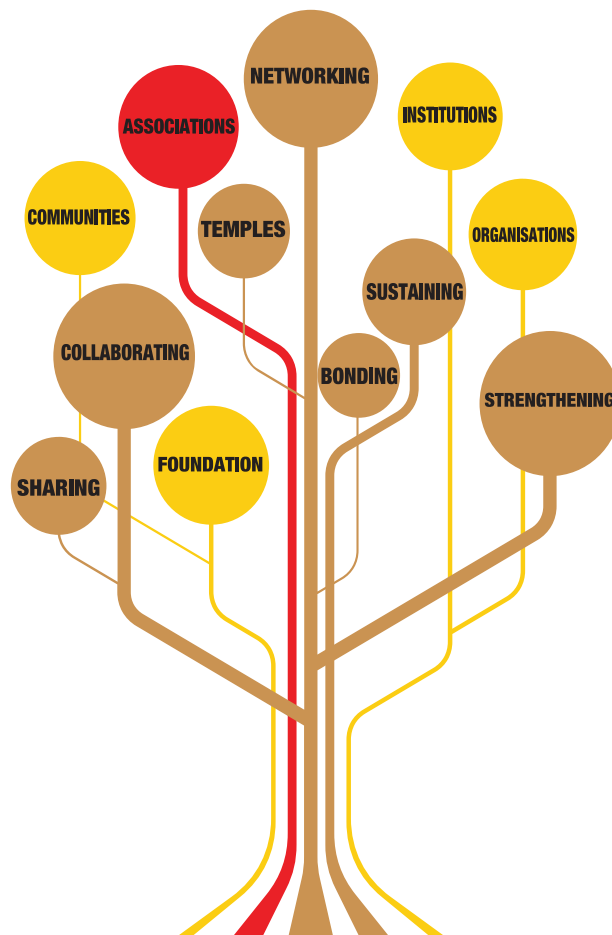




HINDU ORGANIZATIONS, TEMPLES AND ASSOCIATIONS (HOTA) FORUM

SANGHE SHAKTI KALIYUGE



MISSION STATEMENT

The aim of the Hindu Organisations, Temples and Associations Forum (HOTA Forum) is to bring together all Hindu organisations, temples, associations, institutions and *sampradayas*, who are working for the Hindu resurgence, on one common platform. Additionally, HOTA Forum will empower Hindu organisations by providing necessary resources, encouraging networking and sharing of resources, and instilling a sense of pride.

INTRODUCTION

There are many different forces within the Hindu society working actively for the Hindu resurgence and renaissance. While the numerous groups working for the Hindu resurgence have been generally accepted among the Hindu society and even celebrated in some quarters as a sign of the strength of Hindu Dharma, there has also been a historical downside to this development mainly due to the chronic disorganisation of the Hindu society. One reason for this has been the disjointed efforts by Hindus leading to lack of assistance in the hour of need and inability to pool resources. Additionally, disparate Hindu organisations, while doing vital work for the Hindu cause, have rarely shared news of their activities with their fellow Hindus or their counterparts who are also attempting to make Hindu society stronger. This failure to disseminate information combined with the lack of coordination between various Hindu groups has hurt the Hindu resurgence more than helping it.

These numerous groups are striving to make Hindu society better as well as stronger, but are working for the Hindu community in their own individual capacities and usually work separately from each other. This has led indirectly to a lack of unity and organisation in the Hindu community, which ultimately has been detrimental to the overall interests of Hindu society. While various Hindu groups may wish to work separately due to various reasons, it is important that at the very least all these groups are kept informed about the activities of their fellow Hindus. This will allow for a more efficient division of labour and more efficient use of resources. If Hindu groups could learn to work together, or at the very least work in a more coordinated manner, the Hindu resurgence would greatly benefit from the efficient division of labour and the judicious use of resources that arise from this effort.



Chairperson: Shri Suresh Joshi

Secretary General, RSS, Bharat

Introductory Remarks

Shri Suresh (Bhaiyyaji) Joshi started the session by explaining the meaning of “Sanghe Shakti Kaliyuge” – in the current age we need to organize to become strong. There are many Hindu organisations around the world and they have been working and have made great strides in different fields such as arts, Yoga, Ayurveda, literature, Sanskrit. He emphasized the importance of creating a collaborative platform for all Hindu Organisations, Temples and Associations (HOTA), and need to come together to share experiences and work with a spirit of cooperation to further the goals of Hindu society. He also emphasized that all these entities need to co-operate and complement each other for the good of the community.

