



4th Annual HINDU MANDIR EXECUTIVES CONFERENCE

Sept 11-13, 2009
Holiday Inn BWI Airport
Linthicum, Maryland

Record of the Youth Session

Recorder

Bhakti Mehta

॥ *Narayanaya Namah, Namoh Arihantaya, Buddham Sharanam Gachhami, Sat Sri Akah* ॥

Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference

HMEC - An Initiative of VHP of America

P.O. Box 611, Iselin, NJ 08830 • (732)-744-851 • mandirsangam@vhp-america.org

HMEC 2009 Youth Session Records

Session 6C, 1:00 PM-3:30 PM



The youth session was particularly well organized. After a lot of talking and sharing our ideas, the youth group came up with some great suggestions and conclusions. Now its time to put the thoughts in to action!

An invitation to join the group will be sent out to all the youth and once a majority have joined we can begin discussing and go from there. We can also invite more people to join once you are a member of the group. The material can be viewed by non-members, but to have any privileges you must join.

<http://groups.google.com/group/hindu-youth-network>

We also had two attendees in HMEC from Toronto, Canada: Sonia and Parthiban. They were there representing the widely successful Hindu Youth Network in Canada. They were not able to attend our youth session as they were presenting in a parallel session. The HYN in Canada has over 6,000 members and is flourishing. Please check out their website, as this is our inspiration.

www.hinduyouth.net/

Mini-Session 1: Youth Involvement in the Mandir/Beyond Bal-Vihar, Youth camp

Moderator: Keya Dave

09/12/09 – 1:00pm

Discussion on how to retain youth once they have "graduated" from bal-vihar or have reached the age when they feel they are too "old" to come anymore. Part of this comes from the values instilled during Bal Vihar itself, so a strong Bal Vihar is crucial to the success of retention.



General Experiences: Introductions with Ice Breaker – (facts about yourself)

Pooja Lahori - Chinmaya Mission

She just got appointed to be youth coordinator at Chinmaya Mission. The group started weekly meetings at college park. Group members pick a text, read at own time and have open discussion. There is no right or wrong answer. Recruit seniors in bal-vihar, so they have momentum when heading off to college. It starts off as social hour, it can get difficult. Some groups do twice a month, some do weekly

Sujal Mistry - Gayatri Pariwar

It is not just spiritual, religious, and "Hindu" work. Encourage workshops, career training, resume writing, sat prep, book reviews, tutoring. Have an encompassing curriculum, but have to focus on the difference between Hindu culture and dharma.

Shivi Chandra - Gayatri Pariwar

Over 6 months - mini "bal-vihar" to train older kids to facilitate. Use books and experiences. Start off with stating tangible goals and expected results.

Sachi Lamb - HAF

It is important to be open to many ideas, beyond religiousness. It is important to accept the differences between Indian and Hindu; important to accept non-Indian Hindus.

Kunal Vyas - India House of Worship

There are 2nd, 3rd, 4th generation Hindu youth in other countries. Have youth research themselves, and explain it as if to non-Hindus. Makes the youth understand dharma more if they have a hand in it. Take initiative to make religion your own. Religion does not have to focus geographically.

Preya Dave - HTCI

Youth events occur, but have inconsistency. Bring young adults to make a better impact, to make youth comfortable. Assign people tasks that shows initiative and interests the youth.

Shaily Patel - Mangal Mandir

I painted a room in the mandir, made it a social activity, made the activity fun, and made the mandir more personal.

Jay Mehta - HJT

Hindu Jain temple: 25th anniversary program. Giving responsibility had great response. Kept an eye on them but left it up to them; brings a sense of pride; brings up leadership quality.

Keya Bhatt – Hindu Center of Charolette

Giving responsibility works, but is temporary. At the moment energy is so strong, but it dies down

Bhakti Mehta - HJT

It is important to have a personal connection to responsibility; Need to have events outside of mandir, take it to their homes. Connect those activities to mandir periodically.

Shivi Chandra - Gayatri Pariwar

Michigan: Ann Arbor, bal-vihar has excellent youth network and continuing program. It is important to have youth leaders, not just youth volunteers. Youth have to be beyond workers, they have to come out as a leader

Rudra Upadhyaya - Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh

Seva projects and events have high enthusiasm, but temporary. Friendship is a great motivation, but it can't be superficial. Have personal relations through events or otherwise. Take small responsibilities, something that can be handled. Ownership with responsibility is most important. Mentorship is important, but need to give freedom to have that sense of growth.

Rekha Tiwari - Sankat Mochan

Explaining the task, explain why. Have relating stories, give detailed explanations. Relate real-life situations to religion, to our events and practices. It is important to notice people's strengths, quiet doesn't mean inattentive.

Sneha Radhakrishnan - SSVT

Adults run events. Parents need to start the initiative, but give full responsibility to children. Let them coordinate the whole event. Not have "old people" talk and lecture. Important to have teenage kids and college students set examples and show.

Kinjal Nana - Mangal Mandir

It is important that youth form their opinion. When there's age gap it is harder to pass that opinion down. Talk to them in a casual manner.

Jemini Patel

How to spark intrinsic motivation? Just bringing children to mandir will not make them want to learn.

Utsav Chakrabarti

It is important to teach philosophical ideas - thought-provoking ideas.

Sujal Mistry

Older generation have come from Indian background, they have the idea that kids should be seen not heard. Youth members: 25-35 are the main bridge. Need to open channels of communication to allow question opportunities for younger children.

