



Testimonials from Attendees of “An Interfaith Seminar”

**“Vaishnav Jan To Tene Kahiye, An Interfaith Bhajan,
Mahatma Gandhi, An Interfaith Prophet.”**


**On Saturday, February 23rd, 2019
At Jewish Temple Tikvah
New Hyde park NY**



WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK



The Official UN Observance in the 1st Week of February



**PARLIAMENT
OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS**

1.

Dear Dr. Bhalodkar

I thank you, Dr. Bhadra Shah, and all of the conference organizers for highlighting the Parliament of the World's Religions at your event.

I was pleased to see how well attended it was, and to observe the audience attentively listening to all of the speakers. Such dialogic engagement helps to increase our understanding and respect for communities of faith, and this on the ground work with local stakeholders are valuable stepping stones toward promoting harmony among religions globally.

My deepest appreciation to you and Dr. Bhadra Shah for the invitation to attend your uplifting, and inspiring event.

May it continue to ignite the hearts of compassion, caring and understanding of all those who attended that they in turn, may ignite the hearts of all those whose lives they touch.

Warmest regards,

**Audrey Kitagawa, Chair
Parliament of the World's Religions**

**A follow up email of
Audrey Kitagawa, Chair
Parliament of the World's Religions**

Dear Dr. Bhalodkar,

Thank you for your email. It is wonderful to see how the event on Saturday has already brought forth great interest and increased participation by the attendees.

I am very happy to learn that four different organizations have invited to conduct same seminar in Tri-state area.

More stepping stones moving us all toward the global goal!

I am most grateful to you, Dr. Bhadra Shah and all of the conference organizers and participants for their role in making this a reality.

Warmest regards,

Audrey

2.

Dear Dr. Bhalodkar,

I want to express my gratitude for your invitation and for the inspiring program you put together. It left me re-inspired by the extraordinary life and work of Gandhiji. I've seen the movie many times, read biographies of the Great Soul and always admired his work and temperament. I learned new information and reinforced what I'd learned before.

I hope that we can be part of similar events in the future. We are convinced that the Parliament needs frequent events of the caliber of yours on Saturday. With profound thanks and

In Solidarity for Peace, Justice, and Compassion,

Bruce Knotts Trustee, Parliament of the World's Religions

**Bruce Knotts | Director | United Nations
Office | International**



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"We need not think alike, to love alike." -- Ferenc David (often rendered "Francis David"), founder of the Unitarian Church of Transylvania, 1565

3.

Dear Dr. Bhalodkar,

On behalf of Parliament of the world's Religions, UN initiative of WIHW and John Templeton foundation I thank you all from bottom of my heart to support our efforts to make the world more just, sustainable and peaceful place to live for ALL.

This was one of the best interfaith dialogues I ever had witnessed. Dr. Bhalodkar put up his best to make this possible and all others pitch in to do their best. I enjoyed meeting old friends and great new friends and receiving heartfelt hugs from many. I am looking forward to meet all of you again in near future and continue our work to break walls of hate, violence, war, injustice and selfishness and promote just, sustainable and peaceful world.

I request you all to become Member of Parliament of the world's religions as individual or as organization. Please see attached information. If you need any further information please feel free to contact me.

With Reverence and love,

Bhadra Shah, MD
Vice-Chair & Co-chair of Dev. Co.
Parliament of The World's Religions

Follow up email from Dr. Bhadra shah

I was happy to learn that with grace of GOD you have 4 offers for interfaith programs for future. Your expertise and enthusiasm are superb. Your real reward is in impact on people created by such programs and changes it makes in their lives.

Dr. Bhadra Shah

4.

Dear Dr. Narendra Bhalodkar,

To keep spirit alive of Gandhi, one of the greatest human being in our history is a laudable act.

It becomes almost incumbent upon all peace loving, nonviolence promoters to do something to memorialize him, above and beyond during Gandhi - 150 , 150th birth anniversary celebrations from October 2, 2018 to October 2, 2019. In that spirit one of the great events was organized by Dr. Bhalodkar on Saturday February 23, 2019 at a Jewish Temple Tikwah in New Hyde Park Long Island.

The beauty of the event was weaving a tapestry of many faiths, Gandhi's favorite hymn, high tech audio video, Parliament of World Religions and United Nations which has declared first week of February as World Interfaith Harmony Week(WIHW) and Gandhi's birthday October 2 as International Day of Nonviolence.

- Someone who as a Main Representative of ANUVIBHA , UN NGO and a Board Member of RFP – USA had a pleasure to participate at the inaugural of WIHW at the UN General Assembly Hall;
- one, who as a Chairman of Long Island Multi Faith Forum since inception in 1995 knows difficulties of bringing faiths together on a single platform and

Having gone through above experiences, I must take my hats off to Dr. Bhalodkar for rounding up noted speakers of Buddhist, Christian, Hindu (four of them), Islam, Jain, Jewish, and Unitarian Universalists, planning two hours of program and keeping almost 200 people in spell binding attentive status.