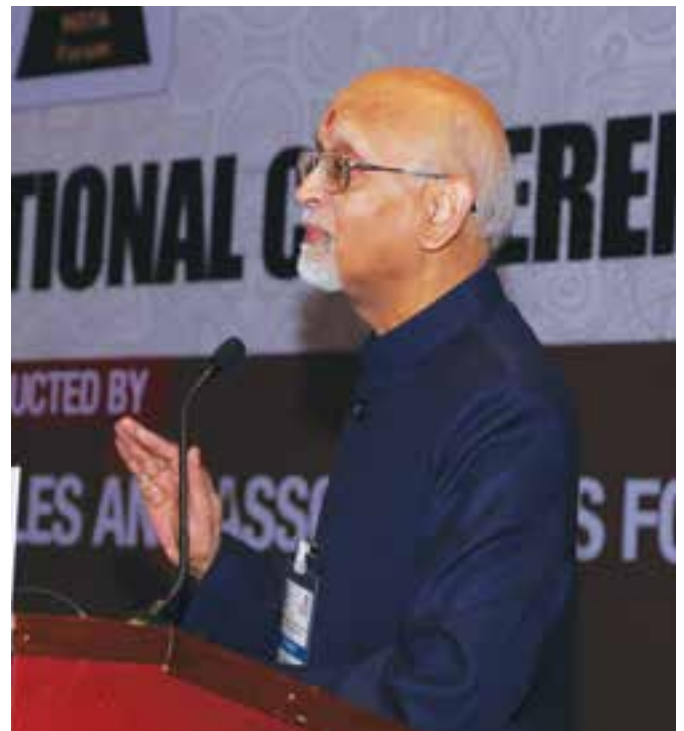
Dr. Abhaya Asthana

President, VHP America, USA

Hindu Mandir Executive Conference

USA – A successful experiment

Dr. Abhaya Asthana spoke about Hindu Mandir Executive Conference (HMEC) - a movement that started in 1998 to network the temple executives of North America. Swami Dayananda Saraswathi and other Dharmacharyas guided this movement to help not only the second generation Hindus in North America, but also more than 30 million non-Hindus who are influenced by Hindu ideas such as vegetarianism, Yoga, meditation. The HMEC represents all schools of thought which have their roots in the sacred soil of Bharat such as Hindus, Buddhists, Jains etc. Historically, mandirs were *jan jagran kendras* (centres of social awakening); so teaching Hindu art forms and running seva programs should be encouraged in mandirs. HMEC



has added values to mandirs by improving temple administration, conducting training programs, and has initiated service projects like documenting *sanksars* (rituals) for life events, educational scholarships, priest conference, HAVAN (Hindu American Vanaprasthi Network), etc. The aim is to have future historians record that Hindus brought with them a spiritual lifestyle that transformed America.



Smt. Mamta Bhikha

Executive Secretary, VHP, New Zealand

HOTA Forum, New Zealand – A successful experiment of bringing Hindu community organizations together

Smt. Mamta Bhikha spoke about the Hindu Organisations, Temples and Associations (HOTA) Forum in New Zealand that was established in May, 2010. She said the main objective is to empower over 70 Hindu organisations, which are working together, through mutual assistance and resource sharing. The forum uses Hindu festivals to spread the message of universal fellowship and deepen ties with the larger Dharmic community including Buddhists, Taoists, Shinto and also the indigenous Maori. ‘Hindu Wisdom Workshop’ is the most recent project to spread Hindu wisdom on Yoga, Ayurveda etc. The HOTA forum also facilitates activities like Yogathon, Seva Day, visits of Dharma gurus, and media-watch. The HOTA logo – the Ekta Shankh –

was designed to represent Hindus of all backgrounds holding up the *shankh*, a universal Hindu symbol.

Shri Mahaprabhu Dasa (Martin Gurvich)

General Secretary, Hindu Forum of Europe

The challenge and opportunity in organizing Hindu community in Europe

Shri Mahaprabhu Dasa spoke about Hindu Forum of Europe which represents various umbrella organisations and over 2 million Hindus spread across Europe. In countries like Belgium, Hindu Dharma is not officially recognized as a religion. This deprives Hindus of various benefits like priest salaries, building renovation grants, running faith based schools etc. Official recognition also help s communicate with the government and participate in high-level meetings and conferences. The Hindu Forum of Europe highlights and fights against discrimination or persecution faced by Hindus in different parts of the world. He spoke about some challenges that include getting leaders of different spiritual traditions to work together and to portray

a consistent message to non-Hindus without confusing them; lack of funding, especially when Hindu business and followers rarely contribute for advocacy work. We need to learn from the Jewish community that has as many divergent spiritual philosophies, but works as one on social and political issues.





Shri Muljibhai Pindolia

President, Hindu Council of Africa

Challenge and opportunity in organizing Hindu community in Africa

Shri Muljibhai Pindolia spoke about the benefits derived from Hindu unity and organisation in Africa, and the associated challenges. We need to identify the problems and formulate solutions at the local, regional, continental and world level. In this, we should learn from how other religions have organised – unlike us, they work as per a planned agenda. The achievements of our ancestors should inspire us to sacrifice for our Dharma. The Hindu Council of Kenya was formed in 1973 as a response to the atrocities of the Ugandan dictator Idi Amin. Later, the Hindu Council of Africa was born, and today it represents Hindus of 33 African countries. Hindu organisations need to work collaboratively and present a united voice to safeguard interests of

the Hindu community world-wide.





Chairperson: Shri Sat Maharaj

General Secretary, Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha,
Trinidad & Tobago

Introductory Remarks

Shri Sat Maharaj said that Hindu temples around the world play various roles and face different challenges. Hence we need to work out location specific solutions and responses. He said that Hindu Dharma is fast spreading across the world, and we need to make Hindu scriptures accessible in all languages.

Swami Paramatmananda Saraswati

Secretary General, Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, Bharat

Liberating Hindu temples from Government clutches

Swami Paramatmananda ji said that Hindu temples in Bharat face the unique problem of Government control. From ancient times, Hindu kings have considered themselves as servants of God. They and other rich people left temples and huge tracts of land in the name of the temple deity. The British colonial Government took over some temples to settle petty disputes, but since Independence, every state Government expanded this temple take-over through common and special laws. There are two main problems arising from this Government control. First, temple income is credited to a common Government treasury and is open to misuse – one estimate is that Hindu temples across Bharat generate income of Rs 1.5 lakh crores per year! Second, temple administration is managed by Government officials, including non-Hindus. Other consequences include poor upkeep of temples, land grabbing, death of temples as centres of Hindu art and culture. The Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha has held legal conferences on this issue, and filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court.





