


The Summary of the each day of the Global Interfaith Forum for Transformation (GIFT)


FEBRUARY 1-7, 2021 7AM PST | 4PM CET | 8:30PM IST ACCELERATING EMPOWERMENT



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**World Interfaith Harmony Week
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The 1st day of the GIFT: Community building

Many inspiring leaders shared their vision on community building, and answered questions on how to use spiritual technologies to build community for a better future. Such interesting leaders from URI as Bishop Swing, Charles Gibbs, Sally Mahe as well as leaders from IFAST and ISKCON like Vraja Lila and Parabhakti Prabhu.

Facilitated by Sagar Swami, such an insightful conversation was built on the topic. In it, the importance of common interfaith prayer, service and Love was raised by a lot of the speakers.

For example, Charles Gibbs highlighted such an important point, that to build community, we must first love, connect and support each other, “turn strangers into neighbors”, and that to do so, we must “seek the spark of the divine in other people and evoke it”. There were so many more priceless insights on this idea shared by each and every speaker today. It was an honor for every participant to be able to listen to such interesting people, people who are inspired and driven by a common idea, to make the world a better place for us all.

To conclude, we would like to share some of the words of Patri Prabhu, a spiritual leader of ISKCON. Patri Prabhu had said that community is “common unity” and that “All people are like different flowers, and together we are one garland”, highlighting how unity is possible when we go beyond our differences and focus on how they can complement each other to create something bigger. And now that so many leaders spoke about spiritual technologies can be used for the matter, we heard and know them with our minds, and now, Patri Prabhu suggests we let this knowledge get into our hearts, because “when our heart and our mind are looking in the same direction, we don’t need to worry about the legs”!

Short video quotes:

GIFT: Vrajalila: The Love means action

<https://youtu.be/srfeo7Kbva8>

Charles Gibbs: Turn strangers into neighbors

https://youtu.be/4Tlw_uZqhAE

GIFT: Patri Das: Three A secret

<https://youtu.be/Ajjef2TIAEU>

The 2nd day of the GIFT: Education

“Each one of us teaches and learns throughout our lives”, as mentioned by Deepak Naik, reporting from his smaller group discussions on the 3rd day’s topic: Education. This saying explains so well why it is a very relevant topic. Education is also what builds all that lies ahead of us, what gives us hope for a better future, and a chance to participate and create said future. This was a common idea in today’s event, brought up by our main speakers: Dr. Shiv Talwar, Marilyn Turkovich, Aram Pakhchanyan and Mahatma Prabhu. All great specialists in the education field, all driven by a grand vision of Tomorrow’s education, it was a pleasure to hear their wisdom and expertise today, with the facilitation of Samira Baručija.

The speakers had shared a lot of valuable insight, and among it was a common idea: the need of a more global, “holistic” education. An education that would allow students to learn not only common material subjects such as mathematics, science, etc., but would also teach students Human qualities and virtues. Qualities such as compassion, kindness, responsibility, understanding, communication, integrity, humility, and many many more. An education that would help students to create connections, think larger and develop awareness of what happens both in the outside world as well as inside their own mind. An education that would combine all fields, both of natural sciences, social sciences and spiritual knowledge. An education to make humans more Human, as said Aram Pakhchanian. An education that would bring more Love and Happiness in the world, as said Patri Prabhu.

As Mahatma Prabhu had mentioned today: “When we receive knowledge, we have the responsibility of passing it on”, and we are happy to do so by sharing with you this wisdom given to us by such amazing specialists in the field, as well as the inspiring atmosphere created by this common vision of the speakers on the topic. We are very grateful to have heard their knowledge and experience today.

Short video quotes:

GIFT: Mahatma Das: The biggest lesson

<https://youtu.be/V6iWkPkM8dY>

GIFT: Marilyn Turkovich: Keys in Education

<https://youtu.be/aWRrFuHUj-0>

The 3rd day of the GIFT: Peace building conflict transformation

The 3rd day of the Global Interfaith Forum for Transformation was centered on peace building through conflict transformation, and the main idea was that to resolve bigger conflicts, we must first start with ourselves.

We welcomed prominent panel leaders from IFAST, URI, and ISKCON for today's session, such as Marilyn Tyrkovich, Samira Barucija, Morgana Sythove, and Bhakti Rasayana Sagar Swami. Morgana Sythove shed light on languages that everyone could understand, such as music and emotional connection. Marilyn Tyrkovich explained that to truly connect with people, we need to ask questions and not make assumptions. Samira Barucija addressed that in conflict, core problems can be found once we understand the needs of the individuals. Bhakti Rasayana Sagar Swami shared a beautiful compassion exercise taken from Buddhism:

“Just like me, this person is seeking some happiness for his/her life. Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering in his/her life. Just like me, this person has known sadness, loneliness and despair. Just like me, this person is seeking to fulfill his/her needs. Just like me, this person is learning about life.”

