

UNMISTAKABLY SANGH: THE NATIONAL HSC AND ITS HINDUTVA AGENDA

Preface
This Far and Further

An error does not become truth by reason of multiplied propagation, nor does truth become error because nobody sees it.

Constant development is the law of life, and a man who always tries to maintain his dogmas in order to appear consistent drives himself into a false position.

First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.
– Mahatma Gandhi

The Campaign to Stop Funding Hate (CSFH) seeks to expose the connection between the violent Hindutva movement of the Sangh Parivar and the Hindu Students Council (HSC) in the United States. The internet is littered with information that points to the National HSC's links to the global Sangh Parivar. As many of our readers will already know, the Sangh Parivar is a hate-mongering ultra-right Hindu supremacist family of organizations with a global presence. Many of the local HSCs and a majority of its chapter membership appear to be unaware of the connection between the National HSC and the Sangh Parivar. Our communications with some of these individuals and groups indicate that these local organizations do not want anything to do with Sangh Parivar. One local HSC office bearer wrote to us distancing her local HSC chapter:

“I can say with CONFIDENCE that we have NOTHING to do with VHP ... [VHP] is IRRELEVANT TO OUR ORGANIZATION” (emphasis in original)

The level of interest in getting to the truth is evidenced, for instance, by the public discussion that the Stanford HSC chapter organized on June 5, 2007. A video recording of the meeting has a statement endorsing the efforts of the CSFH:

“We recognize that organizations like CSFH can be valuable partners in helping us stay clear of fundamentalism, and thus, their activism is of great benefit and will act as our conscience” (see <http://www.stanford.edu/group/hsc/video.html>)

Meanwhile, the National HSC has responded with ad-hominem attacks on members of CSFH, without any substantive response to the evidence.¹ Might this be the reaction from those who know the evidence against them is overwhelming?

Objectives of this Report:

To continue CSFH's positive engagement with local HSC chapters and its membership who have remained unaware of the National HSCs connections with the violent Hindutva movement. CSFH believes that this generation of Indian-American youth would not willingly or knowingly participate in politics that supports or affirms violence in the name of religion or nation. Unlike the National HSC, we feel that local HSC chapter can be engaged in lively, strong discussions, discussions that will enrich us all and make us more aware of the political and social implications of our actions – even actions that we think are not “political” but simply express our urge to nurture our identity or learn about our heritage.

To continue to question the National HSC on its deep, long-standing connections with the Sangh Parivar, and its use of the large majority of its unsuspecting members to further the Sangh Parivar's agenda of hate.

The Structure of the Report

We have received several requests from the larger Indian-American community seeking clarification on the evidence we presented. **Chapter 1** is a consolidated summary of previously compiled information, most strikingly, the structural/organizational links between the National HSC and particular Sangh Parivar organizations. These links vary from the hosting of various Sangh Parivar websites by the HSC, what we call the IP infrastructure network, to the HSC being listed as a project on the VHP-A's tax returns even as late as 2001. In our view, these connections cannot be coincidental and they call into question the claims of the National HSC that it "has been independently run since 1993" (see <http://www.hscnet.org/fact.php>).

On June 5, 2007, the HSC regional coordinator for Northern California spoke on the Stanford University Campus and made the four (4) claims outlined below – the sum total of HSC's substantial response to our information:

- a. That the Sangh Parivar IP infrastructure, which CSFH had established as linked to the HSC, is actually operated and run by a private company, Hindunet, Inc., and that the National HSC has had nothing to do with it since 1999.
- b. That HSC's legal "independence" from the VHP-A implies that the National HSC is ideologically independent from the Sangh.
- c. That the attendance of National HSC members at Sangh Parivar meetings was in their individual capacity, and as such, the National HSC cannot be said to have been at the meetings;
- d. That the list of speakers hosted by the HSC is "diverse" and that CSFH has ignored speakers other than those from the Sangh Parivar.

Chapter 2 responds to each of the above claims by bringing together new material that we have uncovered since June 2007, leading us to the conclusion that the National HSC has presented only part of the story.

Chapter 3 again invites engagement with local HSC chapters through a series of questions that can serve as starting points for discussion.

The reference to the "National HSC" in the title of this report, "Unmistakably Sangh: The National HSC and Its Hindutva Agenda" has been used in order to clearly indicate that it is the national organization of the HSC which has problematic ties to Hindutva groups. In doing so, we therefore want to highlight the clear distinction between the National HSC on one hand, and the local HSCs and their members on the other. Our goal here is dialogue, and we are as willing to learn from this process, as we know all of you are.

Chapter 1: DO ALL HSC ROADS LEAD TO THE SANGH PARIVAR?

The Sangh Parivar is a family of violent, ultra-right organizations that espouse a Hindu supremacist ideology – Hindutva. Several international and national human rights organizations have documented the violence that has been associated with the activities of the Sangh Parivar over the last two decades – violence that also clearly appears to be a product of the ideology espoused by the Sangh Parivar.²

The Hindu Students Council (HSC) is a US-based organization with chapters at several university campuses across the country. The HSC claims to be “an independently run and funded” organization for Hindu students to connect with their heritage (www.hscnet.org/fact.php). How true is this claim?

In this chapter we summarize the structural, institutional and personnel connections between the Sangh Parivar and the National HSC by presenting (1) a time line that shows that the HSC, despite its claims to have become independent of the Sangh Parivar in 1993, continues to maintain and cultivate links with the Sangh, and (2) a more detailed enumeration of five structural/organizational links between the National HSC and the Sangh.

1.1. *Fifteen Years of the HSC: A Joint Strategy of Growth for the Sangh and HSC*

The National HSC was started in 1990-91 as a project of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHP-A). The timeline below shows that despite claims of “severed connections” after 1993, the HSC continued to have ideological, political, organizational and personnel connections with the Sangh.

1.2. *Hindu Students Council Timeline*

Figure 1 below presents a simple picture. Despite the HSC’s claimed independence from the VHP-A in 1993, there continue to be structural, institutional and personnel based links with the Sangh. The question to which the National HSC owes an answer to the public at large is: *Why does the Hindu Students Council continue to deny its links to the Sangh Parivar?*

1.3. *Structural Links Between the HSC and the Sangh*

While the timeline gives us a quick view of the HSC’s continued links to the Sangh Parivar, Figure 2, *infra*, and the section following it provide a somewhat more comprehensive view of the evidence that points to deep-rooted institutional and structural links in five areas.