His genius is in coming up with a topic that is not only non-controversial but almost universally liked – characteristics and traits of a benevolent person as described in a Gandhi's favorite hymn that he sang at every prayer service.

I am a perfectionist and you exceeded all my expectations.

Please continue conducting similar high-quality interfaith seminars as per your announcement at the event.

Arvind Vora is affiliated with many organizations

**Founder and Chairman of Long Island Multi Faith Forum
Main Representative of UN NGO ANUVIBHA**

Founder of SHANTI FUND (Mahatma Gandhi)
Board Member of Long Island Council of Churches
Board Member of American Red Cross

5.

The organizer and moderator **Dr. Narendra Bhalodkar** did a fabulous job in arranging this program. It was truly informative, impactful and spiritually uplifting. Different speakers focused on various aspects of Gandhiji's personality and his interfaith beliefs and practice.

Prof. Faroque Ahmad Khan, MB, MACP
Director IMANA International Collaboration
Chairman Interfaith Institute Board

Imam Khalid S Lateef and Dr. Yousuf Syeed from IFI board

6.

We thoroughly enjoyed the interfaith presentation organized by **Dr. Narendra C Bhalodkar** on 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. It surely must have been an enormous task to selectively pick up excerpts of milestones in the Mahatma's struggle for preaching "Non-Violence"

It was illuminating to listen to leaders from all major religions discuss their faith, belief and devotion towards God and humility and peace for all on earth.

It is interesting to know that the person in question - **Associate Professor Narendra C Bhalodkar** who from 1982 to 1991 had a significant influence in my life as a mentor - teacher during my

residency and fellowship in Cardiology also has this unfathomable wealth of knowledge in multiple religious faiths of us all human beings at large with an unrelenting passion for universal peace and harmony.

God Bless Him.

Reminds me of couplet in Urdu which signifies my admiration for Dr. Bhalodkar - Teacher, Mentor, Colleague and a Friend

Teray qadmo mey sir hoga

تیرے قدموں میں سر ہوگا

Qaza sir par khari hogi

قضا سر پر کھری ہوگی

Wallah, kya bandagi hogi!

واللہ کیا بندگی ہوگی



Munir A Shikari, MD,
President, Hudson Valley Cardiologists, P. C.
Mrs. Gulzar M. Shikari
Newburgh, New York

7.

Dear Dr. Narendra Bhalodkar

I can't thank you enough for holding your interfaith seminar at Temple Tikvah. At Temple Tikvah we pride ourselves on being a warm inviting, and inclusive community. It was our utmost honor and pleasure to host the interfaith seminar during world interfaith harmony week, in conjunction with the Parliament of world religions.

As I was watching throughout the program, I couldn't help but feel that all of us, the wonderful speakers, the director of the program, Dr. Narendra Bhalodkar, and the guests who attended were part of something much larger than ourselves.

I am convinced that we must continue to hold each other and each other's beliefs close at heart with all the respect and honor that we give to our own beliefs and traditions. I absolutely felt transformed that day as I realized that we were achieving something wonderful and very spiritual as we came together in unity and peace.

Shari Rotstein, President Jewish Temple Tikvah

8.

Dear Dr. Bhalodkar,

We were so fortunate to have attended your inter-faith seminar: “Vaishnav Jan To Tene Kahiye - An Inter-Faith Bhajan-Mahatma Gandhi-An Inter-Faith Prophet” on Saturday, February 23, 2019 at Temple Tikvah in New Hyde Park, N.Y.

The Parliament of World Religions honed in a vital topic area, to implement inter-faith programming. Your seminar took that theme and superbly delivered.

It was a true pleasure to hear from leaders of different religious organizations under one roof echoing the same ultimate goal, to reach peace and harmony using different paths. In these days of utter chaos, violence, and hatred, this seminar was exemplary and

crucial to developing not only a better understanding of one another but also one of mutual respect.

Your audio-visual presentation was superb and rightfully conveyed the message from the Bhajan that we are ALL are children of same God and as such we should be kind, compassionate and respectful of each other.

If only we can have more similar seminars, world would be just, peaceful and sustainable.

We congratulate you for formulating, researching, and carrying out this incredible program with the vital message that we are all one people.

Kudos to you!

Sincerely,

Dr. Saroj Shah, Obstetrics and Gynecology

Dr. I. C. Shah, Surgical attending

Advisory Board Members, Aarti Foundation (NGO), Floral Park, NY

Founding Members, Indian Initiative at Parker-Jewish Institute of Health Care and Rehabilitation and, New Hyde Park, NY

9.

Dear Dr. Narendrabhai,

First, I want to thank you for inviting us to Inter faith Seminar. Although I have been living in USA for fifty years, it was my first experience attending this type of gathering and what a wonderful experience it was for my wife and me!