Dr. Hari Mohan Jha Bidyarthi

Shree Gajanan Maharaj Sansthan, Shegaon,
Maharashtra, Bharat

Role of temples in serving community

Dr. Hari Mohan Jha Bidyarthi spoke about the role of temples in serving community using the example of Sant Shree Gajanan Maharaj Sansthan. It follows the dictum “Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah” (May All Beings be Happy). All wealth accumulated by the Sansthan is used in selfless service of society and humanity. It spends 71% of its total annual income on medical, educational and other philanthropic activities. The Sansthan has a large pool of doctors and medical professionals who offer free treatment to the poor. It runs schools, an engineering college and a research centre. It carries out other social programs like cloth distribution, and feeds up to 75 lakh devotees each day. The trust generates both direct and indirect employment for the nearby

villages, generating around Rs. 400 crore per annum business for local villages.

Shri Ronur Murali Bhattar

Chief Priest, Hindu Temple of Minnesota, USA

Role of priests and the future of Hindu society – Challenges

Shri Ronur Murali Bhattar spoke about the role of priests and the future of the Hindu society. He said that well trained priests are essential to preserve and spread the Vedic Hindu Dharma. Priests enlighten devotees through their dedication to God and bring them together through rituals. Outside of Bharat, priests play an important role in educating second generation Hindus on various rites of passage. Priests offer comfort to the sick and counsel married couples. As young Hindu children are more exposed to Western culture, all Hindu temples in North America have started the concept of Sunday school to teach Hindu Dharma and epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata. He suggested that the *pathshalas* which train priests in Bharat need to start teaching foreign languages as well as the deeper meaning of mantras, so that priests can effectively communicate with overseas followers.





Shri Champat Rai

Secretary General, Vishva Hindu Parishad, Bharat
VHP – Vanguard of Hindu awakening

Shri Champat Rai said that the WHC 2014 is a living example of Hindu awakening. Over the years, Hindus had become apathetic and developed an inferiority complex. Hindu society has lost the ancient values like feeling of oneness and respect for women. This has led to various social ills like caste discrimination and rise in crime, especially against women. We need to revive those values to bring about social change. It is necessary today to awaken the Hindus, especially in Bharat. Today, Hindus from over 50 countries have gathered to discuss various issues facing the community world-wide. VHP has reached many remote corners of Bharat, to run informal literacy campaigns and make society self-organizing. Its goal is to expand its reach even more and give rise to a united Hindu society.





Chairperson: Shri Dattatreya Hosabale

Joint General Secretary, RSS, Bharat

Introductory Remarks

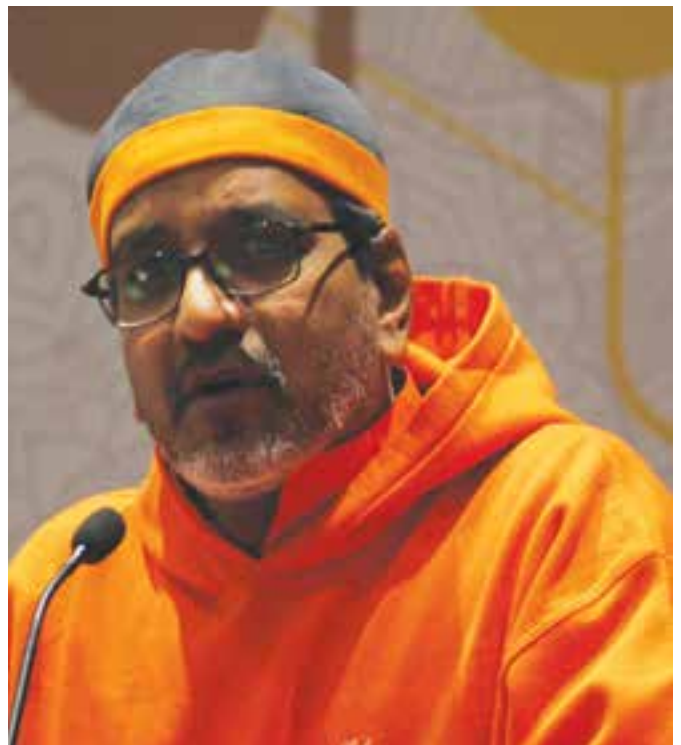
Shri Dattatreya Hosabale stressed on the motto for WHC 2014 “Sangachchhadhwam Samvadadhwam” i.e. the need for Hindus to step together, express together. Hindus have assimilated seamlessly with host societies across the world, and we need to clear any misconceptions related to the term Hindu. We need continuous awareness in the Hindu society and not rely solely on individuals or specific organisations. We need to develop a strategic response to the denigration and distortion of Hindus, avoiding knee jerk reactions. Presence of influential Hindus in various segments of society is required. We should promote universal Hindu spiritual values and practices like Yoga and Ayurveda.

Swami Mitrananda

Spiritual Teacher, Chinmaya Mission, Bharat

Can Hindu organisations come to a common platform for a common cause?

Swami Mitrananda started with a parable to show that Hindu Dharma is attuned to the human mind which demands variety, and hence our Rishis have given variety of spiritual practices which are all valid. Hindu Dharma has a broad universal vision which accommodates various cultures. Hence, when we talk of bringing Hindu organisations on the same platform, we should not attempt theological unity because diversity is our strength. But we need to come together on various issues like social reform, freeing temples from Government control, maintaining Bharat's integrity. Traditionally, the Hindu society has come together at the Kumbh Mela – that is the best platform to raise a united voice on issues of common interest. Chinmaya Mission has also started the concept of Hindu Spiritual Service Fair where different Hindu organisations can learn and take inspiration from each other.