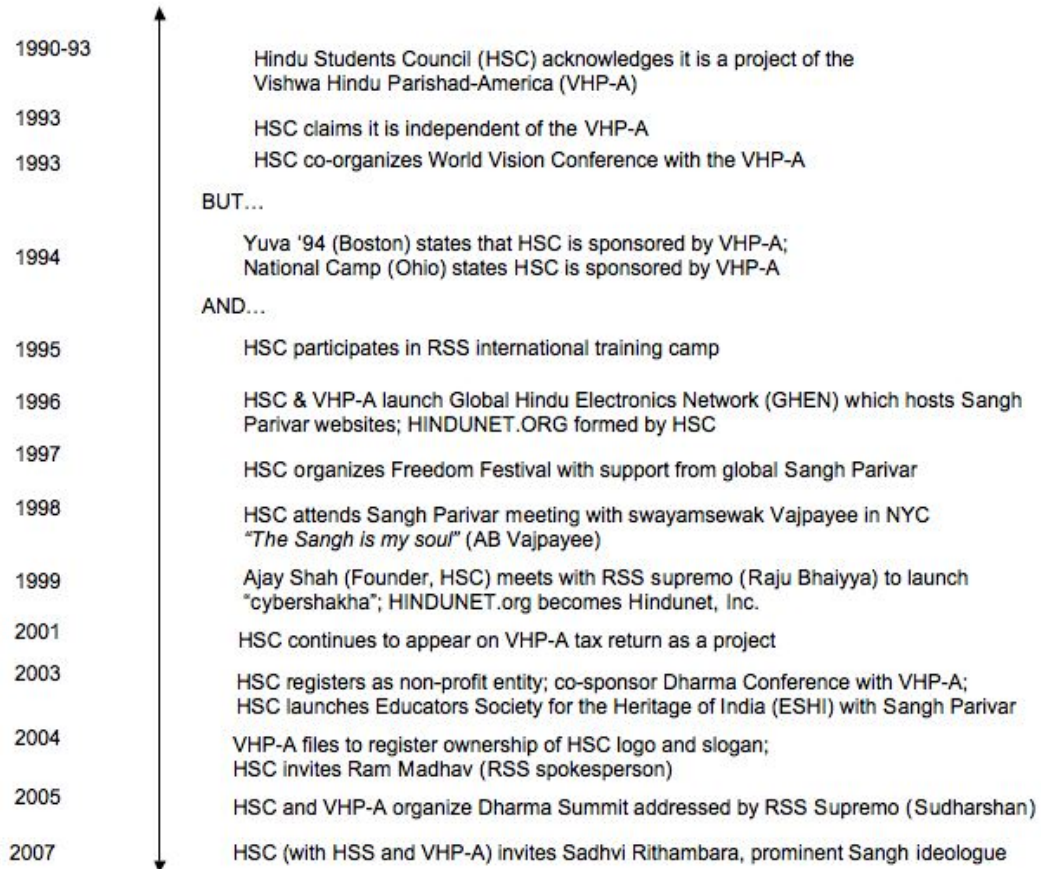


Figure 1 – HSC Timeline

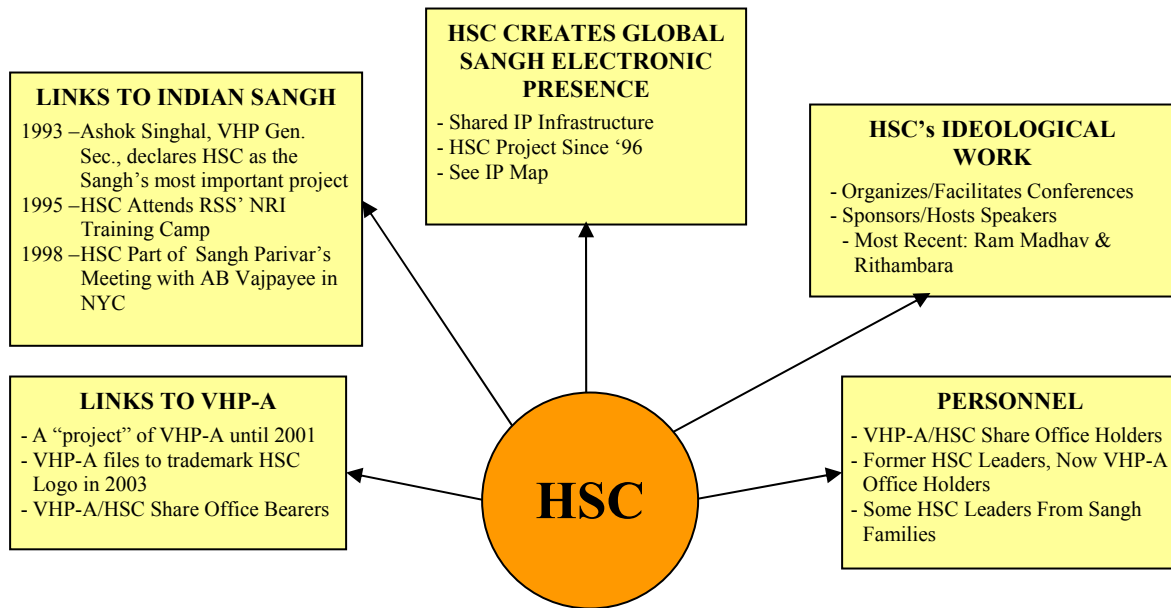


Figure 2 – How the HSC is Part of the Global Sangh

1.3 (a) HSC's Links With the VHP-A

The most dense set of institutional connections between the HSC and the Sangh Parivar appear through its links with the VHP of America, HSC's parent organization.

- Beginning with its inception in 1990, and for the first three years of its existence, National HSC publicly acknowledged that it was a project of the VHP-A. In 1993, the National HSC announced its independence from the VHP-A. However:
 - Eight years after National HSC claimed independence from the VHP-A, VHP-A's 2001 Tax Returns filed with US IRS listed the National HSC as a VHP-A project. This linkage continued until 2002, when HSC registered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit
- According to the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), a trademark application was filed in 2003 for a typed rendering of the words "Hindu Students Council", and the "HSC KNOWLEDGE UNITY PROGRESS DHARMA" logo. The applicant address listed in the trademark application matches that of then VHP-A General Secretary Gaurang Vaishnav (as listed in the VHP-A tax forms for the year 2002). The trademark applications were filed on May 16, 2003 and were abandoned on May 26, 2004.³
- Mr. Kanchan Banerjee, Governing Council member and Vice-President of Youth for VHP-A in 1999,⁴ was also listed as Overall Coordinator for the HSC in 2004.⁵
- In the 2004 Tax Returns filed by the HSC with the IRS, Mr. Vijay Pallod, member of VHP-A's Governing Council, is listed as the Registered Agent for the HSC.⁶ The "registered office address" for the HSC is also the same as Pallod's address. Further confirmation of Mr. Pallod's role with the HSC comes via a HSC Press Release detailing its "3rd Annual Fundraising Dinner" (held on December 2, 2006), listing Mr. Vijay Pallod as the HSC Treasurer.⁷

Together, the Tax Returns, the registering of trademarks and logos, and the shared personnel offer clear indications of the link between the HSC and the VHP-A.

1.3 (b) HSC's Links With the Sangh in India

The Sangh Parivar in India recognizes and acknowledges the HSC as part of the Global Sangh. Numerous incidents over the last fifteen years attest to this. Not only have senior Sangh leaders located the HSC as part of the Sangh Parivar in their writings or speeches, but the HSC has been invited to Sangh-only events on numerous occasions.

- In 1993, on the eve of the so-called "independence" of the HSC from the VHP-A, then VHP General Secretary Ashok Singhal said in an interview after the World Vision 2000 conference:

"Now, the first project we have in mind is strengthening the Hindu Student Council..."⁸

- Between December 25 and 27, 1995 the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the organization at the core of the Sangh Parivar, invited its affiliate organizations from across the world for a training camp in Gujarat, India. The HSC was among those

invited. The press release for the camp, issued by Gaurang Desai of the Hindu Swayamevak Sangh (HSS), the US arm of the RSS, stated:

“This Shibir (camp) was conducted *on RSS ideology* for NRI workers ... Aptly titled as ‘Vishwa Sangh Shibir 95,’ all its delegates were from several affiliated organizations of RSS, which operate abroad as Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, Sewa International, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, *Hindu Students Council*, Friends of India Society International, etc.”⁹ (emphasis added.)

- In 1998, the HSC was among those invited to a meeting with the then Indian Prime Minister, A. B. Vajpayee, along with New York-based Sangh Parivar affiliates. A press release from the Overseas Friends of the BJP (OFBJP) said:

“On September 26, 1998, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayeeji managed to spend a short hour, from his very busy schedule, in New York Hilton's Madison Suite, with a small number of his New York Parivar made up of karyakartas from HSS, VHP, OFBJP, IQG, *HSC*, Seva Samiti, and Sikh Sangat of America.”¹⁰ (emphasis added.)

1.3 (c) GHEN/Hindunet: The HSC Creates the Sangh's Electronic Infrastructure

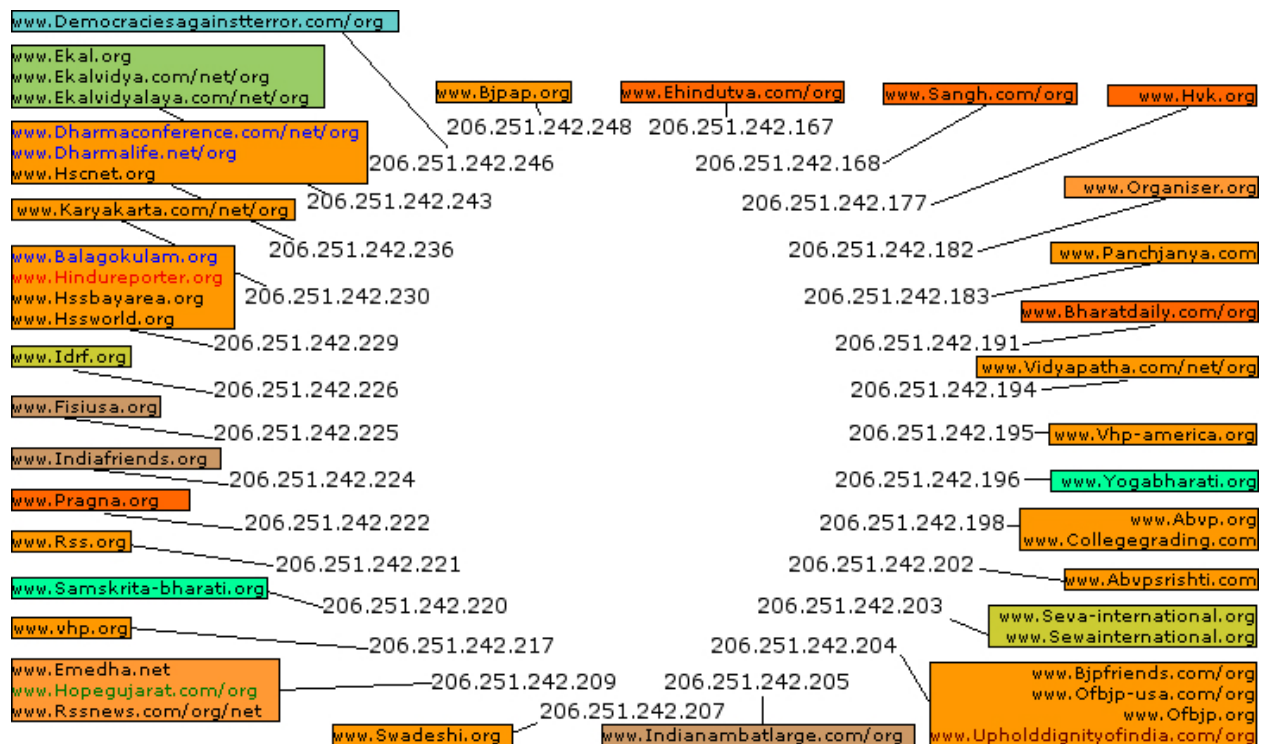
On April 14, 1996, HSC announced the formation of the Global Hindu Electronic Networks (GHEN), introducing it as a comprehensive site on Hindu dharma.¹¹ The announcement stated that GHEN was a resource center for Hindutva wherein GHEN established, for the first time, a web presence for the RSS and VHP. A wider announcement was posted on June 12, 1996, stating that GHEN was “sponsored by the Hindu Students Council and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHP-A).”¹²

This early network has grown over the last ten years into the Sangh's electronic infrastructure. The web site of every major Sangh organization runs off a cluster located in San Diego, California. The figure below graphically illustrates the information that the RSS, HSS, VHP, VHP-A, HSC, IDRf and many more Sangh Parivar organizations, all share the same common Class C IP address structure and map on to one network. The network was run and maintained by the HSC at least between 1996 and 1999. (The post-1999 relationship between HSC and Hindunet is discussed in Chapter 2.)

