

Compassionate Presence as a Bridge

Hindu Chaplaincy 2026 - See the Tradition at Work -



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Meet the 2026 CHT Graduates

New Counselor Purohit Program

BCCI Affiliation

Partnerships with VHPA & SAHMS

Chaplaincy Education at HSCI and Elsewhere

Claremont Colleges Partnership for Hindu Chaplaincy Services

Hindu Chaplaincy Beyond Traditional Settings

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Editorial

The Road Less Traveled: Shifting the Paradigm of Hindu Spiritual Care

Robert Frost wrote about two roads that diverged in a wood. He chose the one less traveled, making all the difference. For the Hindu Spiritual Care Institute (HSCI), our journey has been that less-traveled path. Instead of following legacy formats, HSCI is carving a professional model for global **Dharmic and Hindu chaplaincy**. At the center of this evolution stands a singular theme: Compassionate Presence as a Bridge connecting ancient sacred wisdom with modern clinical realities to bring comfort and understanding to a **fragmented and contentious world**.

To build a bridge that stands, we must first lay solid ground. Institutionally, HSCI is rapidly professionalizing our field by training traditional priests in **clinical empathy**, securing graduate academic credits, establishing landmark **APC/BCCI** credential validation, partnering with **CPEI**, and publishing the global **Hindu Chaplaincy Guide**. Yet, these frameworks are only the skeleton of our work; the living insights of our practitioners bring this model to life through the articles featured in this issue, which offer a profound, multidimensional look at this compassionate presence in active clinical practice.

We see this in Dr. Zachary Ginder's exploration of how an "accidental chaplain" connects deeply with a dying scientist-atheist. We feel it in Dr. Abhijit Dam's work connecting **quantum physics** with **Advaita Vedanta** to view clinical death as a transference of consciousness. The bridge extends into mental health as Dr. Punit Mahendru links the **Bhagavad Gītā** directly to evidence-based practices like **CBT**. I explore how the *sākṣī*—**our innermost witness and pure awareness, a profound concept in Hinduism**—shapes presence to help patients cross from fear into calmness and peace, while Sharad Patel illustrates how to support families through **life transitions** using ancestral wisdom and deep compassion.

This intersection of rapid operational growth and deepening academic rigor brings us to our next necessary evolution. **Dharmic and Hindu chaplaincy** has officially arrived on the global stage. To signify this milestone, we must actively expand the body of knowledge in both **theory and practice**. We have now established numerous **collaborations with top institutions**, and these strategic partnerships will bring immense **rigor to our theory and practice**. Because our current publishing format can no longer hold both our expanding theory and our growing community, *Kutumba* is undergoing a major transformation. Moving forward, *Kutumba* will transition into a fully **peer-reviewed academic journal** explicitly dedicated to advancing the practice, theory, and rigorous standards of our field. Simultaneously, to keep our community connected, we will launch a separate house magazine focused on organizational updates, personal stories, and accessible care insights. More detailed information on this **dual-publication transition** will be available soon.

This entire paradigm shift is a collective journey. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the brilliant contributors in this volume who provided the vital theory to advance our field, and to the institutional partners, visionaries, and volunteers working tirelessly behind the scenes. Thank you for walking this less-traveled path with us, and for helping HSCI build a stronger bridge for a **world in need of healing**.



Ashok Chandrasekhar

Ashok Chandrasekhar, PhD
Editor-in-Chief

kutumba

Editorial Board

Mala Setty, PhD
Ashok Chandrasekhar, PhD Editor-in-Chief

HSCI 2025-2026

The Hindu Spiritual Care Institute (HSCI) has arrived!! Eight arduous years of a volunteer team's research, development and outreach has culminated in HSCI being one of the "go to" institutions for Hindu chaplaincy and spiritual care.

The Counseling in the Hindu Tradition (CHT) course was launched in October 2018, with a class of twenty one persons who were entrenched in community service. Years of quiet, steady work of many volunteer hands—building the curriculum, widening community outreach, growing relationships deepened one conversation at a time went into the growth. Today, that work is converging towards a firm, shared direction. That direction is simple to state and radical in practice—**honoring Hindu tradition as it has been lived, while actively shaping how it will be carried forward.**

The year 2025-2026 has been a milestone year in multiple ways. Academically, three initiatives have come to fruition. First, the GTU-HSCI affiliation now offers 12 credits to CHT graduates enrolling in the new GTU offering—a 36 unit MA in interfaith chaplaincy. Second, HSCI has been approved as a APC/BCCI validator for Hindu credentials for Chaplaincy Board and job applicants in the US. What this means for Hindu chaplains—no more convoluted methods of getting Hindu credentials validated for future Hindu chaplains in the US. The third initiative has been the MOU with CPEI, an accreditation body for the CPE course. HSCI has begun the necessary efforts to offer Hindu-centric CPE courses starting in 2027.

