



Second Dharma Sansad Ends With Great Promises

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Austin, TX, Sept 1, 1999. [Dharma Sansad](#) -1999 was held August 28-29 in Barsana Dham, the beautiful and peaceful 250-acre ashram of H. D. Swami Prakashanand Saraswati located near Austin, Texas. According to Dr. Mahesh Mehta, one of the founding members of Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America and its former president "The ultimate objective of the Dharma Sansad is to enrich the American culture by blending the Hindu spiritual heritage with the scientific and technological culture of USA. The Dharma Sansad in Barsana Dham will go down in the history of American Hindus as an historic event, because some very important resolutions were adopted under the guidance of our revered Dharma Gurus."



Dharma Gurus sitting at the Barsana Dham mandir during the inauguration of the 2nd Dharma Sansad

(From Left) Front Row: Poojya Swami Murugananda, Respected Sardar Shree Chiranjeev Singh, Poojya Swami Chidananda Saraswati (Muniji), H.D. Poojya Shree Prakashananda Saraswati Maharaj, Poojya Swami Tadatmananda, Poojya Swami Aksharananda.

Back Row: Respected Shree Bahadur Singh, Poojya Swami Chandra Mauliya, Poojya Shree Brahmadev Upadhayaya, Poojya Shree Vishwa Prakash Tripathi, Poojya Shree Dharmajit Jigyasu.

This program followed a [Dharma Prasaar Yatra](#), coordinated by Anjlee Pandya-International Coordinator of VHP-A. The Yatra, through the leadership of VHP-A and with the cooperation of many community organizations and temples, brought together over 20,000 people in 10 cities of America during July 31-August 8.



Attending the Dharma Sansad-1999, which was the second such Sansad with the first being held at the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Pennsylvania, were more than 325 Hindu community workers from throughout the USA. Also participating were Dharma Gurus (spiritual leaders) from throughout the USA and several from Bharat. H. D. Swami Prakashanand Saraswati was the presiding Dharma Guru of Dharma Sansad-99. He talked about the eternity of Hinduism. He discussed about are our supreme dharm Gurus whose instructions we all (including the present spiritual leaders) should follow. He also touched upon how to develop a correct understanding of our religion in our youths.

He also encouraged parents to follow the authentic teachings of Hinduism as defined in his book "Sanatan Dharm" and teach them to their children.

It was strongly felt by the participants of the Dharma Sansad-99 that a network of all temples in USA is required to effectively serve our community in several areas. We need to involve our youth in spirituality, religious activities, and social service. We should conduct in local communities at least one common festival (such as Janmashtami, Ram Navami, Holi, or Diwali) where all local temples work together as a first step towards developing a strong Hindu voice. We must encourage Hindus settled in the US to continue serving Bharat through social services, including the eradication of illiteracy from 70 million tribal people. We can promote widespread support of "Ekal Vidyalaya" with the help of temples, ashrams, and other social and cultural organizations. "Ekal Vidyalaya," is a non-formal primary education project to teach children 5 to 14 in rural and tribal areas of India and supported through contributions of only \$1 per day.



The Dharma Gurus participating in the Dharma Sansad-1999 were H. D. Swami Prakashananda Saraswati, Poojya Swami Chidananda Saraswati (Muniji), Poojya Muni Amnendra, Poojya Shree Dinesh Muni, and Poojya Swami Murugananda. Also attending were Poojya Swami Tadatmananda, Poojya Shree Vishwa Prakash

Tripathi, Poojya Swami Ghanshyam Jivandas, Poojya Swami Dharmasambhavdas, Poojya Swami Aksharananda. Poojya Shree Brahmadev Upadhyaya, Poojya Swami Chandra Mauliya, Poojya Shree Dharmajit Jigyasu, Respected Sardar Shree Chiranjeev Singh, Respected Shree Bahadur Singh were also present. Sanyasin disciples residing at Barsana Dham included Sushree Meera Deviji, Sushree Maheshwari Deviji, Sushree Priya Dasiji, and Sushree Krishna Dasiji.



(From Left) Front Row: Poojya Swami Murugananda, Dr. B.K.Modi and Shree Ashok Singhal

Shree Ashok Singhal, Working President of VHP-Bharat also attended. Dr. B. K. Modi, industrialist and Working President-External Affairs of VHP-Bharat, who has been donating more than 50% of his time and considerable finances to community service was an honored guest and speaker.

Panels of Dharma Gurus provided guidance to the community leaders on a number of topics throughout the weekend. Invited community members, including youth, also gave short presentations. Among the thoughts expressed during the weekend were the following:

Poojya Swami Tadatmananda suggested that in the next century, the form taken by the Hindu tradition in the US will be influenced most by Hindus born here. He made the point that our traditions could be made more understandable to the young people by adding English language prayers and devotional songs, rather than by replacing the Hindi and Sanskrit ones. He went on to say that "forms of worship must meet our needs, not God's needs," indicating that God, being God, has no needs. Swami "T" as he is called, asked the attendees to "hold on to the universal truths that cannot be improved on and to allow other features to change."