Prof. Guna Magesan

General Secretary, VHP, New Zealand

Successful experiment in positioning and strengthening Hindu society

Prof. Guna Magesan presented the case study of New Zealand with regard to strengthening the Hindu society. Hindus are a peace loving and contributing community who add value to their host society. The Hindu Council of New Zealand, registered in 2006, started its public activities with a big bang conference that was inaugurated by the New Zealand PM. The council is also in Special Consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Despite opposition, including from fellow Hindus, the Hindu Council was able to successfully establish itself and work collaboratively with New Zealand Government bodies on various social causes. Another win was the Maori King, who usually doesn't travel much,

inaugurating the second conference. The council has since organised many successful events where Government agencies also participate.

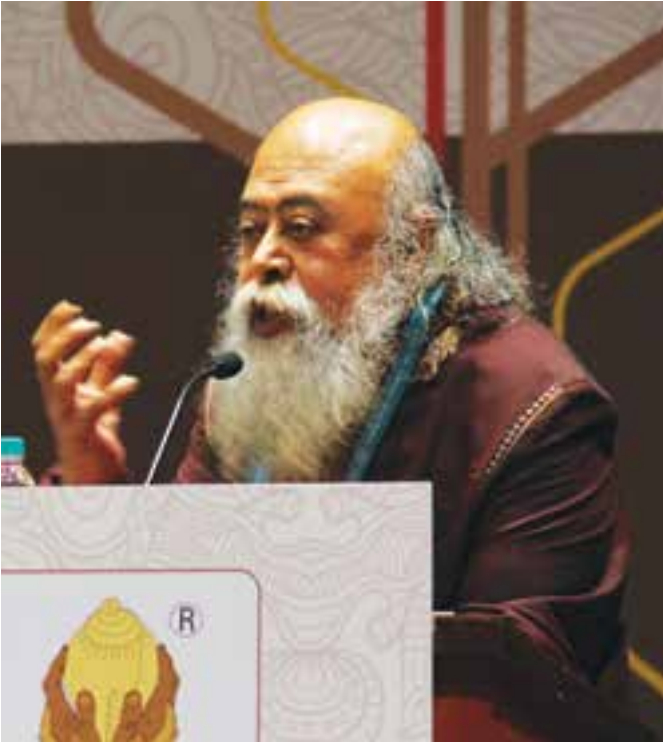
Shri Mohan Rupadas

ISKCON, Bharat

Taking Hindu Dharma global – reaching to unreached areas

Shri Mohan Rupadas said that Hindu Dharma is growing all over the world. Many Westerners, including scientists and professors are following the path of Dharma, while the Bhagavad Gita is being taught in Western universities like Harvard. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada established ISKCON. Today, it has grown to over 500 centers across all continents. ISKCON runs schools, colleges, farm communities and *goshalas* (cow shelters). The Bhagavad Gita has been translated into over 70 international languages, and over half-a-billion Vedic books have been distributed. ISKCON teachers travel all over the world to teach the Gita and Hindu Dharma.





Prof. S.N. Balagangadhara

University of Ghent, Belgium

Intellectual challenges before Hindu society and our responses

Prof Balagangadhara said that while celebrating successes, we must face up to the challenges facing Hindu culture and society. There are two main problems – one is proselytization, primarily by Christianity, including an insidious secularization whereby we have all accepted Christian ideas in guise of modern rationality. Second is the problem of a colonial consciousness. The British believed they had a ‘civilizing mission’ in Bharat as they viewed Hindus as dirty, immoral, corrupt and superstitious. But even after independence, we have internalized that same view about ourselves, as can be seen in our current debates around caste discrimination, corruption, cleanliness, and religion. This is not to deny the reality of the challenges we face, but the

theories being used to understand these problems are secularized Christian variants which make our society appear backward and primitive.





Chairperson: Prof. Ved Nanda

Provost, Denver University, USA

Introductory Remarks

Prof. Ved Nanda said that the human rights movement originated in the West after the Second World War in response to Nazi atrocities, as an integral way to maintain international peace. However, global human rights organisations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch distorted the idea by continuously maligning Bharat. We now have some organisations set up by committed individuals who are championing Hindu human rights and working to protect Hindu social, economic, political, religious and cultural rights across the globe.

Shri Sradhanand Sital

Chairperson, Global Human Rights Defense (GHRD), Netherlands

Defending human rights for Hindus in Pakistan and Bangladesh

Shri Sradhanand Sital said that the Global Human Rights Defense (GHRD), inspired by the principles of Dharma, fights for the rights of minorities in South Asia. GHRD is based in The Hague and has 15 full-time salaried staff, including Westerners. The three pillars of GHRD are monitoring, support and lobbying. He pointed out that gangrape of Hindu women, land grabbing, and destruction of temples are the weapons widely used against the Hindu minority of Bangladesh and Pakistan. The Hindu population has been diminishing in both countries. Sadly, Hindus in those two countries are poorly organised, and the larger Hindu community has also failed them. GHRD educates these Hindus about their rights, and provides material and legal assistance to them. He regretted that any human rights violation of a Christian or Muslim is met with vociferous protests across the world, but repeated violations of Hindu rights don't elicit any response, even from Hindus.