1.4. *Ideological Support: HSC and Hindutva*

One of the major functions of the HSC has been to organize regional and national conferences on campuses across the US – both as outreach to Hindu youth, and as an attempt to create a broader public discourse on Hindutva. Some details to consider:

- The HSC has been directly responsible or has supported three large-scale Hindutva conferences over the last fifteen years – the 1993 World Vision 2000 conference, the Freedom Festival of 1997 and the Dharma conference of 2003.¹³ The latter two conferences, which were directly organized by the HSC, are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.



 Main Sangh organizations and/or direct affiliates	IP Addresses mapped June 2004. Selected websites hosted on Hindunet network, IP Address range 206.251.242.160 to 206.251.242.250. For an exhaustive list see IP Map Key, section 3. Internet reverse IP Lookups through Whois.sc
 Development/Education/Aid – India	
 Development/Education/Aid US/UK fundraising	
 US affiliates (political activism)	
 US affiliates (NRI activism)	
 Hindutva ideological indoctrination/mouthpieces	
 'Cultural' organizations/websites	
 Hindutva-Zionism	

- Beyond these large conferences, the HSC has organized numerous smaller events. Available documents from 1990 to 1996 acknowledge the organizational effort behind these events as part of an HSC-VHP-A partnership.^{14, 15, 16, 17}
- The HSC provides a platform for a range of Hindutva ideologues from India and the US to travel and speak at venues across the US. For instance, in 2004 the National HSC played host to Ram Madhav, the Chief Spokesperson for the RSS,¹⁸ and then more recently, in 2007, it co-hosted Sadhvi Rithambara, perhaps the most virulently anti-minority ideologue of the Sangh Parivar.¹⁹ Conferences and events such as those organized by the HSC are, in large part, the only public/mainstream avenues available to leaders of the Sangh Parivar from India when they tour the US, avenues from where they can command a national audience in America.

Beyond conferences and speaking engagements such as the ones mentioned above, the HSC also exhorts its members to provide SEVA²⁰ for organizations and projects that are supported by the Sangh Parivar, such as Ekal Vidyalaya in India. These so-called service projects that the Sangh supports are the mainstay of its ideological and organizational work in India.²¹

1.5. Personnel Links: Grooming Leadership for the Sangh?

The current roles of some of the early HSC leaders within the Sangh raise the question of whether the HSC is a grooming space for future Sangh leadership. Consider the following:

- Early HSC leaders such as Ajay Shah, Kanchan Banerjee and Mihir Meghani have all risen to leadership within the US Sangh and also helped the Sangh start new initiatives and organizations in the US.²²
- Certain recent HSC leaders are connected to well established Sangh families and in some cases, the launch of a campus HSC chapter or revival of a dormant one coincided with the appearance of a Sangh family member on campus.²³

The above is not to say that HSCs are always led by Hindutva family protégés. We certainly do not make any such claim. And we also understand that when a HSC chapter does become active, it likely does so because there is more than one person who takes leadership, and because there is a significant drive within Indian-American youth to respond to questions of identity. However, to acknowledge this is not to deny the pattern that some HSCs have been led and driven forward—created or revived—by youth who have clear interpersonal connections to the Hindutva leadership in the USA.

1.6. Some conclusions about the HSC and the Sangh Parivar

The HSC is now legally independent of the Sangh Parivar in the United States. Nevertheless, it seems to us that National HSC is an equal and full member of the Sangh Parivar. Apart from the electronic infrastructure that HSC coordinates for the Sangh, there is remarkable overlap between the institutional structure of the Sangh and the HSC, particularly evident in the deep personnel connections between HSC and VHP-A. For instance, Ajay Shah, one of the founders of HSC, is now the Zonal VP for VHP-A for the West Coast and runs the HSC's servers out of San Diego, servers which serve the Sangh. Kanchan Banerjee, another founder of HSC, became the Vice-President, Youth Affairs, for VHP-A, and still makes appearances as a spokesperson for the HSC, as he did at the Dharma conference. Vijay Pallod is the VP for Fundraising for the HSC, a member of VHP-A's Governing Council and Texas contact for the HSS.²⁴

The HSC's presence on college campuses has been an important aspect of the organization of the Sangh in the US. Over the twenty years of its existence, HSC has normalized a narrow brand of upper-caste Hinduism on campuses across the US. A generation of Hindu and non-Hindu students, as well as university administrators, have come to think of the HSC as an apolitical, cultural organization that provides the space for Hindu students to connect with their roots. But it is exactly this normalization of a particular, narrow version of Hinduism that allows for multiple expressions of Hindutva. Now that it is legally independent of the Sangh Parivar, the national HSC (in as much as it is in charge of the Sangh's electronic infrastructure), and local HSCs that are fully mature, can openly associate with the Sangh's ideology of Hindutva. In one extreme example, the University of Washington at Seattle has student chapters of HSC, Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Yuva (a project for youth by Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh) with a significant overlap in officers.²⁵

One issue remains unchanged in the midst of this organizational coherence where the HSC is a full component of the Sangh – most HSC members on US and Canadian campuses seem unaware of the historical and present-day connections between HSC and the Sangh, and of the ways in which HSC sustains the Sangh’s ideology on college campuses. Because of its *legal* independence, HSC is now able to claim that it has no connections to the Sangh Parivar. However, the question of HSC’s responsibility to its membership and local chapters remains unanswered.

Chapter 2: CONTINUED PATHWAYS OF SAFFRON

In the Preface we outlined the following four claims that the National HSC has advanced (or could advance) in its efforts to deny the HSC's links to the Sangh, and as an attempt to counter the evidence presented by CSFH.

1. The denial of HSC's existing infrastructural links with the Sangh,
2. The denial of HSC's ideological links to the Sangh,
3. The claim that the speakers invited to HSC festivals and conferences are "diverse" in their ideological perspectives, and
4. The claim that individual HSC members attending Sangh activities does not implicate the entire organization.

This chapter examines these four potential defenses in detail.

2.1. *HSC's continuing infrastructural links with the Sangh*

In Chapter 1, we demonstrated how the HSC and the Sangh are linked materially and organizationally, most damningly through the common web network structure captured visually in the IP Map (*see* page 11). National HSC has claimed²⁶ that it did not host the websites of the RSS, VHP, ABVP, VHP-A, IDRF, Sewa Bharati and other Sangh organizations because it gave up control over its project GHEN (Global Hindu Electronic Networks) to a private firm, Hindunet, in 1999 and that Hindunet was merely HSC's Internet Service Provider (ISP). (This argument was made by Mr. Sudeep Roy, HSC regional coordinator for Northern California,²⁷ at a meeting organized by the HSC chapter at Stanford University to discuss the information presented by CSFH about the HSC's links to the Sangh Parivar in the U.S. and in India. See video at <http://www.stanford.edu/group/hsc/video.html>

Contrary to the HSC's claims that it did not host Sangh websites, the archived websites of the RSS, VHP and Hindunet.org from late 1996 to early 1997 have identical content that includes GHEN and HSC logos and the statement "*GHEN is sponsored by the Hindu Students Council.*"²⁸ This is consistent with GHEN's copyright notice on archived hindunet.org webpages, which reads: "Please note that entire collection of GHEN websites is copyrighted 1989-1999, Global Hindu Electronic Networks, Hindu Students Council."²⁹ It is clear, therefore, that the web infrastructure for RSS, VHP, VHP-A among others, was built by the HSC. *Undeniably the HSC-run GHEN was facilitating the initial web presence of the RSS and VHP at least until 1999.*

Further, the assertion that Hindunet is a private company that was formed in 1999 in order to take over GHEN from HSC suggests that Hindunet as an entity did not exist prior to 1999. This is not true. At least as early as 1996, "Hindunet.org" hosted the GHEN/Hindu Universe group of websites.³⁰ The Copyright for Hindunet.org from that point on has read "*Copyright © Hindu Students Council.*"³¹ Sometime between 1999-2001, HSC's "non-profit" GHEN became incorporated as a private for-profit entity called Hindunet, Inc.

There is thus a clear continuity in the use of the name "Hindunet" – from HSC's early Hindunet.org to Hindunet, Inc., which took over ownership of GHEN.