Poojya Swami Murugananda emphasized the need to live in the present moment. "Be an officer when in the office, not a parent." But when in the family, he said, concentrate on being a parent, on talking to one's children and understanding and providing for their needs.

Poojya Shree Vishwa Prakash Tripathi encouraged the use of the Gayatri Mantra and Yagnas. He stated that "everything in Hinduism is based on science." He emphasized that as Hindus we have duties to ourselves, our families and to society. "Hinduism" he said "is the "art of living." Poojya Shree Dharmajit Jigyasu enlarged on that point, stating that "Hinduism is the art and science of life." He continued "Religion is the whole of life."

Respected Sardar Shree Chiranjeev Singh, National President of Rashtriya Sikh Sangat, stated that the "relationship between Sikh people and Sahajdhari Hindu Samaj has been a unique one...Sikhism without Hindutva has no roots; Hinduhood without Sikh will bear no fruits."

The Dalai Lama's message, in part, sent in writing, was that "since the development of a healthy social attitude built upon a sense of consideration and kindness for other is vital to society, it is important that each of us cultivate love and kindness, ahimsa and compassion in our own daily lives."

Both Ajay Shah of American Hindus Against Defamation (AHAD) and Sri Tusta Krishnadas of the Worldwide Vaishnava Association spoke on several of the recent situations ridiculing Hindu scripture. Krishna Das stated that he was against any fictionalization of Hindu scriptures or deities. Both indicated that if Hindu beliefs can be ridiculed that Hindus would be made to look foolish. Shah stated that AHAD, in past successfully protested the distortion of Lord Krishna's picture on Aerosmith's Nine Lives cover, inclusion of Hindu deities at the Karma Club in Chicago, and improper portrayal of Hindu deities in Universal Studio's Xena: Warrior Princess show.

The emphasis of the Dharma Sansad-1999 was on the youth and their needs. Many of the participants were glad to hear the direct and honest questions from the youngsters (high school to young professionals) and pleased with their comfort level in being Hindu in a non-Hindu environment and their resolve to continue to practice the faith, encourage other young people to do the same, and to, as one of the youth stated, "make a difference."



Sunday morning from 9 am to noon the local Hindu community was invited to attend

the closing session. More than 500 attended this session. Among Sunday's speakers was Poojya Swami Aksharananda. He stated "No one listens to the weak, however lofty their ideals; they only listen to the strong" he stated." He added that "whenever Hindus are strong and united, they benefit the world." Poojya Swami Ghanshyam Jivandas emphasized that "knowledge is wealth." "Unused knowledge is lost; live that knowledge" he continued. Poojya Shree Brahmadev Upadhyaya talked of knowledge leading to wisdom and encouraged international brotherhood and appropriate family values.

Devotional songs by Sri Ashok Sharma, chanting of VHP-A prayers, chanting by the devotees of Barsana Dham and Darshan of Sri RadhaKrishn complemented the lectures.

Appreciation of the program was heartfelt. Poojya Muni Dineshji of the Jersey City Yoga Centre stated that the Dharma Sansad is "reflecting great potential to make the dream of making unity in diversity true." This unity was also perceived by a devotee of Barsana Dham who said "It felt so very good to see the various peoples worship Shree Krishn together here at Barsana Dham, in love, peace and harmony, in unity of heart." Dr. Sen Pathak, a geneticist, said that "It was a thrilling experience of my life to witness Dharma Gurus of different religions of India under the umbrella of Sanatan Dharm (Hinduism) sitting on the same stage and blessing the public for Hindu Unity." Professor T. R. N. Rao expressed the feelings of many, saying "It was a wonderful opportunity to meet, talk to, and receive the blessings of so many Dharmagurus and Dharmacharyas in a short two days."

Dharma Sansad-1999, sponsored by Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America with Vimal Sodhani as the overall coordinator and Padmakant Khambhati, Ramesh P. Shah and Subhash Gupta as the local VHP-A coordinators, was an outstanding example of cooperation between many Hindu organizations, spiritual leaders, and local community leaders. A volunteer from Houston, Uma Srinivasan, said "The Dharma Sansad is the best idea ever implemented for the Indian community." She continued, stating that Barsana Dham is a "paradise on earth-peaceful and beautiful."

The next Dharma Sansad is expected to be held next fall or late summer in California. Many of this year's attendees are already looking forward to next year's event.



Some of the Dharma Gurus who attended the 2nd Dharma Sansad

(From Left) 01. Poojya Muni Amnendra 02. Poojya Shree Vishwa Prakash Tripathi
03. Poojya Shree Dinesh Muni 04. Poojya Shree Dharmajit Jigyasu 05. Respected
Sardar Shree Chiranjeev Singh 06. Poojya Swami Chidananda Saraswati (Muniji)
07. Respected Shree Bahadur Singh 08. Poojya Swami Tadatmananda 09. Poojya
Swami Murugananda 10. Poojya Swami Aksharananda 11. Poojya Shree
Brahmadev Upadhayaya 12. Poojya Swami Chandra Mauliya

Click here to read the report from the India Herald paper.

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