Shri Samir Kalra

Hindu American Foundation, USA

Defending Hindu human rights and influencing Government in USA

Shri Samir Kalra said that Hindu American Foundation is a non-profit advocacy group whose main aim is to educate American society about Hindu Dharma and raise awareness within American law makers and officials about Hindu human rights issues. The group pushes for policy change towards countries that persecute Hindus. Anti-Hindu groups have created strong lobby groups in USA, which HAF is now beginning to counter. For example, HAF advocated the cause of ethnic cleansing of Bhutanese Hindus through Congressional hearings and gave them a platform when the whole international community has been silent on this issue. Similarly, HAF has highlighted the plight of Hindus in Pakistan, especially Hindu

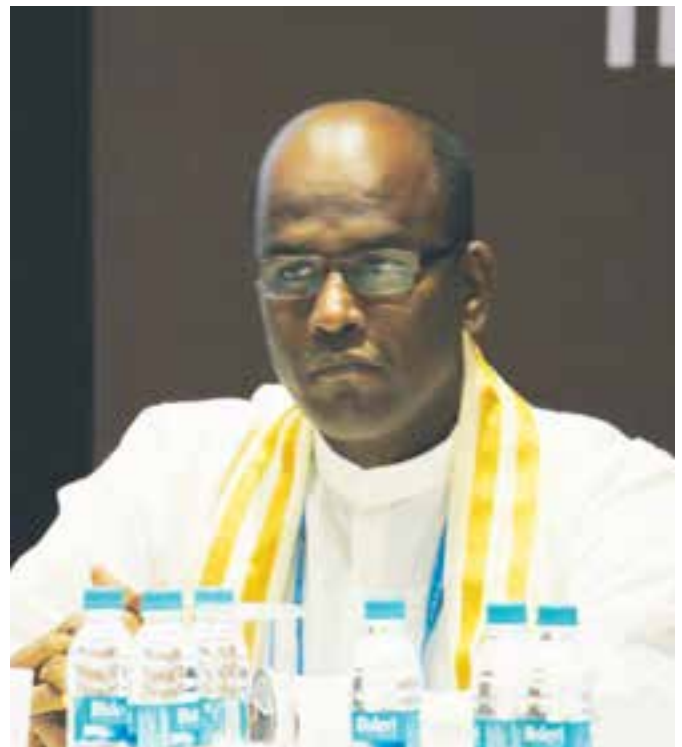
women who are abducted and forcefully converted. HAF also interacts with US think tanks, as these influence US policy makers.

Dr. S Sathiyalingam

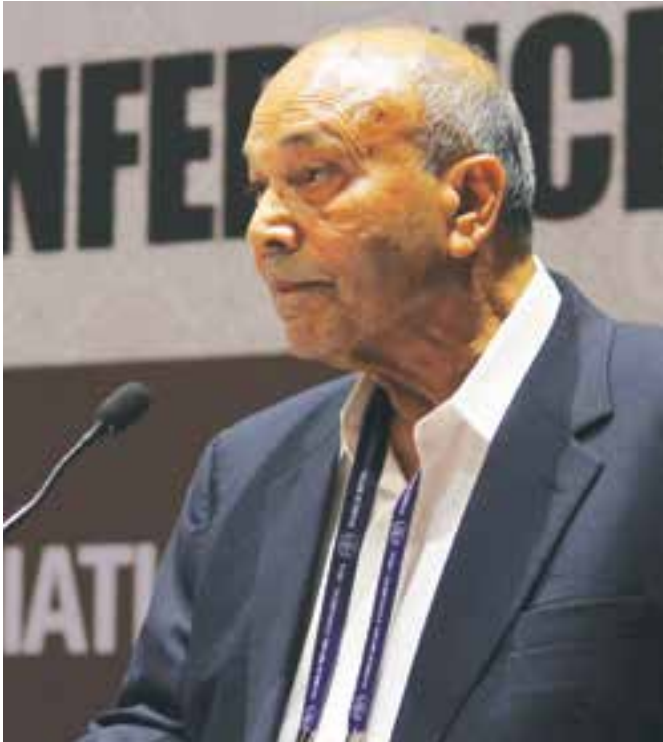
Health Minister, Northern Province, Sri Lanka

Human rights violation of Hindus in Sri Lanka

Dr. S. Sathiyalingam said that the civil war which ravaged Sri Lanka for decades has ended, but Hindus are yet to find an equitable political solution. He thanked the VHP for lending moral and political support to Sri Lankan Hindus and urging the Sri Lankan Government to address their concerns. He recounted the role of Arumuka Navalar in Hindu revival in Sri Lanka and South Bharat during the 19th century. Today, Hindus of Sri Lanka face entrenched institutional discrimination. As per 1998 data, 1479 Hindu temples (over 80%) had suffered severe damage. Many rare Hindu scriptures have also been lost to mob violence. The psycho-social scars of the war are yet to heal – there are 86,000 widows, while many combatants who surrendered in the last stages of the war are still missing. The



Sri Lankan military has seized large tracts of land belonging to Hindus, and the Northern Province still remains heavily militarized. Acts of rape and sexual violence against Hindu women are still endemic as has been highlighted by many global organisations.