HSC's supporting role for Sangh activities goes deeper. Apart from an active role in

building the Sangh's web infrastructure, HSC/GHEN also ran some of the Sangh's important internal listservs such as VHPGC-L, "a network exclusively (sic) for the VHP Governing Council Members and chapter coordinators."³²

The VHP Governing Council listserv included VHP-A leaders Gaurang Vaishnav and Mahesh Mehta, among others, and HSC leaders Mihir Meghani, Ajay Shah and Kanchan Banerjee. The latter three, apart from providing regular updates on HSC projects such as GHEN and GHYAN, also participated in strategy discussions with VHP leaders.³³ Tellingly, Gaurang Vaishnav, General Secretary of the VHP-A, complimented Ajay Shah's leadership in setting up an "Internet empire":

Abhayaji is replacing Dr. Ajay Shah who has moved on to what started as an experiment in cyberspace and turned out to be more than a full time job of managing our presence on the Internet. Ajaybhai has been instrumental in almost single handedly creating what I would like to call an Internet empire of VHP of America and HSC.... It was Ajaybhai's persistence that has made communication among the GC [Governing Council] members by email possible. He was the one to clearly see the benefit of this tool and remained an ardent advocate of it until most of us understood and implemented what he was saying.³⁴

It quickly becomes clear how the involvement of HSC in the above listserv aids the formation of Hindunet, Inc. On August 27th 1999, the same Ajay Shah, one of the founders of the HSC and the central figure behind the development of GHEN as a HSC project, wrote a memorandum to the VHP-A's Executive Board.³⁵ In this document, Shah sought the VHP-A's permission to "Spin Off Global Hindu Electronic Networks ... as a separate for-profit entity." Shah uses the example of the Bharat Prakashan Kendra, a publishing house whose portfolio includes the RSS and BJP mouthpieces, *Organiser* and *Panchajanya*, to lay out his vision for the new relationship between the "HSC spin off" and the "Sangh Parivar." He suggests that the new arrangement should include a profit-sharing agreement whereby "VHP-A/HSC should be given a share of profit in this commercial venture." In a clear admission of the HSC's identification with Hindutva and its continued commitment to the development and control over the Sangh network, Shah's memo states:

While the day-to-day contents and development would rest with the employees of the commercial GHEN, VHP/HSC and indeed the Sangh parivar should have a say in the over all direction of the contents development. In that, two members of the Borad [sic] of Directors should be appointed by VHP/HSC We believe that with the future in mind, this is perhaps the only way we will be able to grow into a major operation, otherwise in the future a commercial company with ample resources and non-Hindutva leanings will over shadow our work.

Mr. Shah's role as a leader of HSC is indeed fundamental to the presence, growth and success of the Sangh in the USA and on the web. And this memorandum clearly admits that the transfer of GHEN from the control of the HSC, a part of the non-profit VHP-A, to the "newly" incorporated for-profit Hindunet, Inc. was a strategic move by the HSC *within* the Sangh Parivar.

The documents surrounding the creation and contemporary status of Hindunet, Inc., as a private company reveal much continuity between the non-profit Hindunet.org run by the HSC

and its for-profit reincarnation as Hindunet, Inc. An internal document dated April 20, 2000 lists the “GHEN Team”:³⁶

CEO: Ajay Shah, Ph.D.
V.P. Development: Srinivas Bolisetty
V.P. Operations: Rajiv Varma
C.F.O.: Ragni Mehta
V.P. Sales: Kanchan Banerjee
General Counsel & Director of Marketing: Rakhi Israni

Of the above, Shah, Banerjee and Israni have been HSC leaders and founders. Banerjee and Israni in particular were HSC office bearers after 1999. Available records suggest that Banerjee was Overall advisor of the National HSC in 2004, while Israni was National HSC President in 2004 and Program Director for HSC’s Dharma Conference in 2003.³⁷ Varma and Bolisetty closely worked with the HSC-run GHEN network (Varma was list manager for GHEN/HSC run listservs such as the VHP-GC-L, Bolisetty was the administrator for the HVK discussion lists, and both have ties to organized Sangh Parivar networks in the U.S.; Bolisetty was listed as a contact for the Raleigh/Durham chapter of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS), while Varma runs a network of extremely virulent Hindutva websites out of Texas).³⁸

Another document dated August 20, 2001 lists the following as the “Hindunet Management”:³⁹

Chairman of the Board: Dr. B.K.Modi
Board Member: Dr. Mahesh Mehta
President and CEO: Dr. Ajay Shah
Chief Technical Officer: Srinivas Bolisetty

Ajay Shah and Srinivas Bolisetty remain from the GHEN team. The identity of the other two members of the management team indicates that the process of creating Hindunet as a private company was done under the sponsorship of the VHP. The first, B. K. Modi, has been Chairman of VHP Overseas. The second, Mahesh Mehta, is a founder of VHP-A.⁴⁰ As noted supra, Shah’s memorandum to the VHP-A seeking permission to “spin off” GHEN includes a clause about VHP-A/HSC nominating two members of the board.⁴¹

Moreover, draft versions of a licensing agreement for GHEN between WWVCorp⁴² and VHP-A recognize the debt owed to HSC and its parent VHP-A in starting GHEN, and creating and propagating GHEN websites⁴³:

WHEREAS, Global Hindu Electronic Networks (“GHEN”) was started as a project of Hindu Students Council (“HSC”), a chapter/project of VHP-A;

WHEREAS, WWVCorp recognizes that VHP-A and HSC have significantly contributed to creation and propagation of GHEN websites.

The inescapable conclusion is that Hindunet, Inc. was not some new and independent private entity coming in from the outside. Instead, the creation of Hindunet, Inc. was an “internal” project within the Sangh Parivar of which key participants were HSC and VHP-A.⁴⁴

2.2. *Questions that CSFH would like National HSC to answer publicly:*

1. Why did the HSC build and maintain the Sangh web infrastructure prior to 1999?
2. Why did Sudeep Roy, HSC regional coordinator for Northern California,⁴⁵ avoid answering the above question during the Stanford debate when a local HSC member queried him about the status of these websites prior to 1999?⁴⁶
3. Why did the HSC run listservs (such as that for the VHP-A Governing Council) for Sangh Parivar internal communications? What does it mean that HSC leadership participated in the internal communication of the main decision making body of the VHP-A at least until 1999?
4. Why have the National HSC and Regional officers not been publicly forthcoming about the continuing links between the HSC and the Sangh Parivar when they privately worked actively to facilitate the Sangh's presence in the USA at least until 1999/2000? Instead, why do they insist on denying everything above?

2.3. *HSC's Ideological Links to the Sangh*

Despite the information described above, the HSC, as the information presented below demonstrates, continues to claim that it is not ideologically linked to the Sangh and that it "has been independently run since 1993" (see <http://www.hscnet.org/fact.php>) The available information also shows that even after HSC obtained its own 501(c)(3) status and presumably thus became *de jure* independent of the VHP-A in 2002 (see chapter 1),⁴⁷ HSC continued to reproduce and legitimize the Sangh Parivar's ideology in its activities in the USA.

In 2003, HSC organized the Dharma Conference,⁴⁸ where "three important projects"⁴⁹ were launched:

- Global Outreach for Students and Youth Against Violence (GOSYAV)
- Educator's Society for the Heritage of India (ESHI)
- NetSeva

While GOSYAV seems to have been put on the back burner permanently—we have found hardly any mention of it since the announcement of its formation—, ESHI and Netseva have been active in furthering the agenda of the Sangh Parivar. We explore the nature of these initiatives by the HSC and the VHP-A below.

2.4. *Educator's Society for the Heritage of India (ESHI)*

The National HSC is represented at the leadership level of ESHI by Kanchan Banerjee and Nikunj Trivedi.⁵⁰ ESHI was founded "to address the need for greater scrutiny of Indian and Hindu content in school and college curricula and in the media."⁵¹ Proposed projects included "Review of Middle School, High School and College Textbooks" wherein "ESHI will review content in textbooks at various levels and, where appropriate, contact authors, editors and publishers to suggest changes in content." The table on the next page lists cross-membership at the leadership level between ESHI and other Sangh Parivar organizations such as the Hindu Education Foundation.⁵²

Individual	ESHI Role	Sangh Affiliation
Mahesh Mehta	Advisor	Founder (VHP-A)
Beth Kulkarni	Training & Education	VP-Texas (VHP-A), Advisor (HEF)
Kanchan Banerjee	Co-Founder, VP Public Relations	VP for Youth (VHP-A), Co-Founder (HSC)
Nikunj Trivedi	VP for Students/New Generation Outreach	VP (HSC)
Abhinav Dwivedi	Advisor for Fundraising	Advisor (HEF)

In September 2004, ESHI held its first national conference on “Contemporary Conceptions of Studies on India in Academia.” The conference was co-sponsored by the HSC, and “information was shared about various initiatives taken in different parts of the country for providing education about India to middle or high school teachers and students.”⁵³

In August 2005, the HSC and VHP-A, among other organizations, participated in a “Dharma Summit” with the Hindu International Council Against Defamation (HICAD). HSC's important role in the "summit" was expressed most eloquently by Ved Chaudhary, conference coordinator and founder of HICAD and President of ESHI, who “referred to HSC as his right hand and his left hand.”⁵⁴ At this conference, Hindutva luminaries, including K.S. Sudarshan, the *Sarsanghchalak* (Supreme Leader) of the RSS, participated and launched the “Hindu Council Initiative.”⁵⁵ This “initiative” explicitly tied the efforts of the Hindutva movement in India to efforts in the U.S., as evidenced in this excerpt from a report prepared by the Hindu Press International:

Youth education and guidance were foremost on most speakers’ minds, with a secondary issue being the treatment Hinduism receives in the dozens of textbooks used in American schools and colleges...However, the books have given shabby treatment to Hinduism. Different speakers explained how to approach the local school board at the time the books were up for adoption, how to influence the selection and even future editions of the books.⁵⁶

The conference served as the immediate impetus behind the launch in September 2005 of what has come to be known as the California Textbook Controversy⁵⁷ – an ultimately unsuccessful campaign spearheaded by Hindu Education Foundation, Vedic Foundation and ESHI to modify middle school textbooks in California along standard Hindutva ideological lines. The Sangh Parivar sought to “sanitize caste and gender hierarchies and discrimination that permeate ancient Indian history, omit mention of caste and gender injustices in India today, and delete the word dalit (former “untouchable” castes)”⁵⁸ from textbooks in California. In support of the HEF/VF efforts in California, “ESHI also contacted Prof. J.S. Rajput, former President of the National Council for Educational Research (NCERT), India, to write about the efforts of textbook corrections in India.”⁵⁹ Rajput’s central role in forcing the insertion of distorted history, crude RSS propaganda and hate speech into school textbooks in India in the late 1990s was widely condemned by scholars of history in India and elsewhere, as was his active participation along with the RSS and the BJP in the harassment of scholars in India unwilling to toe the RSS line.⁶⁰

The interventions in California by ESHI and other Hindutva organizations are very much a continuation of similar efforts in India by the Sangh Parivar. As an HEF volunteer proudly proclaimed in a recent gathering of Sangh Parivar activists from all over the world:

“Through the Hindu Education Foundation *run by the RSS* in California, we have succeeded in correcting the misleading information in text books for primary and secondary classes.”⁶¹ (emphasis added.)

