

LET'S MAKE A DIFFERENCE DECEMBER WORKSHOP **REPORT 2016**

As we grow up and shoulder responsibility of earning, raising a family and building a strong nation, we miss out on many intangible aspects of life. For decades we have been constantly on the move, without sparing time to nourish our soul. Once there was a Arab man who was travelling to a big city. He boarded a caravan that was to set off onto the journey through the desert. He sat on his camel like many other merchants did. The man pulled out a book and a reed from his purse and started writing in it. As the caravan moved slowly through the desert an old merchant seated on the camel next to the man was looking at him with a keen eye. After a long time he could not resist himself and he asked the man what was he writing for so long? The man replied, " I am writing my thoughts on purpose of life." His answer baffled the old man. He exclaimed, "I have walked this earth for 60 years now, but I never thought about my purpose of living."

Such is the story of most of us. We get caught in our daily chores to such an extent that we ignore the fact of having a higher purpose of life. It becomes necessary, to lower the anchors and slow down and reflect on the path we walked and the path that lies ahead. With the objective to discover ourselves and see our true nature by diving deep within by discipline and regular practice of quiet time for long hours, ten participants of varying age group and different walks of life arrived at Asia Plateau, Panchgani to be a part of the December workshop

The December workshop is organized at Asia Plateau for many years. Unlike the National Youth Conference, participants in December workshop are invited for the attending the workshop. This year the workshop held from 28th December 2016 to 2nd January 2017. The participants who are invited are a part of the larger LMAD family and

been to the National Youth conference. Hence, they are well aware of the principles of IoFC – purity, honesty, unselfishness and love, and the concept of quiet time. These participants have experienced the power of being connected with one's conscience and also been through the cycle of rectification and repentance. An important reason for doing quiet time is to move beyond the circle of rectification and evolve as a human. In the December workshop one gets to dive deep in and search the answers one seeks. Through this workshop one connects deeply with the conscience and experiences clarity regarding life and its meaning like never before.

Day 1 | 28th Dec 2016

The day begins early at 6:30am. Early mornings are most preferred time for effective quiet time. The fresh surrounding complements the freshness of body and mind so that one can connect with the conscience in the silence of the early mornings. The day began with quiet time followed with quick sharing. The participants shared about the reason of choosing to come back to AP. Many past experiences were also shared. When it comes to living in the fast, unforgiving world we usually miss out on the connection with the conscience and get lost in the frenzy. It is here when we pick up bad habits, vices, grudges and prejudice. Procrastination and inefficiency in work becomes a part of our modus operandi. The workshop directs towards evolving as a human being for which it is necessary that we get out from the cycle of mistakes and rectification. It is only then can we strongly focus all our will into evolving and taking our life to the next level.

Post breakfast all the participants had focused their quiet time around 2 simple questions – What am I searching in Life and am I evolving or not? The mere openness of the question makes it difficult to think about. Most of our life gets shaped by the career we choose, the

people that surround us and the material possessions we own. We usually make our goals - materialistic or success-oriented the center of our lives and lose the essence of living. It is necessary that we understand what governs our life. As rightly said by APJ Abdul Kalam - **Having wrong aspiration or no aspirations is as good as committing spiritual suicide.** Most of people around us are not aware of their purpose in life. They are ignorant of the fact that when their time comes, many great aspects of their character, abilities and personality dies along with them without being explored for the greater good. This isn't a short term process and will go on, evolve and change with age and experiences. It is like diving deep into the ocean of our conscience and discovering valuable pearls. The dive is tiring but is always worth it.

Day 2 | 29th Dec 2016

The day began early at 6:30am. With previous day's sharing and interaction everyone was on the same page. When a group of people come together for a common cause, their thoughts need to work together for enriching and lifting everyone to the next level. With everyone assembled in the Australia room the quiet time started with a single thought in our mind - to list down all the good memories and achievement in our life. Since our childhood we have been challenging our abilities and growing through the experiences. Every person has a vivid memory of their achievement small or big. Listing them and writing them down helps us in many ways. They bring back our lost capabilities and dreams. With the ever growing work responsibilities we tend to fill our mind with thoughts of work and responsibilities and forget things we aspired to do. Our life is made of all the happy moments. This exercise showed us the long list of things each one of us

had accomplished. These happy moments have shaped our life and kept us motivated to achieve more.

