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## American Hindu World Service

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There is an estimated 850+ million Hindus that live around the world, and Hindus are considered to be the third largest faith after Christianity and Islam. Although the majority of Hindus are located in India, Hindu communities are concentrated in several nations, such as Sri Lanka, UAE, Malaysia, Singapore, Guyana, the Caribbean Islands, US, England, Australia, and various nations in Africa. In the US, Hindus are a community of approximately 2.7 million. They play a major role in the professional sector and have made significant contributions towards fields such as medicine, engineering, and business. Yet, the societies around them are quite ignorant about Hindu faith, culture, philosophy, etc., because South Asians, in general, have a tendency to segregate themselves in American society by living in areas where there is an influx from several of their own kind e.g. Indians, Sri Lankans, Pakistanis, Nepalese, Bangladeshis, and Bhutanese. I also noticed this while working in Tanzania and in visiting Kenya. African locals, like here in the US, admit that they do not know much about their Indian counterparts, let alone Hindu culture or philosophy. This is perhaps one of the main reasons why there is a lot of misinterpretation, misunderstanding and misleading information on what Hinduism really is.

Upon moving near the Washington, DC, area a few years back, I had an opportunity to meet representatives from World Vision, American Jewish World Service and Islamic Relief. However, I did not observe any non-governmental organization that was oriented towards Hinduism. Therefore, the idea of American Hindu World Service (AHWS) came into being. It is an organization founded on the Hindu faith-based perspectives of international development with a focus on global health. AHWS aims to promote, educate and advocate on the Hindu service aspects in international development.

Currently, AHWS is in development and is collaborating with interfaith organizations, as well as international development professionals and other faith-based organizations headquartered in the US.

Although my vision of AHWS will go over a period of 20 years or more, I am in the process of creating programs that are oriented towards six areas inspired by the Millennium Development Goals: nutrition/food security, water/sanitation, environment, education, women's empowerment and microfinance. Hinduism's ancient principles and philosophy could be applied towards modern international development sectors. For example, food mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita as an entity in life that should be respected and never be abused or wasted. Annapurna is the goddess revered as the giver and creator of food for life. *Saraswati* is the goddess of learning, and all educational pursuits and aspirations are dedicated to her. Clean water and regular sanitation are two of the primary principles of Hinduism, and is also mentioned in *Ayurveda* scriptures.

In first introducing AHWS to the Hindu community, I had the opportunity to speak at the annual

HMEC (Hindu Mandirs Executive Conference) held in September 2009. AHWS will be collaborating with SMILE Trust, a registered charity based in the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu, India, to promote nutrition programs in rural areas. AHWS will be represented in the annual Unite for Sight Global Health

Conference at Yale University in April 2010. That said, due to our strong presence in American society, it is time that Hindus join forces with other religious communities around the globe for the purpose of spreading service, peace, and tolerance.

At AHWS, it is necessary to separate the idea of Hinduism from India. AHWS will be doing international development work in South Asia, and would gradually hope to expand towards East Africa and other developing nations. Traditionally, Hindus are not permitted to proselytize, convert or engage in any missionary-type activities, but can educate non-Hindus around the world to promote understanding and tolerance.

Please explore the following resources to learn more about the American Hindu World Service.

AHWS Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=135973071348&ref=mf>

AHWS Blog: <http://matadortravel.com/organizations/american-hindu-world-service>

AHWS Website: <http://www.ahwsngo.org>

E-mail: [ahwsngo@gmail.com](mailto:ahwsngo@gmail.com)

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## **Editor's Edge**

Dear Community members,

Happy New Year!

In my last note to you in October 2009 I had communicated temporary suspension of the free Medical Clinic. However, in this first e-Bharati issue of 2010, I want to give you an encouraging update on the subject. Through the dedication and hard work of a core committee, the Seva Health & Services, Inc. (SEVA) has been formed. [[Read More...](#)]

[Vijay Gombar](#)  
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