

[VHP Calls for Cooperation](#)

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"Hindu Unity Year" Will Recruit New Leaders

Inspired by the success of Hindu unity programs in India for the last several years, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America conceived a plan four years ago to proclaim 1989 as "Hindu Unity Year." Now the time has come. The VHP intends to hold a hundred celebrations in a hundred cities, recruit a hundred new youth leaders, a hundred adult leaders and visit the homes of 10,000 Hindus to inspire each with a strong sense of Hindu pride and a recognition of the need for unity. Already a large meeting was held in Los Angeles; more are planned for New York, Chicago, Detroit, Orlando, Houston and many other cities.

The central focus of the year is the Hindu Unity Charter to be signed by religious and spiritual organizations across America. It reads: "We, the Hindus of the United States of America believe, practice and respect the spiritual and religious principles and practices evolved in the Holy land of Bharat. We are inspired by our ancestral realizations: 'Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti-Truth is One, sages call it by different names; Vasudhaiva kutumbakam-The entire humanity is one big family; Sarve api sukhino santu-Let all be happy, healthy and blessed.' We recognize the arrival of a new era of global consciousness. We individually and collectively commit ourselves to promote the ideal of oneness amongst Hindus and to be instrumental in raising awareness by providing nuclei of growth, harmony and peace amongst all sections of human society. We appeal to Hindus all around the world to join hands in this grand effort."

At the request of HINDUISM TODAY, V.H. Dalmia, Working President of the VHP, India, sent the following message: "The Unity Year will surely create awakening among Hindus. Programs proposed for the year are commendable. Unity is the need of the hour before it is too late, if Hindus are to live in peace and with honor and dignity amongst the world population. The spread of the message of Hinduism will promote harmony and peace around the world."

Dr. Dilip Mehta of Houston, Texas, described part of the Hindu Unity Year program planned for their community. "We are going to take a survey form and go to each Hindu's house, as many as possible. It doesn't matter if that Hindu is working at a \$3.30-an-hour job at the Stop and Go or Seven-Eleven store, or if he is a big doctor or a big engineer. We're going to go there, take the survey and explain to them what Hindu unity is. Then we are going to approach the different various sectarian Hindu organizations and ask them to join and have one common voice on the so many issues we face as a Hindu society as a whole. At that time, we must be all Hindus and forget the sectarian, geo-political and linguistic differences to become a united front with a united voice. We are going to suggest that they celebrate certain common festivals together, such as Divali and Janmashtami."

The celebration of festivals and birthdays in 1989 is a significant part of the VHP's program for Hindu Unity Year. The events include the festivals of Ramanavami, Krishna Janmashtami, Vijaya Dasami and Guru Purnima, and the birthdays of Indian national and religious heroes such as Swami Vivekananda, Dr. Keshav Hedgewar, Chhatrapati Shivaji, Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi and Guru Nanak. Consistent with the VHP's traditional stance, the celebrations are billed as "non-sectarian." However, the selection of festivals appears weighted to the Vaishnavite side, ignoring such popular Shakta or Saivite celebrations as Navaratri, Maha Sivaratri, Ganesha Chaturthi, Skanda Shasti, etc. That may obstruct their efforts to reach more traditional groups.

Swami Akhilesh of Bihar State and Professor Prema Pandurang of Madras are stated to visit America from India to address as many of the HUY meetings as possible. Swami Iswarananda Giri of Mount Abu was also included in early announcements, but according to HUY coordinator, Anjlee Pandya, he will not be coming.

VHP spokesperson Dr. Babu Suseelan explained the local meetings to HINDUISM TODAY, "They will be miniature conferences, may publish some kind of souvenir and hold a workshop or seminar on some topic related to Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam." The meetings are not intended solely for VHP members, Dr. Suseelan said. "We are open minded, we are going to invite everybody. We'll be inviting Sikh gurus, Buddhist gurus and Christian leaders to come and address us as to why [humanity] is not united, as to what are the basic ingredients for us to unite under a broader umbrella and live peacefully and happily."

A set of topics is suggested for HUY meetings. They all relate to the consequences of trying to establish a Hindu way of life in a western society. Education of children and adults alike in Hindu religion, psychological health of the family unit, the care of elders now and into the future and the general American public's lack of knowledge of Hinduism are just some of the complex and pressing areas for discussion and action.

Dr. Dilip Mehta said he'd consider the year a success "If we create awareness and a strong identity for a unified voice on the many common issue like the dot-buster gang and the need for Hindu unity." According to program coordinator Anjee Pandya, a main objective is to develop the 100 youth and 100 adult leaders in a 100 different areas. Dr. Suseelan emphasizes that "The HUY is not a way of increasing the number of VHP members or increasing the potential of the VHP. That is not the aim we have, we just want to spread the message."

The editors and staff of HINDUISM TODAY congratulate the VHP on their far-sighted efforts to improve Hinduism's future. In the spirit of harmony and cooperation, let us all make this Hindu Unity Year a success.

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