



## 12th Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference

September 22, 2017

### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **Twelfth Annual Hindu Mandir Executives Conference (HMEC) – 2017**

The twelfth HMEC was held in Indianapolis, Indiana at the Waterfront Hotel from September 15 to 17, 2017. In the past 11 years, averages of 100+ temples have participated across North America and Caribbean in HMEC. The conference sessions were well received by delegates from USA, Canada, Caribbean, and India.

This year, there were over 30 Grand Hosts and Co-Hosts of the conference mainly from USA and Canada. Some 200 adult and youth delegates drawn from over ~~60~~70 organizations and 43 countries participated in the conference.

The theme for the conference was: "Hindu Temples and Institutions: Challenges of the 21st Century." Hindu temples and institutions are facing challenges around the globe as technology and social changes affect traditional beliefs and practices. The 12th annual HMEC conference enabled Hindu leaders to look at these trends affecting their institutions and rise to the challenges presented by the digital age in the areas of temple management, religious programs, youth engagement, serving seniors and society.

In the inaugural session on Friday, 15 September, Swamini Svatmavidyananda Saraswati of Arsha Vijnana Gurukulam provided blessings and painted a vision for HMEC. Dr. Vijay Reddy warmly welcomed the conference attendees to Indianapolis on behalf of the host team. Next, Dr. Raman Khanna from Hindu American Foundation presented a perspective on Hindu Activism highlighting the theme of 'Who Controls the Past, Controls the Future.' In his inaugural address, Swami Pratyagbodhananda of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam inspired all with a call to action to face the 'Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.' The session ended with blessings from Acharya Dharmendra Sharma, who came from New Delhi to attend HMEC.

The plenary sessions on Saturday, 16 September, set the stage for the rest of the conference. Sessions addressed key challenges through a great line up of speakers: Temple & Institutions of the Future, Fulfilling Our Hopes and Needs, Youth, Young Adult Engagement and Seva As An Inter-Generational Bridge.

Since its inception, HMEC has bred many worthwhile projects and initiatives. A summary was presented to share progress with the audience. Among them are: HMPC (Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference), WHC (World Hindu Congress), HAVAN (Hindu American Vanaprasthi Network), Publication of Sanskar books, Gita Distribution and HMEC Alignment with National Services promoting chaplaincy. The session was closed with an update from Sanjay Mehta, General Secretary of VHP of America, highlighting the achievements of HMEC thus far and encouraging all to continue on this journey to network, share and stand together.

During the afternoon parallel tracks, a series of workshops were organized by a professional set of workshop leads with the intention to drive towards tangible outputs following the workshop. Prior to the workshop, these leads started forming committees to brainstorm and create a workshop outline that would simplify the objectives of the outputs towards an achievable deadline.

Workshop	Objective
Women's Role in Temple Life and Leadership	Develop Guidelines/Statement Promoting Equality of Women
Dealing with the Media	Develop Guidelines for Dealing with Media with Unified Message
Swadeshi Indology and its Relevance to the Hindu Temples in the US	Awareness Email with Resources
Developing Common and Simplified Temple Resources	Develop a Common Temple Guide
Temple By Laws and the Legal Implications	Discuss and Revise Bylaws with Legal Experts
Hindu Executive Leadership Development	Executive Coaching by Professional

Additionally, there were three workshop sessions for the Youth and Young Adults, designed and conducted by the Young Adults: Hinduism, Social Challenges and Other Questions of Today, Shaastras/Spiritual Content Distribution for Millennials, and Digital Guide for Mandirs.

As an output of this workshop series, the youth and young adult workshop leads intend to release a Digital Guide for Mandirs in the next couple of months. Being innovative, some leads quickly got together and also created a new Facebook page for HMEC called HMECNetwork <https://www.facebook.com/hmecnetwork>

Tweets from CHY (Coalition of Hindu Youth) can be viewed at [www.twitter.com/chynetwork](http://www.twitter.com/chynetwork) #HMEC2017

At the evening Gala Dinner and Cultural program on Saturday, Sec. of State Connie Lawson praised the efforts of HMEC to bring Hindu Institutions onto one platform. Mayor Joe Hogsett shared his appreciation for the Hindu community and commended the Indianapolis Host Team for being the driving force behind this successful conference. Sanatan Dharma scholarships were handed out to the winners, followed by an appreciation for the five HMEC Interns. The leadership, unity and teamwork of the Indianapolis team were applauded by all.

