



Arya Samaj of Greater Houston hosts sixth annual HAVAN conference organized by VHPA

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VHPA HOUSTON CHAPTER, VOLUNTEERS & HAVAN TEAM AT ARYA SAMAJ OF GREATER HOUSTON

Sunday, June 30, 2013

Houston, Texas, USA: World Hindu Council of America (VHPA) conducts fifth annual HAVAN Conference in Houston, Texas. The event was hosted by Arya Samaj of Greater Houston. Around 120 plus Hindus participated along with an eminent panel of speakers and many active Hindu community leaders.

The Hindu American Vanaprasthi Network (HAVAN) is launched to serve the self-development and identification of service fields need for retired and to be retired members of Hindu community living in America. The acronym HAVAN is chosen to reflect the transformative lifestyle stage of Vanaprasthi. The goal is to engage them locally in meaningful community service activities, develop network, and opportunities to use their skills, specialties, and wisdom for the benefit of the society.

Conference Topics included Vedic Vision and Modern day Vanaprasthi lifestyle, Vanaprasthi lifestyle in American context, Experience – History of Hindus in America, Women and Hindu lifestyle, Engaging with Houston.s Diverse Communities, Building Bridges. Youth perspective, Vanaprasthis – Medical Science perspective, Social Mingling

The daylong conference inauguration session started with Yogesh Naik (VHPA Houston chapter) informing audience about objectives and vision about HAVAN conference and how it positively impacts seniors of Hindu community in terms of networking, resource sharing and collaboration. Acharya Surya Nandaji from Arya Samaj of Greater Houston performed the invocation ceremony and educated audience about four ashrams (phases) of life, their meaning and roles one play in each phase as per Hindu Vedic scriptures. Devinder Mahajan (Chief Coordinator of Arya Samaj of Greater Houston) welcomed audience and thanked VHPA for organizing such enlightening conference and spoke about programs of Arya Samaj focused towards imbibing Hindu values and culture in children, youth and adults . Pravin Vyas (President, VHPA Houston Chapter) gave an overview of HAVAN and what expectations Hindu seniors can have from it. He also thanked Arya Samaj.

Participants collectively conferred that:

- A national network of Vanaprasthis (senior adults) is needed
- They should regularly meet at local level and discuss issue and resolutions
- Create library of useful material for Vanapasthi in the area of health, estate, spiritual and culture
- Well being of Vanaprasthis (senior adults) is a responsibility of the entire Hindu society, including youth

The session on Engaging Vanprasthis.Discussion included key community leaders with Acharaya Surya Nandaji educating participants on Vedic vision and modern day lifestyle and how Vanprasthis giving real life examples of challenges Vanprasthis encounter in America. Chinmaya mission Acharya Shri Gaurangbhai Nanavaty spoke on Vanaprasthi lifestyle in American context, challenges they face in old age and communications with children and grandchildren and their important role in social transformation. Dr. Mahesh

Dave of BAPS spoke on current state of Vanaprasthis from Medical science perspective and what medical approach they should adopt what treatments they should avoid for healthy physical and mental well-being. Atul Kothari spoke on best retirement planning for Vanaprasthi lifestyle in terms of Social Security, Medicare, investments and other retirement packages. Abha Dwivedi from American General Life & Accident company educated audience on insurance need for senior citizen lifestyle and companies that offer such insurance programs, selection criteria and enrollments. Padamakant Khambhati spoke on .What can Hindus accomplish collectively that we cannot as individual Hindus?. followed by question and answer session.

Post lunch in Session .3 which themed .Engaging Vanaprasthis.Health & Seva. Sanjay Mehta (Jt. General Secretary of VHPA) involved audience in Memory lane game. Jeopardy. Ramesh Bhai Shah (President, Ekal Vidyalaya Global) spoke on Seva (social service) opportunities for youth, adults and Vanprasthis at local and national level, continuing that Sarojni Gupta also educated audience on SEWA International activities and helpline phone number for community social service and help need (SEWA helpline number: (832) 900 9394). Dr. Renu Thapar educated audience on tips for keeping healthy mental health and day to day activities which fosters good mental health with emphasis on getting involved in some activity as a volunteer, office bearer, donation fundraising or editorials for social organizations.

The final session scoped .Engaging Vanaprasthis.Networking and Planning. in which Sushma Pallod (Vice-President, VHPA Houston Chapter) conducted a light Yoga session involving participants. Lauren Santerre spoke on interfaith service and Dialogue: Engaging with Houston Diverse Communities. Neeraj Salhotra spoke on building bridges with youth and how senior community members can apply active role in educating school students in getting high SAT and other academic scores by volunteering in academic education at various community colleges. Sudhir Mathuria spoke on healthcare, Medicare and long term care program with innovative and informational video presentation. At the concluding session Sanjay Mehta (Jt. General Secretary of VHPA) thanked audience, volunteers and Arya Samaj of Greater Houston for organizing such insightful and purposeful conference for Hindu seniors and retired community members. All the attendees were gifted with book on speeches of Swami Vivekananda VHP-A

He emphasized the foundation objectives of VHPA which envision Hindu unity irrespective of caste, creed, and faith based sampraday or country of origin as VHPA is for everybody. He educated audience on programs of VHPA such as Hindu Mandir Executive Conference (HMEC) which has united Hindu temples across USA/CA and allowed sharing of knowledge, resources and helped priests develop contemporary

skills for Hindu requirement in North America. HAVAN is a by product of HMEC. Some other excellent publications of VHPA like Vivah Sanskara, Hindu Prayer Book. Aim of HAVAN is threefold:

First. Seniors to feel good about self, second. Smooth shift from current lifestyle, third. connection with children and grandchildren. Finally suggestions and comments were discussed for dynamic working model that help. Some take away points for conference were developing seniors home in USA/CA for parents and grandparents, expanding HAVAN network, databases, phone calls and regular monthly meetings. Create library of useful material for Vanapasthi in the area of health, estate, spiritual and culture. To join HAVAN movement in greater Houston area please contact Yogesh Naik. yogeshnaik@att.net & Pravin Vyas. prvyas@yahoo.com Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America Inc. (World Hindu Council of America) (National): <http://www.vhp-america.org/>