# Gita Youth Society for Transformation (GYST)

## Brief History

GYST started in the year 2014 with the aim of mass youth preaching and taking Krsna Consciousness deeper into the society. Earlier, the youth programs focused more on training and cultivating Brahmacharis and in the bargain, those who were not so serious but still inclined (eg. Those who chanted 4/10 rounds) got neglected. The practice of following the 4 regulative principles and reading Bhagavad Gita daily was given more priority. Mega theme based events were held, with the first event being held on 14th February 2014 titled ‘True Love Story’ which saw an audience of nearly 1100 boys and girls. Events such as ‘Colours of India’ on Holi and ‘Vote for India’ followed, with 8/10 mega-events every year.

## Organizational Hierarchy

* There are 10 Brahmacharis for the GYST Program. There is a Chairman and Vice-Chairman in place, followed by HODs of various departments like Professor Cultivation, Permissions, etc. Apart from their respective designations, brahmacharis conduct programs in some capacity in colleges.
* Many volunteers, mainly students lend their support. In return, they are given free accommodation and prasadam.
* Funding usually comes from boys who joined KC through this program or the VOICE boys who perform occupational duties.

## Workflow

The preaching program works broadly in 3 lines:

* The first line of mass preaching is by conducting mega-programs and holding seminars in colleges. A mega-drive is done across the city making youngsters members of a club by charging Rs. 20/- as membership fees. A database is created containing their names and contact details and they are intimated whenever there is an event. After the event, a separate program is held for those youngsters who show further interest in spirituality. In this way, neophytes are spiritually uplifted.
* There are over 800 colleges in Pune district and Pune city in which NSS holds a 10-day camp in villages to encourage social service. ISKCON Pune sought permission to hold motivational programs in these camps. Interested students are further invited to a 12-session Leadership Program, with the aim of taking them deeper into Krishna Consciousness.
* Value Education program for leadership is held across colleges where colleges permit ISKCON’s accredited course to be taught in colleges. Leadership values are taught in these courses with the focus on taking the youth in the right direction.

At present, there are 3 hostels for students appearing for competitive exams with the motive of helping students so that in future, they can help the society in a big way.

## Achievements

* The monthly events have touched close to 10,000 boys and girls in the last 3 years and helped form 150 core devotees. There are around 70 professors who chant and read Bhagavad Gita on a daily basis.
* Contributions in several ways have been made towards the society in collaboration with various local organizations through mutual understandings. This helps in learning the best practices of other organizations.
* Symbiosis College has given permission to hold a mandatory program for their students.
* BMCC Pune has included our accredited course in their syllabus.
* Vidya Sarita Project is an initiative to teach students from villages Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. The spiritual touch to this is the Sloka recitation and 21 times chanting of mahamantra before and after the lecture. We are on the way to adopt 20 villages in the upcoming months.

## Unique Features

* Even with not much manpower, there has been steady growth in mass preaching efforts. Efforts are taken even to train and cultivate youngsters by giving them services as per their capability so that they can identify themselves (eg. Those who love teaching contribute to the Vidya Sarita project).
* Leadership training Module has been introduced which bridges the gap between KC and outside leadership best practices. Moreover, due to these various outreach programs, contacts are established with moral professors, students, college toppers and leaders who are willing to extend their support.
* De-addiction drive also has been quite successful with the State Government also acknowledging the same at a public event. Over 10,000 boys and girls have been successfully de-addicted in 3 months.

## Key Lessons

* It is vital not to criticize other organizations and learn to appreciate their best practices with regard to management, communication, marketing and other skills.
* There is need to improve our marketing efforts.
* Syllabus needs to be re-designed with deeper Bhakti principles presented in a non-offending way so that people subtly imbibe the values. Great writing acumen is required for this.
* Not many people today are attracted to pure Bhakti. Acts of social service and value education garner public support and in turn funding. It is important to conduct acts of social service at the same time along with KC preaching.