On Sunday, 17 September, a Hindu Activism panel called for a united effort by all institutions followed by an Indic Faith panel discussion promoting solidarity of all faiths. The parallel tracks and workshops were summarized by the young HMEC Interns, who also candidly shared their conference experiences.

Following the conference, subsequent action items will be worked on actively in 2017/2018:

1. Hindu Seva Day – Seva in America – Vallabha Tantry, MN, [Laxmi Bhamidipati, TX](#)
2. Visitor's Guide for Mandirs – Chandra Reddy, IN
3. Common BV resources for core teachings – [Coalition of Hindu Youth \(CHY\)](#) CHY
4. Form a committee to work on HMEC Sanatan Dharma Seva Ratna award.
5. Temple Construction, Operations and Management - Venkat S, MD; Anil Bajpai, IN
6. Media interaction - Fred Stella, MI; Aesha [Mehta](#), DC, Aditya [Lingampally](#), CA
7. Temple By Laws, Legal Implications - Vijay Reddy, IN

8. Exec. Leadership Development - Madhu Sharma, NC
9. Chaplaincy Program – Shama Mehta, HUA
10. Hindu Family Support Service frame work – Nainan Desai, FL

In closure, Sewa International's hurricane relief work was discussed following an update on US Immigration. Dr. Chandra Reddy's closing remarks, on behalf of the host team, warmed the hearts of all the conference attendees. Blessings were delivered by Swami Parmeshananda of Guyana. The concluding thoughts were delivered by Kumar and Hansa Dave of Indiana with words of gratitude.

### **Testimonials:**

*"I find HMEC conferences a great place for individuals/ Organizations affiliated with Sanathana Sanatana Dharma come together. It is literally "Hinduism in action" with lot of strategic and tactical planning. A must- attend event for everyone involved in community service." - Vallabha Tantry, MN*

*"HMEC as an amazing experience especially after going to one last year. It was eye opening to see the whole process of creating event from the ground up. I am honored to have been invited back as an intern, allowed to participate in planning the youth sessions and the conference as a part of the local team. It was incredible to see how young adults from different age groups could have similar experiences and viewpoints. I am ecstatic to attend future HMECs." - Nina Jain, Hindu Temple of Central Indiana youth group, IN*

*"It was a great pleasure to be in the 12th HMEC Annual conference. I had tears in my eyes as I felt I was in "Bharat" among my own people." - Acharya Dharmendra Sharma, came from New Delhi to attend HMEC.*

*"Attending HMEC 2017 was a remarkable experience. Had an opportunity to interact with the Hindu brothers and sisters from all over the continent and share/learn experiences in building, maintaining and operating temples." - Tirupati Boliseti, Ontario Canada*

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### **HMEC**

The vision of HMEC is to be the network of Hindu Organizations for effective leadership generation to generation in North America. Representatives from Hindu temples and institutions meet to deliberate and solve issues collectively. This conference provides a great opportunity to community leaders to learn from each other and ultimately grow as one community. The World Hindu Council of America (VHPA), founded in 1970 and incorporated in the state of New York ~~in 1974~~, is an independent, nonprofit, tax- exempt and volunteer-based charitable organization serving the needs of Hindu community in USA. It aims to build a dynamic and vibrant Hindu society rooted in the eternal values of Dharma and inspired by the lofty ideal of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, i.e. the entire creation is one family. For more information on VHPA, please write to [gensecy@vhp-america.org](mailto:gensecy@vhp-america.org) ~~vhp-office@vhp-america.org~~ or visit [www.vhp-america.org](http://www.vhp-america.org)



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