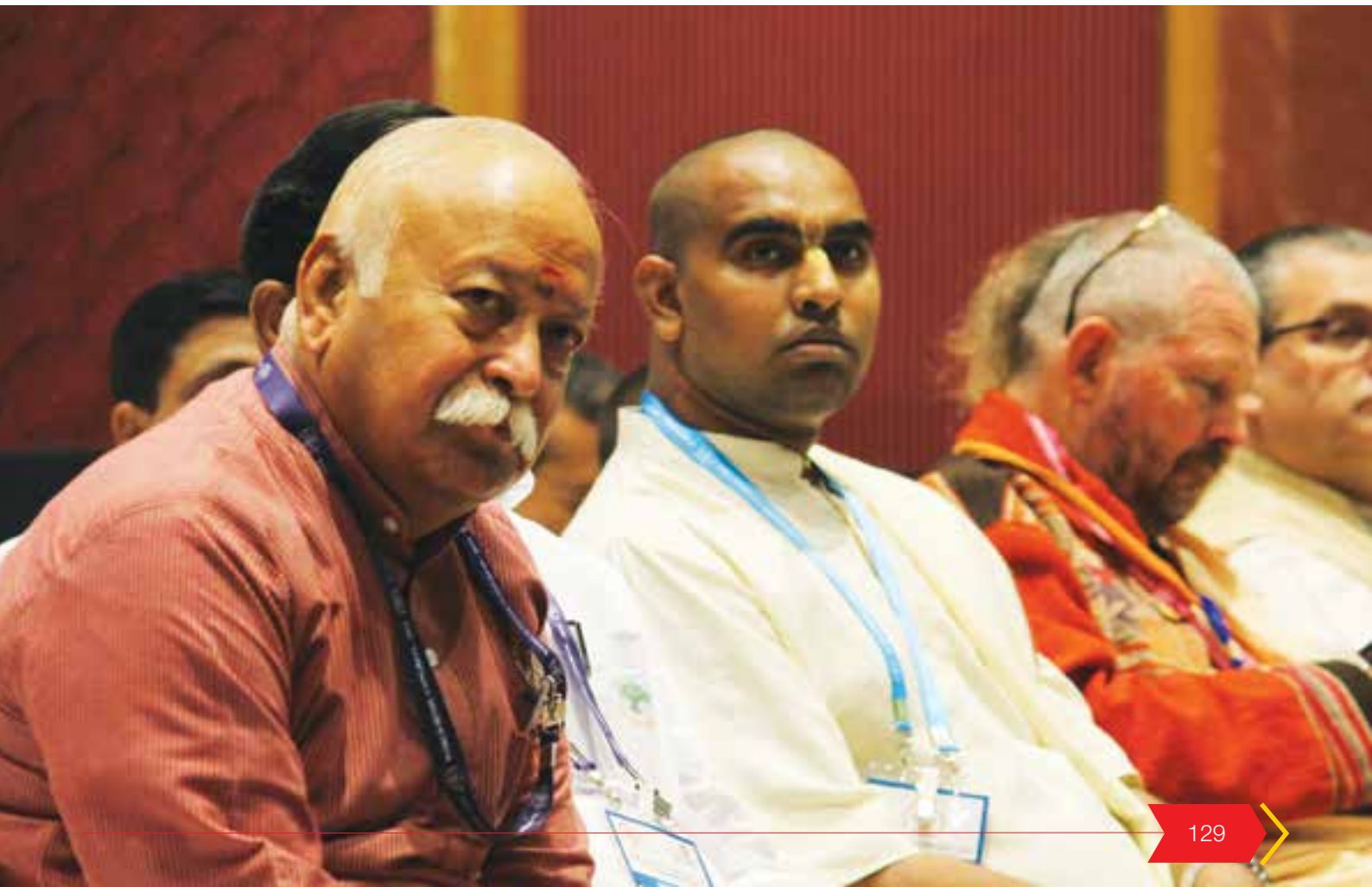
Prof. Ved Nanda

Provost, Denver University, USA

Sensitizing the world – On human rights violation of Roma and Yezidi community

Prof. Nanda said that Romas originally left Bharat 1400 years ago, and today face persecution across Europe in matters of housing, employment and education. Yezidis are another community who hardly get talked about but are facing genocide. They share beliefs like re-incarnation with Hindus. But now Hindu organisations like Sewa International, VHP, HSS, Art of Living are standing up for these communities and coming to their aid. Lack of resources prevents us from doing more, and opens a window for Christian missionaries to prey on such communities. He said that Hindu organisations abroad have petitioned different Governments and international bodies to fight for the rights of persecuted communities. He said we

need to fight this battle at all forums, and Government of Bharat and institutions have to take the lead.





Chairperson: Dr. Girdhari Lal Bhan

President, Vishva Hindu Parishad, UK

Introductory Remarks

Dr. Girdhari Lal Bhan talked about the wounds inflicted on Hindu civilization by 1000 years of foreign rule. Today, we are witnessing the beginning of a Hindu renaissance. Each one of us needs to take ownership to do our bit for this cause. Dr. Bhan attacked the idea of 'Sarv Dharma Sambhava' which has gained popularity in modern times even amongst Hindus. There is only one true Dharma which has different paths like *Bhakti* and *Jnana*. Religions which claim exclusive access to God and try to convert people through violence and fraud cannot be considered as Dharma. Sadly, younger generation of Hindus is being bombarded with ideas like Hindu Dharma is backward, while presenting glorified versions of other religions. He said let us become uncompromising intellectual warriors and

