

Let's Make a Difference Youth Conference – June 1 - 8, 2012

I would like to start this report by reproducing few paragraphs from the book *Frank Buchman – a life by Garth Lean* (1985, London @ page 133):

Some of the new converts set about recruiting their friends (and enemies) with extreme ardour; others displayed a nonchalance bordering on indifference. 'I used to play very second-rate golf with a theological student called Chutter,' says Alan Thornhill, then studying at Wycliffe Hall. 'He was a very undisciplined fellow, but suddenly he started getting up early in the morning, so I asked what happened to him.

' "Oh, he said, in a very off-hand sort of way, "I met some interesting people."

' "Well, who are they?" I asked.

' "They're just a bunch of fellows around the university who're putting Christianity into practice."

' "Are others permitted to meet these mysterious people?" I said."

' "I'm not sure," said Chutter, "but I'll find out." Well, of course, that aroused my curiosity and, the next time I saw him, I asked if his friends had decided whether they'd deign to have me. "Yes," he said, "come tomorrow", so I went to a meeting after lunch in the library of the University Church, St Mary's. 'It was rather a plus-fours gathering,' recalls Thornhill, 'and one or two of them were already in rowing gear. I'd met Christians who button-holed you, but this wasn't like that all. They struck me as being very normal bunch and they talked about God and their own experience in a most natural way, with humour and honesty.

"At that point, of course, I hadn't even heard of Buchman's existence. Certainly nobody mentioned him at the meeting. Then I was invited to another meeting and there were thirty or so people there.

'Somebody suggested we all had a quiet time, but the idea of listening to God was a novelty to me and, when it came to my turn to speak, I hadn't the remotest idea what to say. So I told them that I'd been to the New theatre night before with a Chinese student. It was a rather seedy revue and he was a bit embarrassed by the Chorus girls. I felt rotten afterwards, because he'd obviously not liked it. "Now, what is the right Christian thing to do in such circumstances?" I said – trying to start off an intellectual discussion in the approved Oxford style.

'A voice from somewhere behind me piped up and said, "And what did yer do?"

'I'd no idea who'd said it, but it pricked the bubble and went to the heart of the matter. "Well, nothing, as a matter of fact," I said, feeling rather uncomfortable.

'Then Buchman, because that's who it was, told a light theatrical story to put me at my ease. "But think," he added what a force for God the theatre could be in the world!" He was brisk and trim, with rimless glasses and tweed suit, and he was very obviously American.

4th June 2012: Guest speaker Dr. E. Ramesh Kumar, IAS

Presentation by Dr. Kumar's received a mixed response. Majority of people didn't quite understand the message embedded in his presentation. Dr. Kumar tried to motivate the youth to take initiatives to change the society. The youth can begin these initiatives more easily if they are able to found some common ground between personal and social goals.

The process of this initiative of change should begin with finding one's objective of life. Dr. Kumar showed how he found his objective of life in educating, empowering and generating employment for people in his district. His objective of life gelled well with his job as an officer of the Indian Administrative Service.

He substantiated the feasibility of his arguments by giving examples from his work life like effectiveness of mid-day meal program in retaining children in school; how giving bicycle to girl children motivated parents to send their daughters to school; training of 5th to 8th standard educated youth in tailoring and getting them employed with help of some like minded corporate groups; and training 12th pass youth for armed force and other services.

Dr. Kumar also stressed upon the importance of good governance, delivery of services and rule of law in making India a better place. He wound-up his presentation by giving following message to the youth:

‘Create as if you’re creating for the eternity. Create at the speed as if you’re going to die tomorrow.’

5th June 2012: Guest speaker Mr. Pawan Sarda on Seventh Sense

Mr. Sarda's presentation in the simplest possible terms explained the science behind memory and concentration. He used sand, water and flour to demonstrate how mind works and how information are stored by human mind and how best to utilize our mind. He also explained the necessity of developing our other faculties viz. right brain by doing things and developing hobbies that require use of left hand like playing some musical instrument requiring extensive use of left hand.

Mr. Sarda made his presentation lively with interesting anecdotes and quotes. His presentation was much liked by every one of the participants. He wound-up his presentation by following messages to the youth:

- It's not the road ahead that is tough but it's the pebble in the shoe.
- Use it or lose it (your mind).
- Live your life like a dustbin and a sponge.
- Be helpful yet grateful.
- Humility separates greatness and goodness.
- Everybody deserves you and your best.

Participant's familiarity with PHUL

After 5 days of the youth conference, I had observed that the majority of the participants (including a few refreshers) were not fully conversed with the four principles of purity, honesty, unselfishness and love (PHUL). Their quiet time notings in most of the cases were like ruminations or a random recollection of events like that of Thornhill's quoted in the above passage from FB's biography.

Most of the time young people have very different and perhaps small problems compared to an adult viz. anxiety of being recognized, to be loved, success in examinations, relationships with parents and siblings and with teachers. They were quiet at loss in applying the above principles of PHUL to make decisions and resolve problems arising in their life.

I was wondering whether it would be possible to design some comprehension exercise where participants would be required to read an article involving problem typical to lives of youth, followed by questionnaire to evaluate how one would take a right decision while still sticking to PHUL.
