



THE SHIV RATAN HINDU YOUTH GROUP 2009 ADDRESS

Dear Hindu Parent(s),

At no recent time in history has our lives in America been in a proverbial whirlpool of instability. Gashing unemployment rates, plummeting stocks in Wall Street, the war in Iraq, and the witness of 9/11 all paint the picture of the state of America as the turn of the century progressed rapidly forward. But, how will the state of Hinduism in America now be painted in the minds and hearts of us all? As 2009 sneaked up hastily behind us all, it is legit to ponder and analyze the crossroads that Sanatan Dharma could very well be taking right before our eyes. As our forefathers left the rich lands of India generations ago, they came ashore Trinidad, Guyana, and Jamaica. At that very moment in time, Sanatan Dharma faced a crossroads where the culture, religion, spirituality, and fire of Hinduism could either be blown away by the island breeze or stand firm and proud in the soils of these countries and pass on the flame of our Dharma. History has taken its course and we are all witness to one of the most vibrant displays of culture and spirituality, upheld by numerous dedicated Hindu figures and families. Their sweat and blood has sustained our beloved Sanatan Dharma through one of the most challenging scenarios one could think up. Currently, in the land of Trinidad, hundreds of Temple's and Hindu Schools have been constructed all weaving a coherent spectacle of true determination and passion, resulting in a most beautiful painting of Hinduism in the west. As time will tell, though, sustenance, in world where the only constant is change, is a task laden with devastating results if overlooked.

In the fast paced American lifestyle that we all live in, finding time for religion and spirituality is similar to trying to find a beautiful lotus amongst miles of murky waters. This, simply, is our task currently on hand. Our forefathers left the lands of India, arrived in the Carribean, and now, time has taken its course and our grandparents and parents have left those islands and arrived to America. We now are in the driver's seat, with that crossroad in front of us, where we can either move forward with the torch of our Dharma or feebly and cowardly let everything our ancestors built for us go to ruins.

We, the Shiv Ratan Hindu Youth Group (a subgroup of the FHO Shiva Mandir), wish to take a proactive and diligent approach to sustaining our Dharma here in the United States, by providing a forum whereby your young Hindu youths can be involved and molded into strong individual pillars, thereby raising Sanatan Dharma to new heights! Founded approximately three years ago, a vibrant wave of Hindu youth activity has spread like wild-fire across South Florida. We were founded upon the basic principle of Hindu unity, believing that to be the key to prosperity. Today, we stand here to urge you to get your children involved within the Youth Group and the Temple. As the year just recently began, a great resolution for 2009 would be more youth involvement. Growing up in American public schools, surrounded by people of all different cultures, can be a most challenging life for a Hindu teen. Think about the peer pressures your children have on a daily basis from the time the school bell rings to start until it rings again to finish the day. The vast majority of people surrounding them don't share the same cultures and values we all grew up knowing. That spells a great dilemma in the minds of nearly all Hindu youths growing up here in America. The constant battle of assimilation with American culture or retention of our Hindu culture moves forward. We believe a balance must be struck between the two extremes.

Young Hindu youths can find a place in the SR Youth Group and Shiva Mandir to interact with people sharing their same cultures and values, thus creating a sense of balance within their lives. This is of utmost importance because

young minds develop themselves via examples and actions set by the people around them. The Temple atmosphere is the ideal place for molding this upcoming generation with the ability and determination to carry on our Dharma for generations to come, like our forefathers once did for us. Since the inception of the FHO in 1981, hundreds of children have grown up from toddlers to now very successful adults. It has been shown time and again that there is a direct correlation between surrounding a student's life around Temple and success in studies. Why? Discipline, hard work, patience, and self-motivation are all qualities learned within our religion, and are essential qualities for success in any field of academia and within life.

The future of our religion and our way of life in America lie in the hands of the Hindu youth. We must progress forward as our forefathers once did, and spread and maintain our culture here in the United States. As 2009 unfolds before us all, the SR Youth Group urges you to bring your children to our events, the Temple events, Sunday Morning service, and so forth. Get them involved! Every major university in the world deems it an utmost necessity to have a vast majority of extracurricular activities. What better forum for your children to accomplish this, than in the confines of a Hindu organization? We believe the time has come to take a firm grip on the direction of Sanatan Dharma in America and propel it in the right direction. Our vision, our goal, our emphasis in this new year of 2009 will be your children, and actively getting them involved to carry on the traditions of our Dharma! To do this though, we need the support from you, the parents! Well wishes and blessings on this new wonderful year, to you and your entire family, from our Shiv Ratan family.

Sitaram,

The Shiv Ratan Hindu Youth Group

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