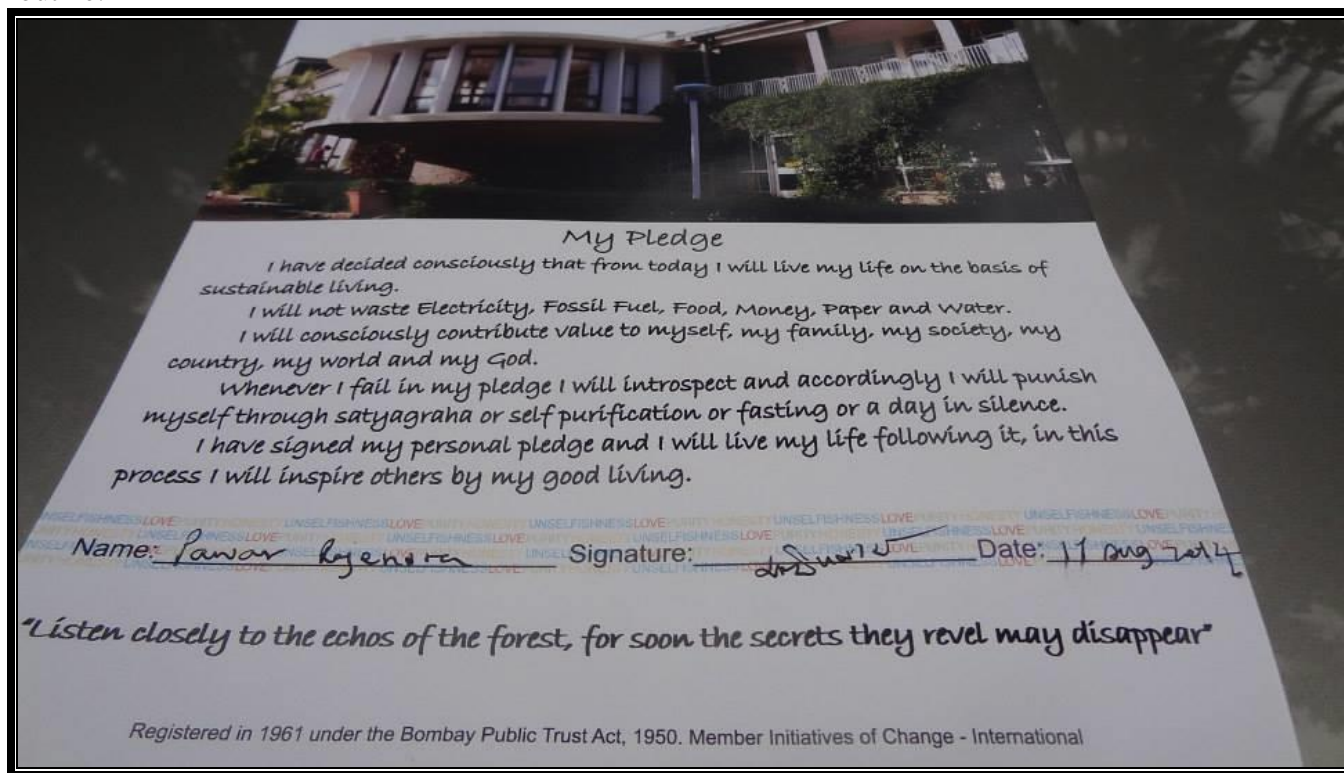
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A session was conducted on Mind, Ego and Conscience. Our conscience easily gets controlled by our mind. But listening to our conscience is more important than listening to our mind. Live examples were given and the significance of the role of each of them was explained. The participants were asked not to allow their mind to control them, instead they should give instructions to their mind. After getting connected to the idea, many participants shared their thoughts. A young girl who was not interested in writing a diary earlier had realised the importance and gave her commitment to write everyday. A young boy shared that in two days he realised how he had troubled his father all this while and he would make sure that he wouldn't repeat his mistakes again.

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Mr. Rajendra Pawar (Chairman of the Agricultural Trust of Baramati) and Mr. Rohit Pawar (CEO of Baramati Agro. Ltd Co.) joined us for the session where Mr. Rohit also felt connected with the youth by listening to their stories and he recalled his old memories. He emphasized that the most important thing in life is "Time"; and once it goes it will never come back. "At times we do take our parents for granted and spend more time with friends, which is wrong, respect your family and give them priority. Hard work always leads to success" he added. Mr. Rajendra Pawar expressed his willingness to take the Baramati Youth Conference to the national and international level for more than thousands of students. He asked everyone to take maximum advantage of this conference and not let it go after going back to their daily routine.



**The pledge signed by Shri Rajendra Pawar**

Participant were asked to share their journey for last four days how they felt and their take-away from the conference to which participants expressed that in the conference whatever they have shared they will share the same heart to heart with their family and ensure to have a deeper bond with their closed ones. A

boy said that he is feeling so happy from within about realising his mistakes and decided to work on it. Few of them expressed that they have left their ego and will move ahead with smile, they liked the concept of quite time and they will continue this even after going back. They poured their heart out concluding that Lmad has shown them a path to lead a graceful and honourable life and has added sugar in the life of many.

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The conference is a serious affair and before-hand the enrolled participants are sensitized about what is expected from each individual and what will be delivered during the four day journey. Discipline, punctuality, willingness to participate, respect towards elders, unconditional surrendering to new learning and embracing people from diverse background of the society is expected from them. During the entire conference there is ban on all electronic gadgets and every participant has to earn his/her certificate of participation by adhering to the Do's and Don'ts in good faith. At the end of the conference if someone is not satisfied or not convinced with the idea and seeks a refund of the contribution made, then without any questions asked, the organisers will refund the amount. But all the participants left the hall with a sense of satisfaction and a smile on their face. They were ready to enter the new era of life with absolute clarity of mind and were willing to accept the challenges and bottlenecks coming on their way during the course of their chosen path. They committed themselves to rise and lift themselves to connect with the higher force and in the process include and inspire many others through their good living and character.



**The Coordinating Team of the Baramati Youth Conference.**