Given the direct participation of leaders and members of the National HSC in the formation and functioning of organizations such as the ESHI and HEF, it would stretch credibility to claim that the HSC is not trying to replicate in the US the Sangh Parivar’s campaign in India to change the depiction of India and the history of its peoples in school textbooks in the US to match the Sangh Parivar’s hate-filled, distorted vision.

2.5. *Netseva*

The HSC website lists Netseva as one of its projects. Netseva’s website was taken down shortly after the launch of CSFH’s “Truth Out on HSCs” campaign in April 2007, but the “Projects” page in an archived version of the website⁶² suggests that Netseva started as a fundraising arm for Ekal Vidyalayas: “At present Ekal Vidyalaya is the only project supported by Netseva.”⁶³ What is not mentioned is that Ekal Vidyalaya is a project of the VHP,⁶⁴ and is a significant component of the Sangh Parivar’s ongoing massive efforts to Hinduize the Adivasis, the indigenous peoples of India, and recruit them as footsoldiers in the RSS war on religious and ethnic minorities in India. (aboriginals in India. This is clear from a sampling of statements by various Sangh personnel and its official publication *Organiser* (see Appendix B for details).

In 2005, the Indian Government stopped providing grants to Ekal Vidyalayas following the publication of a field research study which concluded that they were “misusing these funds, and using the grants for creating disharmony amongst religious groups and creating a political cadre.”⁶⁵

2.6. *Questions that CSFH would like National HSC to answer publicly:*

A. Does the National HSC support ESHI’s efforts to modify school textbooks in California and align them with Hindutva ideology, much like the RSS attempted in India? Does HSC think it is good to distort textbooks to erase, or even downplay, the societal violence and injustice engendered by caste and gender inequities in India?

B. Why does the HSC support, financially and otherwise, the Ekal Vidyalayas in India? Does the HSC condone the wholesale erasure of Adivasi cultures, the indoctrination of Adivasi children into the hate ideology of the Sangh Parivar, and the use, often forcible, of Adivasis as foot soldiers in the Sangh Parivar’s war against religious minorities in India?

2.7. *The “Diversity” of HSC Speakers:*

The HSC claims that its list of invitees to various conferences is “diverse” and does not betray any ideological bias towards the Sangh. Certainly, some non-Hindutva speakers have been invited to HSC events. However, upon closer examination of the invitee lists for Freedom Festival 1997 and Global Dharma Conference 2003, two key HSC-sponsored conferences, we believe we see a clear pattern: The invitee lists are dominated by speakers who are openly

committed to the Sangh agenda, often self-identify with the Sangh Parivar, and/or hold high offices in Sangh Parivar organizations. Moreover, we suspect that the planning and coordination of these HSC conferences proceed in consultation with Sangh organizations.

The ideological trends are easiest to spot in events sponsored by National HSC. For instance, the Freedom Festival in 1997 (FF97) was HSC (organized) to celebrate the 140th anniversary of the 1857 revolt or the first war of independence in India. Early planning documents (see excerpts below) show that many speakers that the organizers planned to invite were part of the Sangh Parivar, and that the Sangh was helping to organize the conference.

GUEST SPEAKERS FROM ABROAD⁶⁶

Atalji [for Vajpayee]: most likely to come for Boston and D.C. conference

Arun Shourie: Cannot come for her (sic) wife's illness.

An alternative name has been suggested by Ashok Singhalji: Shri Narayan Swami, Sr. Editor of Indian Express, supposed to be very effective and knowledgeable speaker on Indian affairs (except of name/fame comparable with Arun Shourie)

Koenraad Elst (Belgium): agreed to come

Mark Tully (BBC): Invitation was sent but we have not heard from him yet

T.N.Shesan: If Atalji comes then we don't need him

Burmese Leader Aung Sun: Sangh office in Myanmar advised (sic) not to invite her for political and other reasons.

Speakers:

Aparnaji from Chinmaya Mission, Atlanta

Bhishma Agnihotri

Dr. Mahesh Mehta

Dattopant Thengdiji (July 4)

Pandit Ramadheenji

Dayanand Saraswatiji (may be)

Anjleeben Pandya (may be)

Gaurang Vaishnavji (may be)

Of the 16 potential speakers mentioned, at least nine are identifiable senior members of the Sangh Parivar – Vajpayee, Shourie, Elst, Singhal, Agnihotri, Mehta, Thengadi, Gaurang Vaishnav, Dayanand Saraswati and Anjali Pandya (*see* Appendix A for specific affiliations). All nine of them are senior Sangh leaders. With few exceptions, the FF97 speaker list is very clearly dominated and defined by Sangh ideology at this early planning stage.

What is perhaps even more revealing from the planning exchanges is the deference to, and coordination with, the Sangh leadership. With Shourie apparently unavailable, the HSC relied upon Ashok Singhal, the General Secretary of the VHP in India, to suggest an alternative. Even worse, as indicated in the listserv conversation reproduced supra, in considering to invite Aung San Su Kyi, the Burmese pro-democracy leader, HSC's planners acted upon advice from the Sangh office in Myanmar that she was politically undesirable for a Sangh event.

The above extract is but one from a long collection of planning emails that reveals much about the HSCs coordination with the Sangh in planning FF97.

A similar pattern emerges in the Dharma Conference of 2003 (DC-03) organized by the HSC. DC-03 gives the appearance of reaching out to a broader audience through the inclusion of a number of non-Sangh speakers and presenters.⁶⁷ However upon closer examination of DC-03's speakers and their presentations two things becomes apparent. First, the HSC has made an effort to sanitize the image of a solid Sangh Parivar contingent consisting of high-profile leaders of various RSS organizations in India and the U.S. This is done by projecting them as "experts" on social issues, and playing down their record as Sangh Parivar ideologues and leaders. Second, despite the apparent 'diversity' of speakers and presenters in DC03, the only group with a consistent political ideology is the Sangh Parivar contingent. All other speakers and presenters bring various types of spiritual self-help and repackaged social conservatism to the event. A list of speakers is tabulated on the next page.

Masking Sangh Leaders

Based on the brief blurbs provided by the HSC's Dharma Conference website, Sangh speakers did not directly talk about Hindutva. While we do not know exactly what they presented to their audiences, it is worth noting these blurbs if only to recognize how the purported content jars with their track records as ardent advocates of Hindutva. Balwant Apte and Dattatreya Hosabele, both senior veteran RSS leaders, are identified with a session that claims to address "cultural degeneration, sectarian violence and divisive politics," and to act as a springboard to "youth acting for societal transformation." Mahesh Mehta, the founder and long-time president of the VHP-A, the U.S. counterpart of the VHP in India, leads a session claiming to expound on the "dharma of science." D.P. Sinha, who led the violent campaign against the shooting of the film "Water" in Uttar Pradesh, forcing the film-makers to go to another country to shoot a film about India, leads a session titled "Do performing arts have responsibilities and obligations?" The editors of the RSS mouthpiece "Organiser" and the BJP mouthpiece "Panchjanya," Seshadri Chari and Tarun Vijay, respectively, held a session titled "Journalistic integrity and the Dharma of the news."

Sangh Speakers		"Diverse" Speakers
Murli Manohar Joshi (BJP/RSS)	Ved Nanda (HSS)	The Kanchi
Subash Kak	Rama Jois (RSS)	Shankaracharya
Koenraad Elst	N.V.Raghuram	Dayananda Saraswati
David Frawley	Jatinder Kumar (IDRF/FISI)	Bawa Jain
B K Modi (VHPO)	Balwant Apte (RSS/BJP)	Pramukh Swamiji
Mahesh Mehta (VHP-A)	Dattathreya Hosabale (RSS)	Tadatmananda Saraswati
D. P. Sinha (RSS)	Seshadri Chari (Ed. Organiser)	Jonas Trinkunas
Manohar Shinde (HSS)	Tarun Vijay (Ed. Panchjanya)	
Yashwant Pathak (SI/RSS)	Francois Gautier	
Stephen Knapp	S. Gurusurthy (Swadeshi)	
Yvette Rosser	Jagaran Manch/RSS)	

All of the session blurbs either completely excise the Sangh Parivar affiliations of the Sangh speakers, or, rarely, gloss over these affiliations by casting them in a positive light. Thus Mahesh Mehta is described as "a polymer scientist by profession," while Dattatreya Hosabele "has worked with the ABVP (Indian Hindus student group)⁶⁸ for decades helping students act in their own interests and in the greater interests of the country." D.P. Sinha is described as a

“celebrated cultural and political figure in India” and the “National Convener of the Cultural Cell,” the latter a euphemistic reference to Samskar Bharati, the RSS front which works to spread the Sangh Parivar’s socio-cultural ideology. The editors of Panchajanya and Organiser are merely described as “senior editors of newspapers in India.” Given all this, the conclusion seems unavoidable that the authors of the conference program deliberately played down the Sangh affiliations of these major Sangh Parivar personalities.