Puja Patel

Youth camp: high retention rate. Reason is because counselors are super role models. Show enthusiasm as role models. Don't give up on apathetic youth 15-16 age group.

Bhakti Mehta

We have to be a bridge by taking action. Listen to what younger kids have to say, convey that to the adults. Take action that shows both groups what potential is there.

Kinjal Nana

It can get risky, because there's no one to answer the proper questions. Important to have youth forums and answer properly. Older kids have deeper questions, where can we get answers? Need to get past the cultural stigma of asking questions.

Shivi Chandra

Sometimes too much can "turn them off." Youth volunteers need to have proper education. Mandir needs to have proper education for the youth and volunteers. So they can give out proper information to the younger generation. Inform them to drive their enthusiasm.

Pooja Lahori

Keep it personal. Connect to the kids and make them understand in this-world context. Explain information in relevant format. Important to have higher Swami, Acharya, hold an open discussion for youth.

Jay Mehta

Most parents don't even have personal answers. That turns youth off as well. That's why we're attracted to Swami jis, they have answers.

Sujal Mistry

It is equally as important for parents to be educated. Sometimes parent's "blow-off" answers turn youth away from the right concepts. It turns off motivation. If you don't know answer its important that parents say "I don't know, but I can find out for you."

Jemini Patel

We already know what uncles and aunties will say, they have their own opinions. It is important to get answers without opinions settled in.

Keya Bhatt - Summary:

Friendship is important for retention; responsibility, the right kind is important; it is important to explain to youth; having role models; creating enthusiasm by varying program; fostering environment for children to ask questions - with someone qualified; having personal relationships with higher up people; have consistency and frequency in events - but add a little variety into it; personal relations; active leaders, not participants.

**Mini-Session 2:
Outreaching Through Seva**

Moderator: Samir Asthana

09/12/09 – 2:30pm

Focused on the role seva plays in the mandir. Why is seva important, how do we start seva programs at our mandirs, and why is the mandir the most appropriate vehicle for seva? These are questions to be addressed. The national seva day will also be revisited as a starting point.

Samir - Opening Remarks

Seva is beyond just community service. Seva is a mindset. We have to think of how mandirs tie into the outreaching part of seva. Right now Christians predominantly cover "seva" through outreach with religious program. How do we start, and why do we start at the mandir? Why is mandir appropriate stage for this?

Discussion:

Rekha Tiwari: Little things count as seva. Example, respecting elders, little activities, starts off at home, not just mandirs. It is important for parents to realize that.

Samir Asthana: Seva is a very encompassing. But we need to focus on the social aspect of this.

Kishore Radhakrishnan: In public schools - community service hours are required. It is important to incorporate service events through a younger age. If it doesn't start at young age, there's no way to instill it for there rest of life. Mandirs should have regular set sessions, rain or shine, seva should be important. Parents, mandir, and youth need to encourage importance of these events. A lot more opportunities should be provided.

Arpit Bhatt: How do you balance the hectic life of mandir, work, activities, and seva as well?

Keya Bhatt: Technology and delegation is important to keep hectic life under control. That is it is important to have a strong team, not just an individual. Letting people get involved by using their own strengths, according to their busy schedules.

Rita Tiwari: It is important to have materialistic motivation that turns intrinsic by repetition.

Puja Patel: It is harder for older generation to accept that this community as "our community."
Ex: soup kitchen - vegetarianism.

Jemini Patel: Something constant was never present. Should we step into the community in non-Hindu activities?

Bhakti Mehta: It is important to take a small step and go out into the community as a Hindu entity. It doesn't matter what activity you do, you have to do it representing the mandir, the dharma, the society.

Shivi Chandra: Pratibha daan - important to use/share their talent as seva. It'll help leaving a larger impact on the childrens' minds.

Kunal Vyas: Seva ranges from small daily activities, to serving your community. We need to concentrate on community seva - Manav pooja (serving humanity). Important to live your life that can help create seva . Everything you do needs to be seva.

Samir Asthana - Summary:

Seva has to be more than karma, it has to be rooted in bhakti. All other religious service groups get governmental funding. What can we show? From a social perspective, it is something we need to do. Start off with smaller activities, but be consistent and outreach to the participants. Consistency can instill these practices in the future generation. It is important to nurture the talented youth so they don't lose their talent but utilize it for the benefit of the community.

Mini Session 3: Strategy to build Hindu Mandir Youth Network

Moderators: Keya Bhatt & Samir Asthana

09/12/09 – 3:30pm

- It is important to keep in touch outside just "temple related activities."
- Need to motivate the local youth to have connections and make effort to take it to different places
- **Create a forum** for active youth to bounce ideas, ideas that other groups can use and utilize in their own community and environment
- Facebook is not a good way to keep it going
- Google Groups should be a starting point
- **Plan:**
 1. First step is to get a group of dedicated members

2. Go to temples, find out what projects are going on
 3. Come up with a manual of what's going on
 4. Come up with a written reflection of different types of activities
 5. After we have a basic set of information we can involve the youth in the community to utilize their talents and skills to make a bigger forum out of it
 6. Use the group to get the word out for events
 7. Start the group off with reflections and then continue to comprehensive seva events
 8. Send info out for events, giving people the opportunity to attend if they want
- **Create a Repository** for materials from different mandirs
 - Facilitate conference calls
 - Need we're addressing that there's the connection needs to be through mandirs