

### Let's make a difference (2001)

The conference was inaugurated by Madhu Dandavate, a ex-member and minister of Lok Sabha. While lighting the lamp he mentioned, "I wish to light a flame in every young heart present here." He spoke to the gathering on issues of relevance of the Mahatma's teachings in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and Parliamentary institutions and processes. "In present time most of the parliamentary proceedings are unparliamentary". He made a reference to Gandhi's human touch like when Bapu visited Champaran how he was touched by the heart-rending report about the women there and steeled not to rest till their honour was restored.

The theme of the conference was *Let's Make A Difference* in our lives and bring change. The conference revolved around the idea of quiet time and looking within. This led to a moving session on family, which was triggered by the sharing during the morning sessions. Few participants shared their grief of losing their loved ones and not making the most of the time while they were around. Today when they want to be with them all they have is their memories. To many of them honesty did not exist and their lives were based on lies. Due to this they had lost complete confidence in themselves and the trust of their family and friends.

Realisation came in the form of "I hated my father since childhood but in my time of silence I could see my fathers love through that hate." One girl said, "My father lives in a different city and I meet him once in two years. He has taken care of all our needs and desires but still I hate him. I don't know why? I am still looking for an answer to this hate which might be due to my mother's relation with my father." Another group of young people who had come with an intention to have fun in a hill-station and enjoy with their girlfriends, with passing of time they realised that their real motive in life is to be a responsible human being. They promised to take initiative to bring change in their lives. A youth coming here for the past four years expressed his intense hate and anger towards his immediate family. He said that in all these years he had gathered hate for them. But by listening to his inner voice he understood that by hating he had earned nothing but loneliness and he was made to understand that why not make a new attempt by loving people? Every young heart and mind had tears and their pain was expressed through their eyes. At the end of the session even nature couldn't control itself and came down pouring heavily!

For the first time in the youth conference a group of teachers from *Art of Living* were invited to conduct a workshop on meditation, *Pranayam*, *Sudarshan Kriya* etc. Emphasis was on learning to be with oneself and with others in harmony. The founder of *Art of Living* believes in winning people through unconditional love, which also matches with the philosophy of *Moral Re-Armament*.

Rajendra Singh, the founder of *Tarun Bharat Sangh* in Rajasthan, addressed the gathering and expressed about how he had been considered as good-for-nothing by his father but he always had a deep desire to prove how one human being can bring a difference in lives of many people. He also said, "All I have done to change the lives of people is take a leaf out of Bapu's life. I draw inspiration from Bapu. The work, which we have done in all these years to transform their land and lives, recharge their rivers and make the *Arawallis* smile was just by watering their roots. The result is people's initiative and credit goes to every villager and every individual."

Rajit Kapur, the well-known actor who acted the role of Gandhi in *Making of Mahatma*, telling us about his experiences while making this film said, "This role was meant for someone else and was not going to come to me. But after I got it the only thing I did was read '*My Experiments with Truth*', and saw a lot of documentaries to imitate Gandhi's fast-paced walk. While shooting the satya-grah walk there was an article about it in the South-African newspaper requesting Indians to participate in it. People responded in great numbers. After completion the film was premiered in South Africa and all the Indian South Africans present were moved immensely by it because they could identify themselves as one of the sathya-grahies." He also expressed that he was in trance when he had to shave off his head where the movie required and what an auspicious moment it was for him and the whole unit. There was complete silence throughout that part of the shooting. He had also resolved to remain a vegetarian during the shooting of the whole movie.

The feeling of fellowship and bonding was on the fore in the last day when everyone expressed their gratitude for the friendships that they build here. Like every good thing has to come to an end I had to bid the participants goodbye inspite of their wish to stay back for a few more days by paying a little extra!

- Viral Mazumdar