Sangh Dharma and Commodity Dharma

The DC-03 website divides the conference sessions by topical area under “self,” “family,” “society” and “world.” The bulk of the non-Sangh speakers were featured under the topical areas of “self” and “family” while Sangh speakers led sessions listed under the topics “society” and “the world.” This distinction roughly corresponds to the different emphases they brought to the table: the former brought self-help and spiritual ‘products’ while the latter utilized the elastic notion of ‘dharma’ to legitimate the Sangh Parivar agenda.

Sangh speakers and non-Sangh speakers may be considered as two distinct groups; however it is the Sangh speakers who together have an institutional basis for their politics; they are well-known players in the global Sangh Parivar. Their participation is for the Sangh Parivar and for Hindutva. To these swayamsevaks (self-described “selfless workers”), “dharma” is synonymous with Hindutva. On the other hand, the purveyors of self-help options for the immigrant middle class, proponents of repackaged social conservatism and itinerant theorists and enthusiasts of ethics and morality have no institutional or ideological consistency amongst themselves. They cater to specific audiences as vendors of packaged commodities. Their view of “dharma” is shaped by their anticipation of markets for their products, and draws on a long history of western fascination with the allegedly “spiritual” qualities of Indian culture.

The HSC’s inclusion of a solid contingent of Sangh Parivar bigwigs within a seemingly diverse group of speakers for DC03 makes sense when we consider their desire to reach a larger audience: one that is attuned not just to the cultural angst of young students faced with the demands of U.S. ethnic/racial identity politics, but one that is also solidly ensconced within a marketplace where self-help, repackaged social conservatism and spiritualist quackery sells. The same class to which young students who crave a ‘culture’ fix in college campuses belong, also produces consumers eager to remake themselves as model-minority citizen-consumers. This inclusion is also shaped by the desire to legitimate the Sangh Parivar as an authentic leader within the realm of syndicated, commercial, globalized Hinduism. Under the garb of an all-encompassing, inclusive-sounding and ultimately meaningless concept like “dharma” the marketplace can seamlessly blend with the fascist rostrum and vice versa. It is all “dharma” – from pricey incense sticks that claim to improve your concentration, to the club that RSS shakhas teach their trainees to wield against minorities.

2.8. *Questions that CSFH would like National HSC to answer publicly:*

- A. How many HSC members attending FF97 knew of the political affiliations of the speakers? Did they know that some of the speakers had actively engaged in inciting anti-minority hatred in India? Were HSC members aware of the fact that the Sangh Parivar was involved in the planning and coordination of FF97? Why was such information kept away from the membership?

B. Why were the speakers at the Dharma Conference predominantly Sangh Parivar leaders and Hindutva promoters?

2.9. *Individuals vs HSC as an Organization*

One could argue that individuals from the HSC attending some Sangh events does not necessarily make the HSC an associate of the Sangh. However, such an argument is spurious not just because the HSC members attending the Sangh events are very much there as representatives of HSC, but also because these events were explicitly designed to bring together people from different Sangh Parivar member organizations. Consider the following:

In 1995, two years after the HSC claimed to have become “an independently run organization,” HSC delegates attended the Vishwa Sangh Shibir (World Sangh Camp) in Gujarat.⁶⁹ The press release following the Shibir had this to say:

“Many youths [sic] came to Bharat for the first time. They were invited in a seven day camp hosted by Antra Rashtriya Sahyog Pratisthan, Gujarat, a registered charitable trust, which is working as a bridge organisation between non-resident Indians and Indians all over the world.”⁷⁰

An internal Sangh document suggests that in 1997 a member of the HSC Coordination Council attended a camp organized in India by the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (the student wing of the BJP). As part of a “worker exchange” program.

Other Coordination Council members reported meeting ABVP leaders and National Hindu Youth Federation leaders in the UK. An email from then Coordination Council member Mihir Meghani reads: “*We encourage key workers from other countries to personally attend some of our programs so we can exchange experiences and learn from each other.*”⁷¹ (emphasis added.)

It is instructive to note that the ABVP meetings held were privately held and the meeting in UK with NHSF was one attended not by some random individuals but by “HSC workers”.

Chapter 3: ENGAGING THE HINDU STUDENT COUNCIL

Here we summarize some of the efforts by CSFH to engage in public discussions and reach out to various HSC chapters and individuals since April 2007. These efforts continue and are meant to encourage the various stakeholders to look at, discuss, and think about the links between National HSC and the Sangh Parivar. The stakeholders here include the HSC chapters, of course, and also those groups and individuals in the U.S. that identify as “Hindu,” or “Indian,” or “South Asian.” Such groups include those with primarily religious or socio-cultural agendas, as well as individuals and groups with broad secular and progressive mandates who are engaged in peace and justice issues and are working against violence. We seek to continue this engagement in the form of a series of questions posed to the HSC about their activities linked to the Sangh Parivar.

As mentioned above, there have been two broad responses from the HSC to the evidence that CSFH has presented. The first is the response of local HSC chapters. Several have contacted us and we have developed an important engagement with some of them. We wish to continue and broaden this engagement and build a dialog with the desi-American student population (more below). The second is the very different response of the National HSC, which has chosen to respond largely in the form of two press statements, neither engaging in any substantive manner with the evidence we presented about the links between HSC and the Sangh Parivar (<http://www.hscnet.org/press.php>). The second press release was nothing more than an ad-hominem attack on CSFH members, and even prompted the Stanford HSC chapter to ask that National HSC retract the statement and desist from engaging in such politics (<http://www.stanford.edu/group/hsc/video.html>). In the video recording of the meeting at Stanford where attendees asked for the retraction, the HSC regional coordinator for Northern California can be seen attempting to deny the links between HSC and the Sangh (*see* the discussion in Chapter 2, *supra*).

On our part, CSFH continues to welcome engagement with HSC chapters and welcomes serious discussion about the linkages between the HSC and the Sangh Parivar.

3.1. CSFH Engagement (with HSC chapters, desi-youth, media)

1. In April 2007, CSFH discussed the HSC–Sangh Parivar links at an open forum during the Youth Solidarity Summer (YSS) in New York City. Of the approximately forty desi-American youth present at the forum, a number of students decided to write letters to the HSC members on their campus seeking an engagement on this issue.
2. Since April 2007, CSFH has been in touch with a number of HSC chapters and with university faculty on campuses with HSC chapters in an effort to engage them in a conversation about the National HSC and its links to the Sangh Parivar. The interactions have ranged from email exchanges to extended conversations such as with the Stanford HSC. The broad aim of these engagements is to initiate a public dialog on the problematic presence of an organization such as HSC in the “liberal multicultural” space of American universities. The presence of HSC is problematic because of its links to the Sangh, especially the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, perhaps the ‘leading light’ among the violent hate groups that comprise the Sangh Parivar.

3. CSFH has put forth eight questions since April 2007 to further the discussion on the issue of HSC–Sangh linkage. These questions, available on our website, were also sent via e-mail to several HSC chapter officers.
4. CSFH has had inquiries about our research from independent citizen groups and media. We have generally responded via e-mail, and on one occasion, engaged in a conversation on a radio show.

The most compelling engagement with the HSC has been with the HSC chapter at Stanford. This exchange culminated in the chapter organizing a public discussion to discuss the evidence presented by CSFH on the links between HSC and the Sangh Parivar. Briefly, our exchanges included:

1. A long email exchange which dealt with broad moral, ethical and substantive issues raised by CSFH in the context of Hindus and Hinduism in America, organizations that purport to speak for Hindus in America, the principles of peace and tolerance, and the notion of violence;
2. A public discussion that the HSC Stanford chapter hosted on its own initiative in which CSFH's letter to HSC Stanford was read out. A video recording of the discussion is also available on the HSC Stanford page on Stanford University's website.⁷²
3. A statement which says: "Recognize that organizations like CSFH can be valuable partners in helping us stay clear of fundamentalism, and thus, their activism is of great benefit and will act as our conscience."⁷³

3.2. *Questions For Continued Discussion*

In the spirit of building upon the engagements CSFH has initiated, here are some key questions that remain unanswered by National HSC. These questions should be seen as open invitations for dialogue in multiple forms by the larger public who we believe are stakeholders in interrogating links between organizations purporting to be tolerant and peace-loving, and organizations that have an ideology of hate. This is especially critical when the supposedly tolerant and peace-loving organizations appear to be no more than a façade, a project of the hate group to soften its public image and insert itself into the larger public space.

