

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening depending on wherever you are joining this conference from. It gives me great pleasure and I am so honored to be with you all today.

I have deep admiration for the work everyone of you do. A year ago today, my mentor reached out to me, see besides my work, I am deeply into yoga and she is one of my Yoga Teachers. She reached out to do something really unique and special. The country was on a lockdown last year, none of us were going out, the schools were closed, the offices were closed, we were working from home, we were not going to shopping malls, we were not taking vacations. So by large at least the privileged ones amongst us had sometime in our hands and she wanted to put that time to good use. What does she want to do, she wanted to tell stories. See, the Indian Mythology has a lot of stories that have been handed down generation after generation across many centuries. And mythology is not just stories. Mythology is living life lessons, it's a living story. Lot of what we do and why we do it is coded in those stories. What my mentor wanted to do was bring these stories to life and remind all of us, why we do the things we do. Be it cultural habits, or as a culture the kind of decisions we make, how we interact with each other and all of these things. So we started small.. I told a few people, she told a few people but before we knew it that a 75 to 100 people joining every session we ran. We did that for a glorious couple of months by the end of it, things started opening up in India, so we put a stop to it. That is the power of community! Now before I go on, I want you to take a pause and just do two things, take a paper and write down, one other person in your club whichever Inner Wheel Club you are part of, think of someone who you like to work with, whom you interact a lot with, who helps you out with things, who means a lot to you, right, write that person's name down. Done? Okay, second, take another minute to just think about why you are a part of Inner Wheel Club, what is your purpose, it doesn't have to be long, could be a word, three words, four words, whatever comes to your mind immediately. Just write that out. Now coming back, what I want to say is, you know that Club that you are part of is a community. A community is a set of people who come together for a purpose. We may come together for a purpose but we stay back for the relationships. We stay back for how everyone of us support each other to grow, to work through difficult situations, to help each other with many many challenges that we face. See, I have been part of two large communities, one of them is Women in the Technology Industry, so I have run the grace hoper conference – Grace Hoper

Celebration India Conference for 04 years from 2016 to 2020. And that is a network of large set of women in the Indian Technology Industry.

The second community I have been part of is completely Virtual. It is called "Mandram". Now when India like many other countries which were colonized at some point, English is a large part of our lives. We use that for a lot of Government work, we use that for our academics and many things. Now what that does is that it creates a divide between people who are proficient in English and have access to that through their studies or whatever methods and people who don't! So "Mandram" is a community that brings these people together and trying to revive the native languages of India.

What I have seen in these communities is we have these large purposes, like gender diversity, language inclusion. We come together to work on that but we stay back for the personal reasons. I have innumerable stories of women who have found jobs through Grace Hoper Celebration India, finding friends for a lifetime, people who help them out through personal challenges, all kind of things. So just to re-iterate communities come together for a social purpose but stay together for relationships and all and all is extremely transformational. I think, that's not new to you, all of you know that, all of you experience it, it transforms you, it transforms the people around you as a community and through that it makes a profound impact on the society you live in. now I just wanted to go back to the two things you wrote down and take a minute to thank this person who makes staying with this community meaningful for you. Take a minute to just say a gratitude, and second just go back and revisit the purpose, you might have written down something like helping the under privileged in my area, helping kids stay back in school or may be it could be to do with COVID 19 Vaccination efforts, whatever! But just revisit that and think about what makes you tick, does it give you a reason to get up and go in the morning, does it help you meet people whom you will not meet otherwise, does it make you feel like you are giving back and hence more purposeful, it gives you a reason to live, whatever it is, what is your internal purpose that drives you and that is what makes you stay back in the community. Now given where we are, the strange times we have been pushed into because of this pandemic, Technology has become inevitable. Now, I just wanted to go back to the story of my mentor calling me to run this entire story session, why did she reach out to me?

She knew the stories and she tells them beautifully, she did not need me at all, the reason why I got to play a part in it is because I am an engineer. I am a computer science engineer, so lot of people assumed that I know everything about technology. So here's a secret that remains between us is that I don't. I don't know machine learning, I don't know artificial intelligence, I don't know all these jazzy words people throw around. But what I do know is how technology works in today's world. What is data. What is communication. How to make an excel sheet work. How to make something look good using technology. How to use the internet. Right, the basics. And when I was doing that project with her, she brought me in because she wanted help in setting up Zoom, using Zoom to reach out to people, keeping track of who's registering, who's not, recording the videos, editing them, putting them up on YouTube, all these kind of things, right.