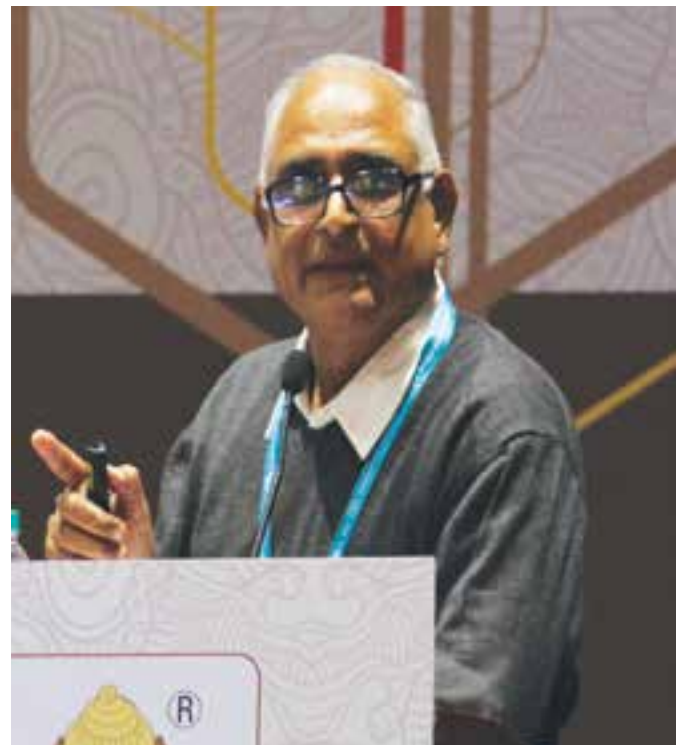
stand up to negative stereotyping and vilification of Hindus in media and other areas.

Dr. J. K. Bajaj

Director, Centre for Policy Studies, Bharat

Conversion as a global threat to Hindus and our response

Dr. J.K. Bajaj stated that both Christianity and Islam have one similarity and a belief – proselytization, i.e. converting others to their religion. Pope John Paul II said in 1999 that the Church should focus on Harvesting Asia in the third millennium – this tells us how integral the proselytization mission is for Christians. Interestingly, while Christian population is growing in Africa and Asia, it is actually declining in Europe, the home of Christianity, where many are turning to atheism. Just in the last 100 years, Africa's native religions have fallen from 60% of total population to 9% today – the continent is almost equally divided between Islam and Christianity today and is witnessing many bloody battles. In Asia, Christians have grown from 2% to 8%, and



Muslims from 16% to 26%, just in the last 100 years. In South Asia, Muslims have grown from 25% to 30% and Christians from 1% to 4%, while Hindus have reduced from 70% to 60%. Hindus have resisted the advance of Islam and Christianity valiantly, but now we need state support to survive, and hence it's imperative that the current political leadership of Bharat sustains for long.



Smt. Madhu Sharma

Hindu Chaplain, Duke University, USA

Hindu chaplaincy service

Smt. Madhu Sharma started with the dictionary definition of chaplain, i.e. a member of the clergy who represents the chapel – this is a Christian term which Hindus in the West have adapted, she said. Hindu chaplains provide guidance and mentorship to the younger generation and support for the elders. They are a public face for the Hindu Dharma, and supplement the role of the Hindu temples and priests. Our priests are not trained to be counsellors and face a generation gap with young Hindus in the West – chaplains fill that gap. Hindu temples and community need to get more involved in training more chaplains. The goal is to have 100 Hindu chaplains in USA in the next five years. We are in the danger of losing our younger generation unless we engage with them to show the value of Hindu heritage and spirituality, she concluded.

Shri Francois Gautier

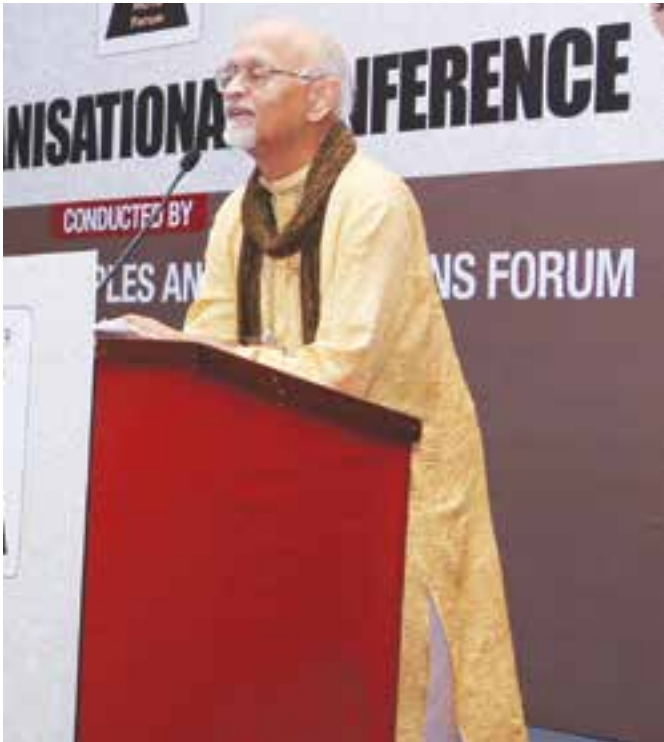
Editor-in-Chief, La Nouvelle Revue de l'Inde, France

Negation in history and the Hindu genocide:

Intervention through Museum project

After realizing that the history of Bharat has been manipulated, Shri Francois Gautier was attracted to writing about the true history of Bharat. The Aryan Invasion Theory, which has now been scientifically proven to be false, has been used to divide the country and convert Hindus. Genocide of up to 100 million Hindus during Islamic invasions has been hidden. Shri Gautier started Foundation Against Continuing Terrorism (FACT) after witnessing the genocide of Hindus in Kashmir. Witnessing the plight of the Hindus first-hand had a profound impact on him, and he has exhibited the plight of Kashmiri Hindus all around the world. Shri Gautier has also organised other exhibitions on the barbaric killing of Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur ji at the order of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, life of the great Shivaji Maharaj, heroic resistance of Rajput King Maharana Pratap, and on Queen Devi Ahilyabhai to break Western prejudice that Hindu women have been greatly oppressed.