We are excited to announce the addition of a new course, the Hindu Purohit Counselor (HPC) program in collaboration with the South Africa Hindu Maha Sabha (SAHMS) starting in 2026-2027. SAHMS, is a highly regarded organization in South Africa, standardizing the role of a Hindu priest. The boost to the curriculum and the pedagogy starting with the 2024-2025 initiative to substantially increase roleplay and live discussion sessions in the CHT course was strengthened in the 2025-2026 cohort. Priests who complete the HPC course will be well-equipped to serve the different needs of contemporary blended Hindu communities with empathy and presence. Parallely, HSCI's initiatives extend to offering volunteering opportunities to the graduates, collaborating with local senior centers to offer support and with Vishwa Hindu Parishad America

to offer Hindu inmates at local jails compassionate non-judgemental presence. More opportunities are cropping up—keep up with us at our website!!

The above ventures are central to our initiative to bring an ancient text, the Bhagavad Gītā directly into the community—as a living resource available to families, seekers, and chaplains alike. This distribution effort is more than a project; it's a statement of intent. It says that the wisdom at the center of Hindu spiritual life belongs in people's hands, in their homes, and in the moments that matter most—grief, uncertainty, celebration, and everyday life.

How we practice Hindu spiritual care is non-judgemental compassionate presence: *niśkāma karma*, which is the underlying message throughout the Bhagavad Gītā. The Gītā emphasizes the dropping of the ego during the performance of an action. Even as you give it your best. Chaplaincy trains its counselors to "Leave everything that is you (your ego)" at the door when you enter a careseeker's sacred space, making room in your heart for the careseeker.

Moodle is HSCI's learning management tool; AI is used extensively within HSCI for research, collating gems in the Shruti/Smritis, documentation and presentation refinement; but for writing reflections on concepts and situations, which is stressed throughout the course, an AI polish of an assignment submission is discouraged, as counterproductive to your goal to awaken reflective skills.

HSCI is emerging as a viable pathway to learn to serve, and we invite the community to walk this next stretch with us—as students, as supporters, and as recipients of a tradition that has always been meant to be universal.

Stay tuned as HSCI's convergent initiatives offer new opportunities for service and personal growth.



Usha Narasimhan
Registrar, HSCI

A Message from the Dean

Dharma Chakra (The Wheel of Duty)

We can all sense the wheel turning faster now. The world has changed, our lives are changing, and our sense of purpose is evolving with it. Of course, this has always been true. The world is always changing, but when the machinery of the world itself begins to change, we can anticipate the onset of a new path, a new age.

HSCI as an institution feels the wheel of time turn. When we began, our intention was simple: to put the Hindu tradition to work in the service of the society. Not to preserve it in a museum as a cultural relic of bygone days. To put it to work in the hospital ward, in the jail visitation room, in the living rooms, and in offices where a professional wonders whether their work is meaningful.

The wheel of time cannot live in the past or in the future. It can only ever touch the ground in the present. Dharma is always expressed in the moment and in response to the subtle shifts outside and within.

In service of that ever-changing dharma, this year your Institute turned in three ways at once.

Technology

Over the years, we have built a curriculum in harmony with AI. The Hindu chaplain of the coming decade will meet a world with AI just as transformative as electricity, piped water, and roads have been. Patients will have already consulted an AI before their diagnosis is confirmed. Families will have used AI to prepare, sometimes without knowing they were preparing, for the unspoken eventuality of death.

In this world, the chaplain's role is not to compete with the machine on information. It is to offer what

the machine cannot: the embodied, unhurried, dharmically-anchored presence of another human being who has done their own inner work and is willing to sit with the seeker in silence. Our curriculum has begun to teach and practice that discernment explicitly, and to give our scholars the language for it. We have also been deepening our tech-stack, always playfully exploring the edge of what's possible.

Pedagogy

We have reshaped the program around service in the field. HSCI's earlier design invited scholars to sit with the tradition first and enter the field on their own afterward. Slowly, we have inverted that. From the first Mandala onward, our scholars now step into roleplay discussions and supervised field placements. They bring the field's questions back into the discussion circle, and let those questions reshape them through deep reflection. *Śravaṇa, manana, nididhyāsana*. The result is someone whose shoes are already well-worn by graduation.