Thank you everyone who made the time to attend and participate in today's discussion.

Short video quotes:

GIFT: Samira Baručija: What is your conflict really about?

<https://youtu.be/5igMB5KaZ2Y>

GIFT: Marilyn Turkovich: You can only have peace if you have love

<https://youtu.be/K-pPmAlbyhg>

The 4th day of the GIFT: Interfaith dialogue

On this 4th day of the GIFT week, URI and IFAST welcomed once again wonderful panelists to speak on today's topic: Interfaith Dialogue. Maria Crespo, Karimah K. Stauch, Rukmini Walker and Kiran Bali all started by telling us how they went "from Faith to Interfaith" and then elaborated on very important concepts concerning the matter, with the facilitation of Sagar Swami. A big thank you to all of them for participating and sharing their wisdom!

One of the main ideas that came up in today's discussion is the importance of listening to each other in Interfaith dialogue. The panelists talked about how this is crucial to understanding and peace between Faiths. By listening to people from different spiritual expressions, we can not only open our mind, create understanding and compassion, but also deepening and enriching our own Faith, as Maria Crespo mentioned. Rukmini Walker has also built on that subject, by pointing out that the shape of two ears side by side, created the shape of a heart, and that in the word "hEART", there is the word "Ear". With this beautiful and poetic peculiarity of the English language, Rukmini Walker highlighted that "we need to use our ears to get to other people's hearts". From this emerged another interesting point: the importance of service. Service to each other, as well as to our planet, our environment. Taking action in order to help in any way we can do so.

Also, a conversation about technology was brought up. As Kiran Bali pointed out, although technology has been shown to have negative impact on individuals, such as a shortened attention span, it can be used for "service based messages" and other positive purposes. Maria Crespo has continued the subject by saying how "we can use this tool for spiritual gatherings", as it has been done through the last year of lockdown. This could not be more true since our meeting actually ended today in a beautiful collective prayer!

Video quotes:

GIFT: Kiran Bali: All our religions built upon ethical values

<https://youtu.be/22zNTGtwzFY>

GIFT: Rukmini Walker: We need a shift of pyramid of power

<https://youtu.be/kAxez07WySE>

GIFT: Karimah Stauch: We need to develop our hearts

<https://youtu.be/9jqHxwqq4Rk>

GIFT: Maria Crespo: Let's find sacred in everyone

<https://youtu.be/AX55jZFb37k>

GIFT: Patri das: The language of love

<https://youtu.be/KslcRAvIZgA>

The 5th day of the GIFT: Family

On February 5th, we discussed the topic of Family and how important it is in today's world.

Nrisimhananda das, a relationship coach in family dynamics and marriage, started by sharing his personal story and some realizations. One of the precious pieces of advice he gave us was to "Discover yourself for who you are before you start your own family". So many of us nowadays don't know who we are, what we want to do in life, where we should be and so on. We feel lost in this world and are trying to find someone to "fix it", a partner who will make us happy. Although it is actually a great illusion that another person can fulfill the "God-sized hole" in our hearts, as Nrisimhananda Das pointed out. This shows how important it is to get to know ourselves and find our own path and happiness before getting married.

Then, Edwina Cowell, founder of CVO of Spiritual Playdate and SpiritualPlay, had a powerful speech about the "Golden Rule", displaying it from a different perspective than what we are used to. She mentioned how this rule is not just about "Treating others as you want to be treated", but rather having an understanding that we're all connected, we are all from the same source. "When I hurt you, I hurt myself. When I uplift you, I uplift myself." If we can all feel this statement thoroughly with our hearts, there would not be any fights, because we would all deeply care for each other. We would want others to be happy, we would want to see their smiles and laughter. And if we bring up this kind of important topic with our kids from a young age, if we have deep conversations with them about such values as forgiveness, gratitude and "letting go", we could really make a huge change in the world!

Also, we talked about the value of hospitality and how it can bring the whole family together. Dr. Pradyuman Singh Rathore, Vice Principal at Agrawal PG College, Jaipur, mentioned that this hospitality, manifested through acts of service can help us solve family conflicts. A huge part of this concept is remembering that our most important guest is God. We would want to do our best to satisfy Him!

Last but not least, we heard the words of Paata Amonashvili - President of the International Center for Humane Pedagogy, and his beautiful wife Tamriko. They shared some wonderful tips for families that had helped them bring love into their own relationship: practicing gratitude, listening to each other, kindness and seeing children as their best teachers.

