World Interfaith Harmony Week 2019 Report

The World Interfaith Harmony Week concept for the Euphrates Institute Kolkata – India Chapter for the year 2019 was woven around the idea of connecting people from across different religious backgrounds and cultures to initiate a sense of community based on our common humanity. There was thus a community dialogue organized by the members where people of different religious affiliations like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism were present and the facilitators Libby and Len Traubman facilitated the dialogue all the way from San Mateo, California to give people a taste of getting to know the “other”. The reflection point for the Dialogue was “What does your tradition teach you about treating the other?” The outcome was truly transformative as participants walked away having made new friends across identity labels and religious affiliations and admitted to having experienced deep transformation in terms of learning to empathise with people from other religious backgrounds, thus humanizing the “other”.

The event was organized at a local community member’s home. There were approximately 25 participants and though of a small scale, the chapter managed to connect the local community with participants like Miss Aditi( journalist) and Libby and Len Traubman ( facilitators) from around the world. Within the community, there were people from various organizations such as Indian Pluralism Foundation, Susamskar Foundation, Center for Peace and Spirituality and United Religions Initiative. It was a gathering which brought together people to connect individually at a personal level, at the community level and at the level of organizations. The chapter had organized refreshments and basic set up of computer, speaker, camera and a small stall of religious literature for distribution belonging to different faith traditions. The event was organized without any external funding support and the organizers were primarily students from universities and students engaged in voluntary work.

The week was concluded with a walk to religious places of worship across the city and meetings with religious leaders (see YouTube video) who were introduced to the idea of community dialogues and encouraged to host them across the city. They were also encouraged to speak from their traditions about interfaith harmony and respond to the need to acknowledge and respect differences while focusing on the common grounds.