Pathways

We have opened new pathways for learners. We have added the Hindu Purohit-Counselor pathway for those trained in rituals who wish to add pastoral skill; the MA in Interreligious Chaplaincy for those coming from adjacent credentialing such as CPE or MDiv; and the Sustainable Fellowship, which supports graduates who wish to remain in HSCI's community as they build their practice. The tradition has always known how to meet the seeker where they are. We have started to design accordingly.

Dharma

Each of these changes is in service of dharma. *sūkṣmā gatiḥ hi dharmasya*, The way of dharma is



subtle (*Mahābhārata, Śānti Parva*). Bhīṣma offered this line to Yudhiṣṭhira from his bed of arrows. It is subtle because it cannot be reduced to rules. It requires living judgment, moment by moment, in a body, in a situation, with the particular person in front of you. There is no rulebook, no AI, no historical precedent that will settle every new case.

Which is why the tradition needs living practitioners: everyone graduating today.

Go forth!

The Bhagavad Gītā's charge to Arjuna, when he was ready to lay down his bow, is our charge to you. *loka-saṁgraham evāpi sampaśyan kartum arhasi*, Considering even the holding-together of the world, you must act (Bhagavad Gītā 3.20).

So go. Take what you have learned and put it to work

toward *lokasaṁgraha*. Serve your communities. Serve those who suffer. Serve those who ask. And serve those who cannot yet ask. We at HSCI are here to cheer you on and support you.

Congratulations on your graduation. The tradition is now in your hands.

Om Shanti



Gaurav Rastogi
Dean, HSCI

HSCI Oath of Service

Spiritual Care Needs

Hospitals	Temples	Schools/ Universities
Corporations	Senior Homes	Families

As a graduate of HSCI's graduate certificate course, I will serve anyone who seeks my help, regardless of their ethnic origin, religious affiliation, or social standing.

I will serve to the best of my ability, with compassion and humility. I will abstain from any behavior that could cause harm, and exercise care to maintain strict confidentiality and respect for all concerned.

The One Who Makes the Path



Neeti Soota • GTU commencement, May 2026

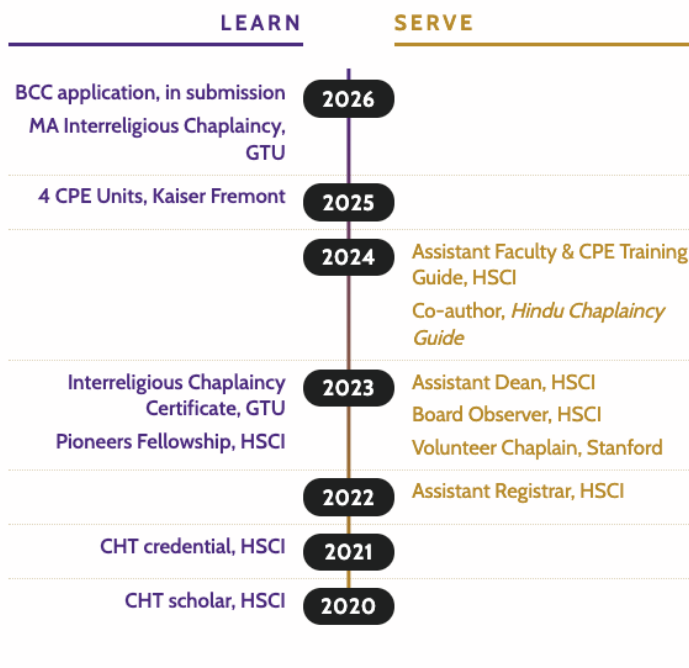
CHT • GTU ICP • CPE x4 • MA Chaplaincy • BCC-in-submission

When Neeti-ji entered the CHT course at HSCI in 2020, the US pathway for a fully credentialed Hindu chaplain did not exist. No Hindu candidate had yet completed the GTU chaplaincy program. APC and BCCI had not yet recognized Hindu credentials. There was no *Hindu Chaplaincy Guide* on any shelf.

Six years later, through her determined engagement with HSCI and GTU, Neeti-ji stands at the top of a ladder she helped build. Every rung was a first for Hindu chaplaincy in the US, and she held an HSCI staff role the whole way up.

Neeti-ji's Six-Year Trail

2020 → 2026



Neeti-ji learned and served at every rung. All of us at HSCI celebrate her.

