

HYA Youth Forum: The Modern Australian Hindu

3 October 2021

On Sunday, 3 October 2021, HYA launched its Virtual Hindu Youth Forum themed 'The Modern Australian Hindu'. The Forum aimed to address the challenges of identity faced by young Hindus in a western society. The Forum included various interactive sessions via breakout rooms and group discussions and covered topics of the Hindu community in Australia, mental health, yoga, the Insider vs. Outsider dialogue around Hindu Dharma and finally, representation of Australian Hindus across various facets of the media/news, arts/entertainment and industry.



The event commenced with a welcome to country and short prayer led by our MC and HYA National Coordinator, Carmila Chand. This was followed by statements read out from both the Indian Consulate General and VHP Australia leadership in support of the program and work being done by HYA. The opening session was wrapped up with a short icebreaker activity to engage the audience!

This led nicely into the keynote address by Sushyanth Subramanian who has been a member and volunteer of HYA for over 10 years. Sushyanth detailed the contribution and place of Hindus in Australia going back over a century, with a focus on significant achievements as a highly educated, peaceful and diverse community over the last four to five decades that contributes to the multicultural flavour of Australia and has very much made it its own. Sushyanth related a number of points back to his own unique experiences and contributions as an enlisted member of the Royal Australian Army since 2016.

Our Challenges

- Despite achievements, Hindus underrepresented in key areas
- Not enough people within the community contributing for the Hindu interests
- Anti-Hindu forces active to undermine us
- Lack of organization within the community
- Opposition from within the community
- Balancing act between being a Hindu and an Australian
- Mental Health issues

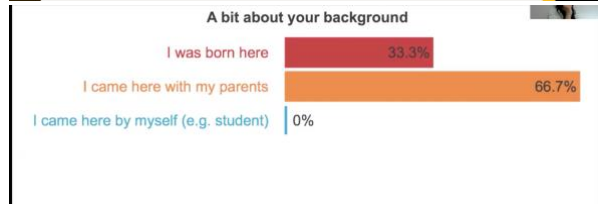


HYA Youth Forum: The Modern Australian Hindu

3 October 2021

POSITIVE ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN MENTAL HEALTH AND RELIGION



- Vedic chanting, OM chanting, Gayatri Mantra chanting associated with:
 - Decreased pulse rate, blood pressure, depression, anxiety and stress scores
 - Increased vagal nerve stimulation, which is a common treatment for depression (Amin et al., 2006)
 - Improved memory and sustained attention (Ghalig, Nagrenda& Bhatt, 2006; Samajdar et al., 2020)
- Consumption of a Sattvic diet is associated with reduced rates of mental health disorders (Frawley, 1999)
- Social perspective – being part of groups such as Hare Krishnas, the Swaminarayan group, Chinmaya mission may lead to a greater sense of belonging, social identity, more social support and access to social interaction



STAYING CONNECTED WHILE STAYING APART

• Due to several factors – one such is acculturation
When two cultures come in contact, both cultures may experience some change
4 different ways this might happen (Berry, 2005)

1. Integration
2. Assimilation
3. Segregation
4. Marginalisation



The second main session of the day focused on mental health and was run by Aishwarya Iyer, a Clinical Psychologist working with NSW Health who has been involved with HYA for a number of years. This session tackled the challenges faced by Hindus as immigrants to Australia and the associated mental health issues that can cause with a focus on the balance between one's Australian identity and Hindu identity. Facilitating dialogue between the audience on these points, the session also delved into the added pressure and sense of isolation that the Coronavirus pandemic has caused. A number of solutions were provided to uplift one's mental and physical health through the incorporation of yoga, meditation, following a Satvik diet, community service and gatherings at the Temple to feel one with the community (subject to health and social distancing rules) that could also bring together the Australian Hindu identity.

The third session which preceded the lunch break was particularly special as it was conducted by Ajay Agrahari ji from New Zealand who hails from Uttar Pradesh in India and is a registered Yoga teacher. Ajay ji really challenged us all but left us feeling rejuvenated and inspiring to seek out and incorporate Yoga more into our daily lives.

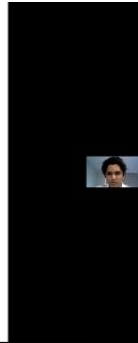


HYA Youth Forum: The Modern Australian Hindu

3 October 2021

Transmission of “knowledge”

- Insider to insider
- Outsider to outsider
- Insider to outsider
- **Outsider to insider**
- Western world view – “The default paradigm”
 - **Opinions** formed from an outsider (Western) perspective established as given facts about Hindu culture
 - **Projecting** notions of Western civilisation as a lens to view Hindu civilisation



Following the lunch break, we were led into the penultimate session of the day by Manikkam Iyer (HYA National Coordinator) focusing on the “Insider vs Outsider” dialogue surrounding Hindu Dharma. This session opened up dialogue between the groups and laid out the issues of the default (Western/Outsider) centric paradigm that exists today and how it was cemented in place systematically over the last few centuries. The session explored a new paradigm founded on *Shraddha* and how this can be achieved through re-engaging with Sanskrit and Vedic traditions as a means to access timeless Hindu knowledge which has been cut-off from the modern generation.

The final session of the day was on Australian Hindu representation across the various facets of news/media, arts/entertainment and industry/politics. Facilitated by Vaishnavi Pasupati and Sachita Subramanian, this session was discussion based and opened up the virtual floor for plenty of discussion amongst the participants around the idea of representation. Going over both pop culture as well as more serious elements of Hindu-phobia, this session was a fitting conclusion to a brilliant virtual forum!

THE MEDIA LENS

Unpacking Hindu representation in all forms of media



The Forum was successfully closed with a vote of thanks to all the facilitators and participants. HYA were pleased to receive high engagement from the participants throughout the day who voiced their feedback, stating that the Forum was informative, thought-provoking and ran smoothly. The team looks forward to bringing similar opportunities to young Australian Hindus in future.

Dhanyavad,
Hindu Youth Australian team (NSW)