1. What did VHP General Secretary Ashok Singhal mean when he said: "Now the first project we have in mind is strengthening the HSC"?
(http://hsctruthout.stopfundinghate.org/PRs/pr_Question5.html)
2. How does the National HSC explain its continuing links with the VHP-A – years after it claimed to have become an "independently run organization"?
(http://hsctruthout.stopfundinghate.org/PRs/pr_Question4.html)
3. Why has the National HSC password protected the alt.hindu archives? Is the obscuring of these discussions which happened in the public domain in the mid-1990s linked to CSFH's "Truth Out on HSC's" campaign?
(http://hsctruthout.stopfundinghate.org/PRs/pr_Question3.html)

4. The domain registration page for the National HSC's website (hscnet.org), along with several other Sangh websites hosted on the Global Hindu Electronic Networks (GHEN/Hindunet), used to list "Hindunet Inc" as the "Admin Organization" and/or "Ajay Shah" as the "Admin Name." However, since the launch of our "Truth Out on HSCs!" campaign, the "Admin Name" for the National HSC's website has been changed to the rather cryptic "hv", and the "Admin Organization" has been left blank. Furthermore, all references to the HSC have been removed from the Hindunet/GHEN contact page. Notably, the copyright paragraph at the bottom of the contact page has also been cleansed of any reference to the HSC, thereby suggesting that GHEN is indeed unconnected to the HSC. Why has the National HSC just recently changed the Admin information for hscnet.org and also changed the contact page on Hindunet (hindunet.com/contact.htm)? Is it an effort to keep the chapters from seeing the connections between the National HSC and the Sangh Parivar?
(http://hsctruthout.stopfundinghate.org/PRs/pr_Question2.html)
5. Why did the National HSC build the Sangh Parivar's Global Internet infrastructure and why does it continue to maintain it?
6. What justifies inviting an ideologue of hate like Sadhvi Rithambara when the HSC vision statement claims "The entire creation is one big family" and "Let everybody be happy, healthy, and blessed"?
(http://hsctruthout.stopfundinghate.org/PRs/pr_Question6.html)
7. Were the students from HSC aware that Ram Madhav is a representative of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)? Will the HSC continue to provide venues to promote the politics and personalities of the RSS?
(http://hsctruthout.stopfundinghate.org/PRs/pr_Question7.html)
8. If HSC has been "independently run since 1993," why did VHP-A seek to trademark HSC's logo and name in 2003, the very next year after the anti-Muslim carnage in Gujarat? This is critical when one notes that the "groups most directly involved ... include the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council, VHP), the Bajrang Dal, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that heads the Gujarat state government. Collectively, they are known as the sangh parivar, or family of Hindu nationalist organizations."
(http://hsctruthout.stopfundinghate.org/PRs/pr_Question8.html)

CSFH is happy that some HSC chapters have addressed the issue with the seriousness it deserves. We urge all HSC members, and the Indian-American community at large, to examine the evidence and the arguments in detail and arrive at their own conclusions. We are, as always, open to any individual or groups who wish to discuss any particular details or conclusions.

We believe that HSC chapters in the US have a special responsibility. The National HSC derives its legitimacy through a claim of an extensive chapter network across the US. Therefore, it is the responsibility of individual HSC chapters to decide whether they wish to be part of such a legitimation for the forces of the extreme Hindu right. We urge all HSC chapters to re-position themselves to be distinct and distant from the Sangh Parivar.

¹ See HSC's press release, dated May 23, 2007, available at <http://www.hscnet.org/articles.php?pid=79> (archive)

² See for instance a 2003 report from Human Rights Watch, <http://hrw.org/wr2k3/asia6.html>, and a 2005 report by Amnesty International, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA200022005?open&of=ENG-IND>.

³ For details, see http://hsctruthout.stopfundinghate.org/PRs/pr_Question8.html.

⁴ See VHP-A's Press Release, dated Oct. 20, 1999, available at <http://www.vhp-america.org/dynamic/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=6> (archive)

⁵ Utsav Chakrabarti, *Hindu Students Council Annual Meet in Florida*, INDO-AMERICAN NEWS (Houston), Mar. 19, 2004, at C3 (listing new executive committee of the HSC) (archive)

⁶ HSC Income Tax Returns 2004, available from guidestar.org (archive)

⁷ A HSC press release issued after the third annual fundraising dinner of the University of Texas at Austin chapter lists "Mr. Vijay Pallod, HSC National Treasurer" as one of the "special guests for the night." (web) (archive)

⁸ See Interview posted on soc.culture.indian by Dinesh Agrawal on September 9, 1993 (web) (archive).

⁹ See the RSS press release posted on soc.culture.indian.marathi by Gaurang Desai on January 17, 1996 ([web](#)) ([archive](#))

¹⁰ See e-mail posted on soc.culture.indian by Romesh Diwan on September 28, 1998, (web) (archive)

¹¹ See announcement dated Apr 14, 1995 on comp.infosystems.www.announce, posted by digest editor (editor@rbhatnagar.csm.uc.edu) ([web](#)) ([archive](#))

¹² See announcement dated June 12, 1996 on soc.culture.indian.gujarati, soc.culture.indian, soc.culture.bengali, soc.culture.indian.delhi, soc.culture.indian.kerala, soc.culture.indian.marathi, soc.culture.indian.telugu.listserves, posted by ghen@netcom.com. ([web](#)) ([archive](#))

¹³ See website for Global Dharma Conference at <http://www.dharmaconference.org/cosponsors.html> (archive)

¹⁴ See Bobby Parekh's note (dated Jan 15, 1992) on soc.culture.indian, and soc.culture.india ([web](#)) ([archive](#))

¹⁵ See HSC's note (dated Jan 14, 1993) on alt.hindu ([web](#)) ([archive](#))

¹⁶ See HSC's note (dated Mar 4, 1994) on soc.religion.eastern ([web](#)) ([archive](#))

¹⁷ See posting dated Apr 21, 1994 on alt.hindu ([web](#)) ([archive](#))

¹⁸ See http://hsctruthout.stopfundinghate.org/PRs/pr_Question7.html

¹⁹ See http://hsctruthout.stopfundinghate.org/PRs/pr_Question6.html

²⁰ SEVA is a Hindi word meaning "service." Sometimes also spelled SEWA.

²¹ See, for instance, the SEVA page as it appeared on July 2001 on the website of the HSC chapter at George Mason University at http://web.archive.org/web/20010703025203/http://www.gmu.edu/org/hsc/hsc_seva.html (listing multiple Sangh Parivar organizations that also appear on the VHP-A's website as seen in the archived version of January 2003 at http://web.archive.org/web/20030103153830/http://www.vhp-america.org/seva_projects/).

²² See various articles posted on the website of the VHP-A about the activities of some of these individuals, e.g. VHP-A press release dated October 20, 1999, (web) (archive); article dated April 9, 2001 (web) (archive)

²³ Here are some instances

1. Sonia Gandhi was active with the HSC chapter at Princeton University in the mid 1990s. Her father Girish Gandhi was Seva coordinator for the VHP-A ([web](#)) (archive), and her mother Veena Gandhi has been vice-president of the VHP-A (web) (archive)

2. Ajay Belambe was active with the HSC chapter at the University of Pittsburg. His brother, Abhay Belambe was a HSS coordinator (web) (archive) and Vice-President of the India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF), a fundraising organization of the Sangh Parivar (web) (archive)

3. Rachna Chandak was active with the HSC chapter at the University of Illinois. Her father Srinarayan Chandak, was a Vice-president of IDRF (web) (archive)

4. Samir Asthana was a leader of the HSC chapter at the University of Michigan (web) (archive). His mother Jaya Asthana was Secretary of the Boston chapter of the VHP-A (web) (archive) and his father Abhay Asthana was one of the zonal coordinators for the VHP-A (web) (archive)

5. Rishi Bhutada was active with the HSC chapter at the University of Pennsylvania. His uncle Vijay Pallod was a governing council member of the VHP-A (web) (archive) and connected with IDRF (web) (archive)

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6. Seema Shah was on the board of the HSC at Northwestern University (web) (archive). Her father Ramesh Shah, was a zonal coordinator with the VHP-A (web) (archive)
7. Sumir Meghani was active with the HSC at Stanford University (web) (archive). His brother, Mihir Meghani, had started the third chapter of HSC at the University of Michigan in 1991 (web) (archive), was a coordinator with the VHP-A (web) (archive), and later founded the Hindu American Foundation (web) (archive).
- ²⁴ In a Rediff article dated September 7, 1999, vijay Pallod is referred to as a "governing council member of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad" (see <http://rediff.com/news/1999/sep/07us.htm>). Pallod has also been "regional vice-President of IDRf" (see <http://www.idrf.org/dynamic/modules.php?name=Hnnews&file=article&sid=102>) (archive) and is listed as a media contact for IDRf (see <http://www.idrf.org/dynamic/modules.php?name=Hncontent&pa=showpage&pid=80>) (archive).
- ²⁵ See the listing for HSC, HSS & Hindu Yuva at the website of the Student Activities Office (SAO) at University of Washington at http://depts.washington.edu/sao/rso_search_detail.php?id=370 (archive), http://depts.washington.edu/sao/rso_search_detail.php?id=1152 (archive) and http://depts.washington.edu/sao/rso_search_detail.php?id=1296 (archive), respectively and note the overlap of officers. The only organization that is in the current RSO directory listing is Hindu Yuva (web) (archive). On Hindu Yuva's own webpage (web) (archive), they call themselves a "a project for youth by Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS), USA" (HSS is the overseas *avatar* of the RSS in India).
- ²⁶ The National HSC has not formally responded to questions about maintaining the Sangh Parivar's electronic infrastructure, but Sudeep Roy, "HSC regional coordinator for Northern California" (see <http://www.hscnet.org/articles.php?pid=80>) made some comments during a discussion organized by the Stanford HSC. A video of the discussion is available at <http://www.stanford.edu/group/hsc/video.html>
- ²⁷ See <http://www.hscnet.org/articles.php?pid=80> (archive)
- ²⁸ The near-identical early websites (dating back to late 1996 or early 1997) of the RSS, VHP and Hindunet support this. See <http://web.archive.org/web/19970207195740/http://www.rss.org> (archive), <http://web.archive.org/web/19961226114512/http://www.vhp.org> (archive), <http://web.archive.org/web/19961105214052/http://www.hindunet.org> (archive).
- ²⁹ See http://hsctruthout.stopfundinghate.org/PRs/docs/hindunet_old.pdf
- ³⁰ Domaintools lists Hindunet.org's creation date as June 2, 1996 (see <http://whois.domaintools.com/hindunet.org>) (archive). For an early archived page, see <http://web.archive.org/web/19961105214052/http://www.hindunet.org>) (archive).
- ³¹ See note 11, *supra*.
- ³² See Ajay Shah's introductory note (dated Dec 5, 1996) on the VHP Governing Council listserv. (<http://www.hindunet.org/archive/listmail-vhpgc-1>) (archive).
- ³³ See, for instance, Ajay Shah's emails dated April 10, 1997, July 27, 1997 & August 14, 1997, and Mihir Meghani's email dated September 18, 1998 on the VHP Governing Council listserv. (<http://www.hindunet.org/archive/listmail-vhpgc-1>) (archive).
- ³⁴ See VHP-A General Secretary Gaurang Vaishnav's email (dated January 9, 1997) at <http://www.hindunet.org/archive/listmail-vhpgc-1> (archive)
- ³⁵ See Ajay Shah's memorandum to the VHP-A, dated August 27, 1999, at <http://www.hindunet.org/users/ajay/MEMO.DOC> (archive)
- ³⁶ The GHEN team is listed on slide #19 of the file ghen_bplan_new2.ppt (originally downloaded from http://www.hindunet.org/ajay/hindunet_inc/feb2001/ghen_bplan_new2.ppt), (archive)
- ³⁷ See a brief note on the Sangh affiliations of Shah, Banerjee and Israni.
- ³⁸ See a brief note on the Sangh affiliations of Varma and Bolisetty..
- ³⁹ The HinduNet Management team is listed on slide #5 of the file hindunet_syndication.ppt (originally downloaded from http://www.hindunet.org/ajay/hindunet_inc/hindunet_syndication.ppt) (archive)
- ⁴⁰ For a brief note on the Sangh affiliations of BK Modi and Mahesh Mehta, see Appendix A.
- ⁴¹ Ajay Shah's memorandum to VHPA (dated August 27, 1999, originally downloaded from <http://www.hindunet.org/users/ajay/MEMO.DOC>) reads: "While the day-to-day contents and development would rest with the employees of the commercial GHEN, VHP/HSC and indeed the Sangh parivar should have a say in the over all direction of the contents development. In that, two members of the Borad (sic) of Directors should be appointed by VHP/HSC."