And what I realized is, lot of people with beautiful intent and valuable knowledge struggle because of technology. And that is not surprising, if you are in that packet, please stay calm, there's nothing wrong with it. I mean all of you know about Harry Potter, the first movie came in 2001 that was like 20 years ago and that time, the movie talked about newspaper where people are moving in the newspaper, right, it was like a wow magical thing and that's happening today. Within 20 years, we have taken a leap in technology that took us centuries to evolve, from going from the branches to walking on a land and then going onto wheels, whatever took centuries and centuries, technology has made that possible within a few years before we can even get our head around having a single TV Box for the entire family in the house to watching whatever we want in our hand in a mobile phone.

At the same time, it is also inevitable because that is one of the easiest and strongest ways for us to establish and derive the most power out of the communities we serve. So, I am gonna just take the next few minutes to demystify technology to the best extent possible. It's not possible within 10 minutes, I am going to try what I can. Now technology is not magic. It is created, it is made easily available and it is made easily usable for many of us. If we have to get through this mental block we have, there are two sources we can rely on. One is our kids, right. Particularly this generation kids, they are born with the mobile phone looks like, they just stick to it so easily. May be ask them nicely, I mean after all you have done a lot for them, so I think its okay for them to give you back a little. Ask them nicely, ask them to show you how notion works, what is reddit, and how can we use Instagram to make the most meaning out of it,

and they can walk through the cool tools that they use day on day and why they use what they use.

I still remember the day, my daughter walked upto me, she was 12 years old, she walks upto me and says, “Mom, can I drop off from school and become a YouTube personality?” I was eating breakfast, and I had to stop, for a minute I couldn’t breathe. But once I recovered, I explained to her even becoming a YouTube personality involves work, involves hard work rather. But that’s how they are! They kind of stick to this digital internet world like fish to water.

The second source is, a people who kind of pushed into using of technology because they just don’t have a choice. What reminds me now is a story of missed calls, especially in India, this was the time when cellphones were introduced for the first time and it was still expensive. You know, we were charged for incoming calls as well as outgoing calls, many of you may not even remember those days. So at that time what became rampant in India is the concept of missed calls. Lets say, my daughter is going to ummm a different city and she is traveling by herself and I am worried about her safety. So what I’ll tell her is that when you go and reach your destination, give me a missed call. I don’t have to pick up your call, you don’t have to complete the call, a missed call does not get charged by both parties but it conveys the message, right! So when you look at people, who adopt technology like the unusual ways, I have seen this with plumbers, I have seen this with electricians, people whom we ummm typically do not associate with information technology, they take to tools like WhatsApp, TikTok, all these kind of Apps and use them very efficiently. So you can take inspiration from these people to help get across your fear about technology. And after all, you have to remember this, Nothing can replace the intent from your heart and the work you do on the ground. So all you are going to do is translate that into how it can be done through technology, for two reasons – one is yes, today we have social distancing, we cannot do many things that we used to do earlier. Second is, it just helps you scale and do a much better job of what you are doing now. And there are just 5 things you have to think about – first one is Outreach, how can you reach the most number of people possible. Second is Co-ordination, planning, keeping it all intact, reminding people of what needs to be done where. Third is Communicate, whenever you doing something, letting people know how to register, where to go, where to find information. Fourth is presenting, because when you have something, putting it in a nice Instagram Post or a website makes a lot of sense. And 5th is tracking because you should always keep track of how many people you have reached, how many people are

there in your team and how many are working on a particular project. So these are literally the 5 elements you have to think about when it comes to employing technology. The real work happens outside of these but this is where the work gets managed and can be performed easily. And there are multiple multiple tools to do it, you just have to give a pair of inhibition go on a net and look with these five aspects, who will be able to find a law.

So having said that, I just want to wish you all a great conference and wish you all the best in the wonderful projects you are going to be doing in future. So go ahead, conquer that fear, do a lot with technology and if that is difficult, give me a call. There are a lots of people like me who can help you. All the best!! And thank you for the opportunity.