Moderator: Dr. Abhaya Asthana

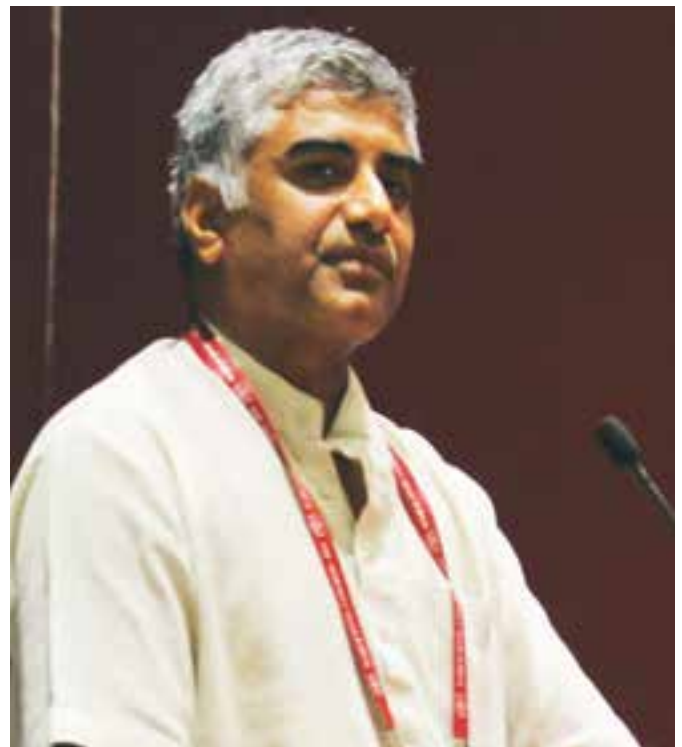
President, VHP America, USA

Dr. Abhaya Asthana summarized the key take home messages from the HOTA sessions – freeing Hindu temples from Government control and ensuring right use of temple funds, educating our youth about Hindu Dharma, focus on becoming practicing Hindus, and collectively raise our voice on Hindu human rights violations. In the open forum at the end, issues like distortion of caste, dangers faced by Hindus of North East Bharat, mechanics of *Ghar Wapsi* (re-conversion) were raised by the audience.

Dr. Ram Vaidya

Joint Convener, Vishwa Vibhag, RSS, Bharat

Dr. Ram Vaidya said that identifying the diversity between different Hindu organisations and sects is as important as stressing on their commonality. We should all use the term Hindu as use of other terms like Sanatana, Vedic, Indic leads to confusion in the present times. All organisations should focus on Sewa, Education and Advocacy for the immediate future.





Shri Dattatreya Hosabale

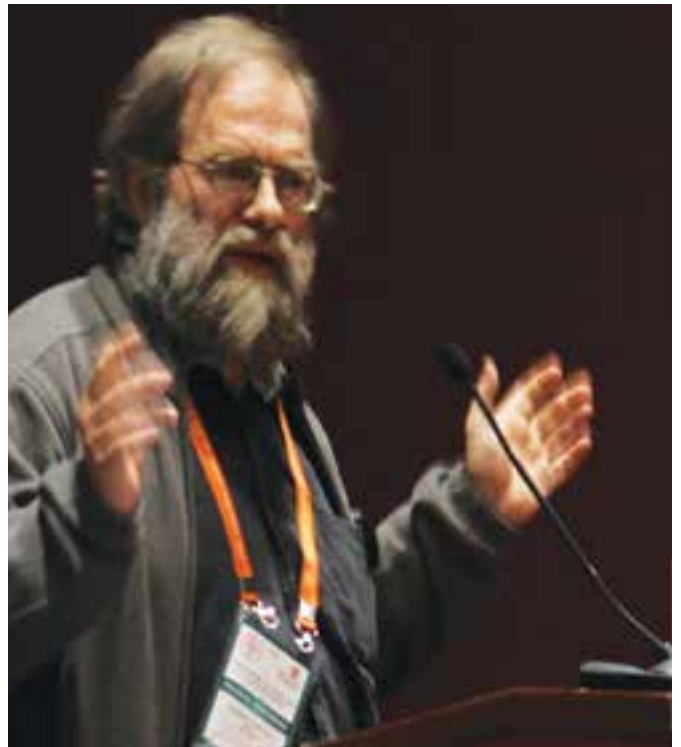
Joint General Secretary, RSS, Bharat

Shri Hosabale said that the idea behind the WHC 2014 is not to dissolve organisational identity, but to work collectively for the larger Hindu cause. Each Hindu organisation should imbibe the ideas discussed at this conference and apply them in their respective areas. We need to improve networking between different Hindu organisations, and shed organisational ego. We need to do a lot more work in presenting our thoughts at academic and intellectual forums. Some mechanisms need to be developed to ensure issue based collaboration across organisations.

Dr. Koenraad Elst

Scholar & Writer, Belgium

Dr. Koenraad Elst said that Hindus are coming out of their *tamasic* attitude, i.e. passivity and despair. In the past he never got support from Hindu activists when he countered malicious lies like Hindu nationalists murdered Mahatma Gandhi and supported Nazis. But now he is seeing a positive change. Hindu activists are challenging established views through social media and trying to build a coalition of global non-Abrahamic belief systems. The Western world forms its opinions based on what it hears from the secularists of Bharat who control the flow of information. This is changing due to growing assertiveness in Hindus, and new media. We need to make full use of the window of opportunity which has opened with the new BJP government in Bharat – the time to Act is NOW! We need to appoint the right people in constitutional



posts, and start acting on issues like education reform and freeing temples from Government control right away.