Post lunch, the participants shared their experiences and happy moments. The next step towards evolving is to know ourselves as we are. To remove any bad habit or solve any personal problem it becomes necessary that we reach its root and identify it. **Our life is an outcome of the decisions we make.** Our good qualities, bad habits and beliefs make our character. To know oneself is to identify character traits by reflecting on the decisions we make when we stood at crossroads in our past and make an honest effort in understanding our bad habits and also our strengths. It also gives us a clear picture of where we stand in course of our life. Every participant reflected on the question at a deeper level and tried to understand who they really think they were. They realized that usually like most people they too were used to wearing masks for concealing their characters when they were with people and let their surrounding govern their reactions.

The spectrum encompassed the aspect of moving our focus from I to WE. To do so it is necessary to be satisfied mentally. An unsatisfied mind won't think of anything other than its own needs. We strive hard to get appraisals from our peers at work, ignoring the fact that it is necessary that we are happy and satisfied with our work instead of asking for appreciation. **It is necessary to strive for excellence in whatever we do.**

Day 3 | 30th Dec 2016

We are halfway through the workshop. Till now all the participants are well aware of their vices, their strengths and also their weaknesses. They have reflected upon their search and also their path towards evolving

into their better self. Every person has different capacity of working and varying levels of intellect. But time is the only thing that is equal for all of us and it is the way we use time decides our modus operandi. Many of our habits and character traits have their roots in the way we manage ourselves. Through a small exercise we saw that most of our time is unproductive and gets wasted. We end up procrastinating or providing a sub-standard work only due to bad management of time.

Time management is not about managing time, instead it is about managing our daily activities with conscious efforts. It is to nurture our passion for providing excellence in whatever we do because the way we do anything is the way we do everything. It is necessary that we are constantly conscience driven while we make minor decisions in daily chores because later the habits that we develop in handling our daily work plays an important role when we reach important crossroads of our life. This sharing played a crucial role in the entire workshop because we can easily connect the dots when it comes to between our bad habits and way we manage ourselves.

Post lunch the day moved forward with a questions put to us – what I want to be? Most of the decisions in our life are made based on the situations we face. These decisions could have been different and better had they been reflected upon earlier in our life. Most of the people let their lives be governed by external factor but their own conscience and end up living a mediocre life. They fail in pushing themselves hard enough as they are not clear on the direction to focus their energy in. Clarity on what one exactly wants keeps us from straying from our path and also gives a goal to reach to, radar in our life. To evolve as a person we need to fix realistic goals and face the obstacles and uncertainties with an open mind. In our life there are no choices but decisions and consequences of them.

'Life is filled with sorrow and pain and nobody however saintly, will ever escape it. But it is only the will to keep fighting back and struggling for those moments of happiness will be able to keep going.'

Day 4 | 31st Dec 2016

Today's quiet time was connected with the sharing of the previous days. Till now, we were all aware of who we are, what are our drawbacks and our strengths and also our aspirations. But dreams without execution are as wild flowers, they bloom and wither away. So it is necessary that we plan a path we need to follow to achieve our dreams. It is necessary to constantly live with that thought we have of the goals we want to achieve. The participants during the quiet time made a roadmap of how they will achieve their goals regarding health, finance, education and spirituality. They realize that the answers to most of their questions lie within their conscience and they need to train their mind to be conscience driven to achieve their goals. It is unto us how we find those answer and use them to our benefit. The quiet time followed by sharing by all the participants.

Post tea all the participants walked to the Sydney point to witness the last sunset of 2016. They had written many negative thoughts and events that had happened in their past on a sheet of paper. They burnt all the negative aspects of their life and decided to start the new- year with a fresh perspective of life. At midnight all the participants gathered at the library to sit still and feel the passing moment of the final minutes of the year. They celebrated the moment by being in peace with their self unlike the usual chaos that was happening outside the room. They lite candles and brightened the room and prayed for their loved ones.



In pic: Bidding goodbye to the last sunset of 2016 at Sydney Point, Panchgani

Day 5 | 1st Jan

The first day of 2017 began with a short quiet time and the participants gathered early at the playground to welcome the rising sun. They silently prayed and witnessed a beautiful sunrise. With the rising sun, entered rays of hope and promise into each one's life. They day began with an extempore talk given by every participant regarding the take away from the workshop.

The workshop gave us insights that it is very important to manage our work habits to achieve success in whatever we do; To be conscience driven and empathetic towards people around us and to manage our emotional outbursts in order to keep peace of one's mind is the virtue of a strong willed person; To believe that with hard-work and perseverance one can go beyond competition; and raise the bar of performance and excel in every walk of life.

Day 6 | 2nd Jan

The workshop officially ended with a brief sharing done by every participant. Many young men and women come to Asia Plateau year after year in hope to find answers to their questions, to spend time getting to know themselves better and reflect upon their wrong doings; the only way to make a difference is by having an Asia plateau within ones heart.



Participants of the December workshop 2016