

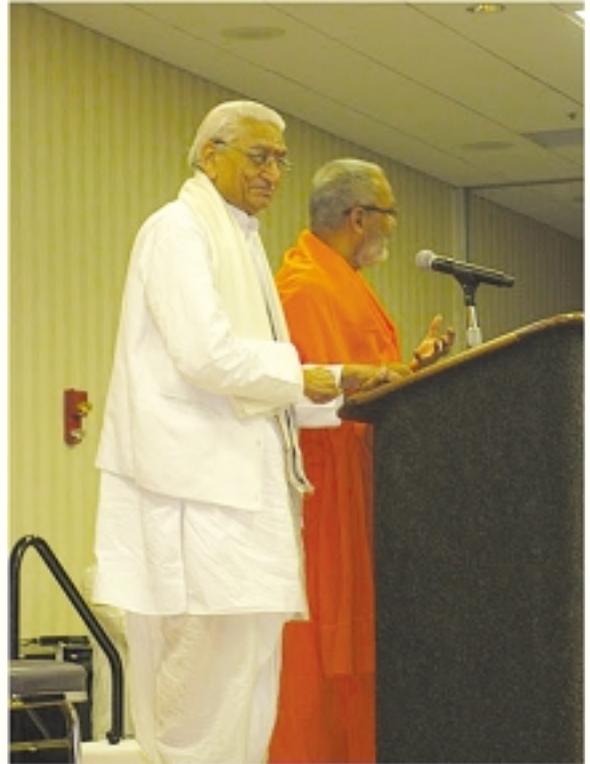
## Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference

COLUMBUS, OHIO, October 1, 2011: Over 280 delegates representing nearly 100 Mandirs (temples) and Hindu organizations from across the world participated in the sixth annual Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference (HMEC). The gathering was held from September 23rd through 25th, 2011 in Columbus, Ohio. The Sixth HMEC was hosted by Bharatiya Hindu Temple (Columbus) and ten other Mandir co-hosts from the Midwest and East Coast. Participants came from Hawaii, New Zealand, Canada, Australia, and from all across USA.

Delegates ranged in ages from teenagers to those in their eighties and came from a variety of ethnic and career backgrounds.

HMEC endeavors to assist in the development of networks and relationships between Mandir executives so that a cohesive and focused Hindu-American community can be created with Mandirs as its nucleus. The participants were focused on developing programs to provide leadership to nourish, protect and sustain Hindu Dharma in North America. There was also an emphasis on service to the broader community through blood drives, health fairs, school supply donations and tutoring projects.

Addressing the conference by video, Swami Dayananda Saraswati of the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam (AVG), emphasized that the



Hindu Mandirs need to work together to stand up to external forces. Each Mandir and individual can contribute to projects and ideas that are generated at HMEC. Sadhavi Chaitanya of AVG, gave a rousing keynote address on karma, temples and our responsibilities as devotees, "everything is worshipful, everything is an act of worship, this is what we have to understand."

Paramacharya Sadasivanatha Palaniswami of Hinduism Today spoke on 14 questions people ask about Hinduism while Dr. S. Yegnasubramanian explaining the practice of Vedic tradition in the West urged that, "we need to make Bhagavad Gita the glove

compartment text for all Hindus. There is no shortcut to education, even in religion.” Other prominent speakers included Swami Parmatmananda of AVG in Rajkot, Gujarat, Srinandanadana Das, Swami Parmeshanand and Swami Nikhilanand of Radha Madhav Dham, who pointed out in his parting thoughts that, “Sanaatan Dharma is eternal and survives even pralaya. It doesn’t need us, we need it. Sanaatan Dharma is going to survive no matter what. Our involvement will just benefit us”. Sri Ashok Singhal, President of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, gave an inspiring speech on the need for unity, assertiveness and a collective response in the face of insults and threats facing the Hindus around the world and touched on the unconstitutional Prevention of Communal and Targeted Violence Bill of 2011 proposed by the National Advisory Council (NAC) of the Government of India.

