



Session 9

Hindu Mandir Empowerment Council
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Sudha Bhatt
CHSC
(Certificate in Hindu Spiritual Care)

Speaker Bio



- Current member of Chinmaya Mission Bakersfield, CA since 2005.
- Serving Chinmaya Mission Centers since 1980 (Chicago, Bakersfield, Fresno, Phoenix).
- Retired English Professor
- Bala Vihar teacher for past 40 years, teaching Geeta Chanting to children and adults, also leads weekly adult study groups.
- Principal Coordinator of Annual Bala Vihar Youth Camps.
- Working towards Hindu Spiritual Care certification, through Chinmaya International Foundation in Kerala.

Why Hindu Chaplaincy Matters



Hindu Diaspora in USA. Statistics.

US Hindu population is ~3.6 million (~1% of the US pop.),
need for spiritual support is close to not at all

Solution: 1,000+ registered active temples nationwide
can fulfill that need

Gen-Z and Gen-Alpha youth in 200+ universities
need spiritual guidance against
identity issues,
mental health pressures,
and anti-Hindu bias

Only 20 or so full-time Hindu chaplains nationwide

Why Hindu Chaplaincy Matters (cont.)



- **Youth and University Students:** Second- and third-generation Hindu youth often navigate complex cultural dualities. When facing mental distress, academic anxiety, or existential doubts, they rarely seek out a traditional priest due to language barriers or cultural detachment. A chaplain who speaks fluent English and understands the American college landscape can bridge the gap using Dharmic principles.
- **Healthcare and End-of-Life Care:** When a Hindu patient enters an intensive care unit (ICU) or end-of-life care, non-Hindu hospital chaplains may not understand crucial Dharmic customs—such as reciting the *Bhagavad Gita*, playing *mantras*, or handling sacred threads (*yajnopavita*) and symbols. A trained Hindu chaplain provides *Sewa* (selfless service) and comfort during times of illness, dying, and bereavement.
- **Corporate & Public Spaces:** With thousands of Hindu professionals in technology, healthcare, and finance, corporate environments are increasingly demanding multifaitth spiritual support. Hindu chaplains ensure our traditions are accurately represented in corporate, military, and civic forums.

CHSC (Certificate in Hindu Spiritual Care)



- On behalf of Vilasini ji, the Programme Director of *Certificate of Hindu Spiritual Care*, offered by Chinmaya International Foundation (CIF) in Kerala, I will give a few details of this program. Please feel free to contact Vilasini ji (spiritualcare@chinfo.org) or me (sudhabhatt108@gmail.com) for additional information.
- This program will bring certification whose credits are recognized by Association of Professional Chaplains and by the United Theological Seminary. Upon completion, one will be equipped to serve as a Hindu chaplain in many venues
- It is one and half year course.
- New session starts in January, 2027. For further details, please pick up the flyer, and a trifold, with QR code, at our booth in the lobby.

Courses offered (CHSC)



- CHSC 501: *Introduction to Spiritual Care*: Teaches skills needed to be a Hindu Spiritual Care Giver, listening and attending skills, assessment and referral, etc.
- CHSC 605: *Indian Psychology*: covers Ayurvedic model of health, the Yogic and Vedantic perspectives on well-being/consciousness, and how these concepts apply to spiritual care.
- CHSC 601: *Bhagavad Gita*, has two components—Part A and Part B.
- Final semester offers two courses: (1) Rites and Rituals and Vedanta, Part A and B and (2) Clinical Practicum
- Besides these, there is a requirement for working as a volunteer spiritual care provider in a clinical placement.
- *Spiritual Retreat Reflection* (2 credits) Elective.

Will the Hindu Chaplain replace a Purohit?



- Hindu Chaplains will not replace traditional priests. In fact there is a way to see that purohits can act also as Hindu Spiritual care providers in a limited capacity.
- Mandir priests and executives see hundreds of devotees daily and weekly. They can identify those in need and guide the devotees to seek further help when necessary.
- VHPA and Madhu Sharma ji may be able to help on a short training for purohits to play this role. Please contact Madhu ji at **mvedak.sharma@gmail.com** if interested.

What can a Mandir do?



Here is How Temple Boards Can Lead the Movement: Temple leaders hold the financial and administrative capability to establish chaplaincy within North America.

- **Sponsor Education & Training:** Fund scholarships for young adults and devoted community members to complete Certificate of Hindu Spiritual Care (1½ year virtual course work offered by Chinmaya International Foundation).
- **Create Outreach Positions:** Partner with local hospitals, hospice facilities, and universities to sponsor part-time or full-time Hindu chaplaincy roles.
- **Educate the Congregation:** Raise awareness among temple devotees about spiritual counseling services, encouraging youth to consider chaplaincy as a noble vocation (Sewa).

By investing in trained chaplains alongside our revered priests, we protect the emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being of future generations of Hindus in America.

Please resolve to make a proposal to your mandir board, to achieve this goal. **Sample Proposal** that will work as a guide to start action is available at our booth outside.