⁴² WWWC Corp was an entity founded by Ajay Shah, Rajiv Verma and Srinivas Bolisetty.

⁴³ According to a draft of a "Licensing Agreement" between WWWC Corp and VHPA, the "name and ownership of web sites operated as GHEN would be completely transferred from VHP-A to WWWC Corp in exchange for profit and revenue sharing arrangements". The document was originally downloaded from <http://www.hindunet.org/users/ajay/ajayGHENagreement4.doc> (archive). We could find a number of drafts of the licensing agreement, and have archived them on our website.

⁴⁴ This conclusion is further supported by a draft of a "Memorandum of Understanding" between WWWC Corp, Ajay Shah, Srinivas Bolisetty and Rajiv Varma of the First Part, Mahesh Mehta of the Second Part, and Vest N Web, Inc. of the third Part which was to incorporate HinduNet, Inc. Upon incorporation of HinduNet, 50% of its assets were to be transferred to parties of the First Part, 10% to the Mahesh Mehta (of the Second Part) who was to hold these shares for the benefit of VHP-A. The MoU was originally downloaded from http://www.hindunet.org/users/ajay/ghen.022701/hindunet_agreement.doc (archive).

⁴⁵ See note 27, *supra*.

⁴⁶ This exchange is captured at approximately 49 mins to 52 mins into the video recording of this discussion at <http://www.stanford.edu/group/hsc/video.html>

⁴⁷ The "Summary of Accounts" attached with the 2000 Form 990 for VHP of America, Inc., lists "National HSC" as one of its 27 chapters. The HSC started filing its own Form 990s starting 2003, suggesting that it was an independent legal entity in 2002.

⁴⁸ The conference website lists the HSC as a "co-sponsor," and the HSC was one of the prime movers behind the event. Kanchan Banerjee, the coordinator for HSC was the Conference Chairman, and Nikunj Trivedi, the President of National HSC was the Public Relations Director, and Rakhi Israni, the previous president of National HSC, was listed as the Conference Program Director.

⁴⁹ See <http://www.dharmaconference.org/theConference.html> (archive)

⁵⁰ Nikunj Trivedi is currently President of National HSC. Kanchan Banerjee's current affiliation with HSC is unknown, but at the time of the Dharma Conference in 2003, Banerjee was listed as coordinator of HSC.

⁵¹ See <http://www.dharmaconference.org/ESHI.htm> (archive)

⁵² See <http://www.eshiusa.org/aboutus.htm> Elsewhere, Kanchan Banerjee is referred to as a co-founder. See http://www.eshiusa.org/NL-vol1_030805.htm. For a brief overview of the HEF and Vedic Foundation, see http://www.friendsofsouthasia.org/textbook/About_HEF_and_VF.html

⁵³ See http://www.eshiusa.org/NL-vol1_030805.htm (archive)

⁵⁴ See <http://www.hvk.org/articles/0805/134.html> (archive)

⁵⁵ Lakshmi Ravu, Report on the Dharma Summit 2005, at http://www.vedicfriends.org/reports_on_the_dharma_summit.htm ("Some of the most important Hindu leaders in the world were present for this event. Including: Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati (the inspiration behind the Dharma Summit, and convener of the event), Sri Chidananda Muniji (the creator of the Hindu Encyclopedia project), Sri Bodhinatha Veylanswami (Publisher of Hinduism Today Magazine) and several of his sannyasis, Sri K. S. Sudarshan (leader of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the largest Hindu service organization on earth), Dr. Pranav Pandya (leader of the several million members of the Gayatri Pariwar), Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda (Ramakrishna Order), Dr. David Frawley (Vamadeva Shastriji), Dr. Frank Gaetano Morales (the well-respected American Hindu intellectual and philosopher), Sri Steven Knapp (a prolific American Hindu author), and many others. These Hindu lights and dignitaries all filled the first row of the auditorium. Several Jain, Buddhist, and Sikh leaders were also present.").

⁵⁶ See http://www.vedicfriends.org/reports_on_the_dharma_summit.htm (archive)

⁵⁷ See <http://www.friendsofsouthasia.org/textbook>

⁵⁸ See http://southasiafaculty.net/catextbooks/files/CAEd_TextbookChanges_Factsheet.pdf

⁵⁹ ESHI Press Release, December 5, 2005, at http://web.archive.org/web/20060118034534/http://www.eshiusa.org/PressRelease/ESHI_Press_Release_120605.pdf (archive)

⁶⁰ "Rajput ran a reign of terror," stated Professor Anil Sadgopal, BJVJ (Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha – *Indian People's Science Movement/Network*) vice-president and professor of education at Delhi University. "Nobody dared speak his mind at his meetings. People at NCERT refer to that period as a bawander (whirlpool), a toofan (cyclone) that has now hopefully passed. So many who asserted themselves were abruptly transferred." Operation Wipe Out, *The*

Week, 20 June, 2004, available at http://www.the-week.com/24jun20/currentevents_article10.htm . *See also* “Communalization of Education, The History Textbook Controversy: An Overview,” Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee, Professors of History, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 22 December, 2001, available at <http://www.sacw.net/HateEducation/MridulaAditya122001.html>; “Hindutva Ire: The NCERT's censorship of history textbooks represents a Hindutva attack on the ideas of pluralism and tolerance,” Praful Bidwai, *Frontline Magazine*, Volume 18 - Issue 25, Dec. 08 -21, 2001, available at <http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl1825/18251120.htm>

⁶¹ *RSS Abroad: 'We are striving to keep our culture alive'*, Times of India, Ahmedabad Edition, Dec 31, 2005, available at http://www.friendsofsouthasia.org/textbook/TimesOfIndia_Article_RSSAbroad.html

⁶² See <http://web.archive.org/web/20031212231144/http://www.netseva.org/> (archived on Dec 12, 2003).

⁶³ See <http://web.archive.org/web/20040221142307/www.cis.upenn.edu/~arunc/netseva/projects.html> (archived on Dec 12, 2003). Later on, Netseva started supporting more projects.

⁶⁴ See http://www.vhp.org/englishsite/d.Dimensions_of_VHP/bekal%20vidyalaya/ekalvidyalayayojana.htm (archive)

⁶⁵ See <http://www.hindu.com/2005/05/19/stories/2005051907291200.htm> The study, "Final Report on the field visit and observations of Mr. Avdhash Kaushal for Singhbhum districts in Jharkhand and Tinshukia & Dibrugarh district in Assam", also cites an instance where an Ekal Vidyalaya teacher trained in “Hindu Culture” (by Vanbandhu Parishad) ganged up with his colleagues to destroy a half-built church -- all in the name of propagating Hinduism.

⁶⁶ The Freedom Festival 97 planning documents were originally downloaded from <http://www.freeindia.org/archive/listmail-ff97-1> (archive)

⁶⁷ See <http://www.dharmaconference.org/speakersguests.html> (archive) and <http://www.dharmaconference.org/Program.htm>(archive) for a full list that includes such personalities as the actor Goldie Hawn, and the new age guru Deepak Chopra among others.

⁶⁸ In reality, ABVP, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, is the political student-wing of the RSS and BJP, and is active in colleges and on university campuses.

⁶⁹ *See note 9, supra.*

⁷⁰ *Id.*

⁷¹ Excerpted from an email from Mihir Meghani, dated January 6, 1998, sent on the HSC Coordination Council listserv (originally downloaded from <http://www.hindunet.org/archive/listmail-hsc-cc>) (archive)

⁷² *See* <http://www.stanford.edu/group/hsc/video.html>

⁷³ *Id.*