On this day full of insights, we are grateful to all the participants and panelists for being a part of this transforming week!

Video quotes:

GIFT: Edwina Cowell: ACT instead of react
https://youtu.be/M_cNqLRbwU

GIFT: Edwina Cowell: Golden Rule

<https://youtu.be/Ljwn01iwJWc>

Gift: Paata Amonashvili: Spiritual techniques

<https://youtu.be/S8lxC36dN1g>

Gift: Dr Pradyuman Sigh Rahore: Story

<https://youtu.be/G6tb8XyNaV8>

Gift: Dr Pradyuman Sigh Rahore: Hospitality is the Spiritual Technology

<https://youtu.be/hcVVksSjQY0>

Gift: Nrisimhananda Das: Understanding true identity for true family life 1

<https://youtu.be/nqLOrnJFXdl>

Gift: Nrisimhananda Das: Understanding true identity for true family life

<https://youtu.be/OL92xywPNaY>

Gift: Paata Amonashvili: Happiness is inside us

<https://youtu.be/WH5UCZE3yyk>

Gift: Paata Amonashvili: Family inspires self development

<https://youtu.be/JGi4Sb6Ka0k>

The 6th day of the GIFT: Youth

The 6th day of the Global Interfaith Forum for Transformation has ended on a fantastic note! The discussion was about placing more trust in our youth and igniting an intergenerational dialogue to make change more inclusive.

We welcomed wonderful panel leaders from IFAST, URI, and ISKCON for today's session, such as Isaac Thomas, Sara Oliver, Aram Pakhchanian, and Patri Prabhu as well as Sofia Saakova as a facilitator! The general consensus was to encourage the younger generation to take action and form communities of passionate, driven people. A way to foster intergenerational dialogue would be for the younger generation of leaders to seek out wisdom and guidance from the older generation. Acknowledging that, at times, we don't always know how to handle a situation and need to ask for help. And fostering a community of like-minded individuals helps us grow and find our purpose.

As Patri Prabhu said, the most important spiritual technology is the ability to be happy and smile from the heart. He explained that happiness creates the energy of love and allows us to communicate with enthusiasm and curiosity. It really is as simple as:

"If you are boring then no one will want to listen to you!"

But how do we become happy? For that Patri Prabhu asked us to look back to our A, B, C's...

Association (who are your friends and I'll tell you who you are)

Books (read holy scriptures and informative books)

Chanting (holy names of God from your faith)

Diet (eating together and offering food to God)

Thank you to everyone who made the time to attend and participate in today's discussion. We are looking forward to seeing everyone for our final day of Harmony Week on February 7th!

Video quotes:

GIFT: Patri das: Synergy

<https://youtu.be/5gykvFXZzZQ>

The 7th day of the GIFT: Summary and conclusion

On February 7th, it was the final day of the Global Interfaith Forum for Transformation. We took this occasion to summarise the valuable insights that were discussed throughout the week.

We started with a wonderful common prayer led by Sagar Swami, that set a tone of gratitude and seeing the Divine in each other. We then proceeded to the viewing of a few videos made by Amiya Sundari, some of them were deep, some were touching, and some were funny! In one of the videos, we could witness cutouts of some of the most inspiring words that panelists had spoken on this week's previous events. This really was a good overview of the key takeaways that were raised about each of the topics. Important words like community, compassion, unity, listening, understanding, learning, communication, sharing and Divine Love, were recurring themes these 6 previous days.

Here is a link to that video: <https://youtu.be/rCmnayWISR4>

Then we moved on to a special activity, consisting of using a creative way to portray our thoughts on one of the topics of the GIFT, in small groups. We had 6 topics and 6 groups, and the participants' creativity was remarkable. Some groups came up with songs, some with interfaith prayers, some with quotes from Holy Scriptures. It was a pleasure to hear each and every group. Also, each person had shared one word about how they felt after the GIFT week, and Parti Prabhu had put all those words together into a wonderful song. We finished off with another video Amiya Sundari made, that illustrated the hymn of URI, a song called "You Are I", in such a touching and heartfelt way.

Today's event was all about creativity, key takeaways and fun, which closed the event in such a meaningful way, leaving everybody with a feeling of gratitude and a sense of community.

Intro video of the forum:

<https://youtu.be/vAjBcqITS70>

Summary video of the forum:

<https://youtu.be/M8-5PxF2GY8>

All the recordings from the GIFT:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD9k3X0RM-cXRXKAaTTfL_vZIU3aZXziY