This was truly a cooperative, constructive and positive interaction between people of different faiths like Hindu, Jain, Islam, Christian, Judaism, UU Congregation and last but not least Buddhism. All the speakers were very articulate in conveying inter faith message.

What a wonderful way to connect all the faiths through Pu. Mahatma Gandhi's favorite Bhajan "Vaishnava Jana". Pu. Gandhiji himself was a firm believer and champion of Inter faith dialogue. By using the essence of this bhajan each distinguish speaker was able to find a common ground and proved that every faith preaches the same principals and ways of life. The paths are different but the ultimate goal is the same.

I think this seminar really did achieve its goal in building communication and understanding among interfaith organizations and diverse religious groups.

We are mesmerized every time we attend your presentation no matter what topic it is, by the depth of your knowledge on diverse topics and your uncanny ability to make it very interesting with all the presentation skills you have. The slide presentations, video, Music presentations were par excellence!

We thoroughly enjoy the event. I am hoping you can continue promoting the inter faith movement through offering seminars in future. Thank you again and wish you all the Best!

Best Regards,

Harish & Dr. Nayana Parekh

Harish Parekh

Sr. VP Finance-CFO

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10.

Dear Narendra,

Thank you very much for your kind invitation to attend an outstanding program. For me, it was clearly an eye opener and more importantly leading towards stronger interfaith beliefs and regards.

The organization of the symposium was extraordinary, and you did a fantastic job as a leader.

Once again, congratulations for a job well done and I look forward to seeing you in future meetings.

Sincerely,

Ashok R Shaha MD FACS

Vice-Chair, Head and Neck Surgery and Oncology

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

**Chairman, American Head and Neck Society Advanced
Training council**

11.

Dear Dr. Narendrabhai Bhalodkar,

It was an absolute pleasure to attend the interfaith seminar. It was a very well-organized event with a wonderful venue, eloquent speakers, delicious vegetarian food and overall superb presentation of Mahatma Gandhi and Vaisnavajana song. It was very informative and enjoyable. I truly appreciate being a part of it, thank you.

To my surprise there was a pin drop silence. As the presentation offered everyone experience of a peace, which is ultimately our most natural position. At this point, we are becoming more and more sane and less affected by amnesia. It is comparable to a person's recovery from a chronic disease, in which they gradually become more stable and eventually regain their health.

Our founder Acharya used to mention that: " The bliss of Truth further likened to the happiness a wild elephant feels after being trapped for days in a smoldering forest fire and then suddenly drenched in a torrential rain..." The joy and relief that we New Yorkers witnessed will last for a long time to come. We are proud of Narasimha Mehta and Mahatma Gandhi who not only realized that "Truth" but also shared and distributed freely among all of us through you.

Yours Truly,

Nikhil N. Trivedi
Interfaith Priest, Bharati Center, Brooklyn New York

12.

Martha and I attended the Interfaith Seminar at Temple Tikvah on February 23rd was an excellent example of how religion, culture, history and art can be creatively interwoven into one distinct social event, with a simple goal of promoting basic human understanding.

In this instance, on the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth, we gathered in a Jewish temple, where Muslims, Jews, Christians, Hindus and others from a wide variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds met to learn about, and in some instances share their understanding of, "Vaishnav Jan To Tene Kahiye," a 15th-century spiritual song that actually inspired Gandhi.

Following Dr. Narendra Bhalodkar's introduction, a series of distinguished speakers discussed the universality of this song, or Bhajan, and gave their interpretation of how it is viewed within their respective faiths and cultures.

I was particularly moved by the videos and illustrations that so effectively illustrated the historical significance of "Vaishnav Jan To Tene Kahiye" and the profound influence it has had on past and current civilizations.

Given our current divisive national and global social climate, this Interfaith Seminar was sorely needed and extremely well received.

Dear Dr. Bhalodkar it was my utmost pleasure and delight to attend the interfaith seminar that you organized and conducted.

Martha and Vincent Chimienti
Unitarian Universalist Congregation

13.

My sister Abida Mirza had a flight to Pakistan only after 3 hours and still we attended the seminar, as its subject matter was very dear to our heart and soul.

The whole seminar was meticulously planned and executed with finest detail.

I was immensely impressed by the discipline of the audience and attentiveness with which they listened to the whole program with absolute quietness.

It was eye-opening and spiritually uplifting to know that all religions and faith are preaching the same fundamental core values for all of us to practice like loving, sharing and helping each other and live in peace and harmony.

I just want to conclude that each moment given to us by Allah is a precious chance for us to make peace with each other and make our world enjoyable as Allah expect us to do.

Again, I heartily congratulate you to organize such a wonderful interfaith seminar.

I offer you my **Duaa**, my blessings that may Allah give you strength and wisdom to conduct many more such spiritual programs.

Tahera Haque and Abida Mirza