The national and local volunteers from VHPA and host Mandirs worked shoulder to shoulder for over nine months to organize this conference. Dr. Umesh Shukla, the convener of the conference, remarked that “with the 6th HMEC we have reached a milestone in establishing co-operation among the Hindu Mandirs and Hindu organizations to nourish and sustain Hindu Dharma in North America”.

The outstanding highlight of this HMEC undoubtedly was the spirit of volunteerism of the Columbus Hindu Youth who took great care of the delegates’ needs. Pt Roopnauth Sharma from Ram Mandir, Canada, who gave the inaugural address on Friday evening, was visibly pleased, “It was a wonderful experience being part of the



conference. I look forward to future involvement”, he remarked. Dr. Kusum Vyas, from Houston expressed her joy, “The hosts including youth volunteers were exemplary; every day I get up and thank God that I am a Hindu.” Naga Rajan from Ganehsa Temple in Nashville, TN, stated that, “I thoroughly enjoyed and learnt a lot by interacting with knowledgeable people. I can understand the mega effort required to coordinate so many different people and organizations to make it go smoothly without any issues - truly wonderful!

“Sessions included a variety of topics relevant to the Mandirs and Youth - tomorrow’s torchbearers of Sanatana Dharma. Other topics included ‘Dangers to the Integrity of India (Breaking India)’, ‘Existential Threats to Hindus’ and ‘Plight of Hindu and the Temples in ROW (Rest of the World)’. Several action-items and projects emerged out of these sessions.

Greater participation by youth speakers was one of the highlights of the HMEC 2011. Tejas Dave, a high school senior, presented the Yogafy project aiming to curb childhood obesity. Vindya Adapa, first year law student, described the Cornerstones project



aimed at compiling a history of the Hindu Temples in North America. Pritika Sharma, Joint General Secretary, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, New Zealand talked about the World Hindu Congress in 2014. Varun Khanna, a graduate of Cambridge University stole everyone's heart on Friday evening as he stated, "When we bring Sanskrit into our temples and into our lives, then we reclaim our sanskriti!" Shivam Dave, a 10th grader, from Houston, and the youngest delegate at the conference got a standing ovation as he crisply summarized the youth session proceeding on Sunday morning,

Second book in the HMEC samskar series on "Vivaha Samskar" written by Deepak Kotwal and team was released by Sadhvi Chaitanya. An interim report on the Seva Divas: National Blood Drive 9/11 project led by Dr. Rahul Jindal was presented. The report on HAVAN - Hindu American Vaanaprasthi Network was presented as well. Displays from several suppliers of books (including VHPA), local organizations and temple software management systems, contributed to the benefits offered to the delegates. Several out-of-towners also

enjoyed visits to the host Bhartiya Hindu Temple.

In the concluding session of the conference, delegates agreed on five resolutions:

- \* Strengthen and Uphold the Traditional Standards of Worship in Mandirs
- \* Involve and Integrate Youth in Mandirs
- \* Create Leadership Continuity for Annual HMECs to Achieve Hindu Ekta
- \* Create a Support Network for All Mandirs
- \* Support the Global Hindu Forum - World Hindu Congress 2014 in India

As a result of the conference deliberations on the evolving social, religious, cultural, spiritual, and next-generational needs of the community, Hindu Mandirs throughout North America, working together, will be better able to meet the needs of the 2.5 million strong, confident, diverse and vibrant members of the Hindu-American community. Already, Hindu Jain temple, Pitt has announced to host HMEC-Priest Conference in Spring 2012. Durga Temple, Virginia has announced to host Coalition of Hindu Youth (CHY) Bal Vihar network seminar in Spring 2012; and Toledo Hindu Temple has announced to host HMEC-HAVAN (Vanaprasthi) conference in Nov 2011. Abhinav Dwivedi from Hindu University of America expressed the views of many when he wrote, "I know it takes a lot to put together a large, successful conference, which generate new energies. I saw all positive energies all over. Please convey my appreciation to all."