Gaurav Rastogi
Dean, HSCI

President's Address Hindu Tradition at Work

We conceived and started HSCI in 2018 to put the Hindu tradition to work.

For this we chose spiritual care and chaplaincy as the vehicle. With humility and pride we now conclude the 2025-26 academic year for the 8th cohort. It has been a year of remarkable achievements for the HSCI team. This Kutumba issue has papers and notes authored by Gaurav ji, Usha ji and Ashok ji that highlight the new courses, enhanced curriculum and new services and partnerships.

As our new frontiers, we signed an agreement with the prestigious seven Claremont colleges to provide Hindu chaplaincy services to their students. We have also begun the preparations for a Hindu-centric CPE course as an affiliate of CPEI, and BCCI recognition has given HSCI another crucial mechanism to support Chaplaincy Board applicants.

Our MOU with South African SAHMS and VHPA in the US significantly widens our reach for students, service providers and seekers alike. Our GTU relationship is robust as ever.

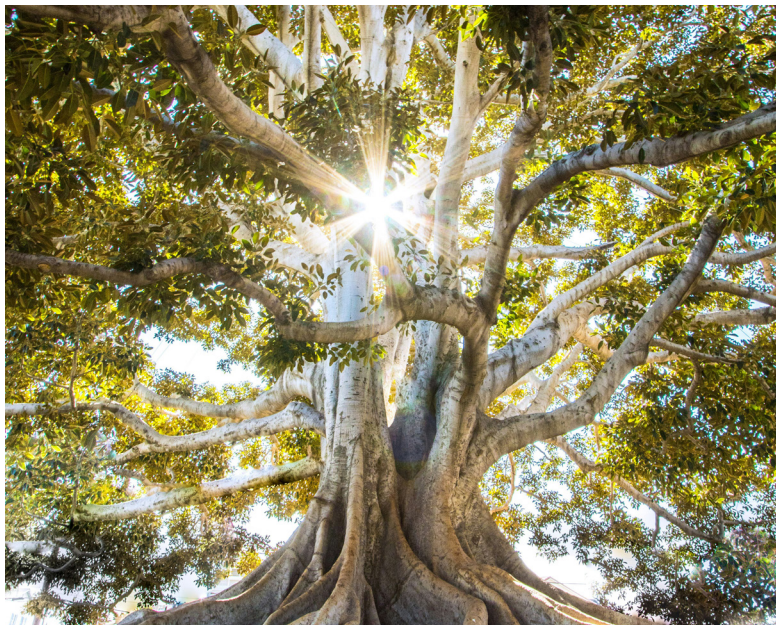
My sincere thanks go out honorees, to everyone on the HSCI team and our supporters. partners, and friends globally.

I conclude by congratulating the 2026 graduates and extending sincere thanks to the distinguished honorees, HSCI team members and our partner organizations



Kailash

Kailash Joshi, PhD, Dsc (hon.)
President, HSCI



Inspirational Role Models

Karma Yoga Honorees 2026

Alumni Who Inspire

Sharad Patel (CHT 2025)
Rajinder Gandhi, MD (CHT 2025)

Past Honorees

2025

- ♦ **Chinmay Pandya, MD** for community leadership
- ♦ **Dilip Amin, PhD** for pioneering interfaith marriage guidance

2024

- ♦ **Mukund Acharya, PhD** for community service
- ♦ **Mihir Meghani, MD** for community leadership

2023

- ♦ **Naras Bhat, MD** for exemplary community education
- ♦ **Sulochina Lulla, MD** for her chaplaincy work and community service

2022

- ♦ **Padmashri MR Rajagopal, MD** for pioneering palliative care in India
- ♦ **Madan Arora** for exemplary community service in Hindu samskara guidance

2021

- ♦ **Rita Sherma, PhD** for pioneering Hindu academic studies
- ♦ **Seifu Anil Molaresh-Singh** for promoting global spiritual care



Rita D. Sherma, PhD
Keynote Speaker

Past HSCI Karma Yoga Honoree, 2021, Dr Rita Sherma is a pioneer whose determined, decades-long effort has established Sanātana Dharma studies with genuine academic rigor across the American higher-education landscape.



Abhijit Dam, MD, PhD
2026 HSCI Karma Yoga Honoree

For his pioneering work in Hindu palliative/hospice care and related nursing training in rural eastern India.



Payal Sawhney, LCSW
Executive Director,
Saahas for Cause,
Southern California

Community-Building Sevika Karma Yoga Honoree:
Honored for providing trauma-informed lifelines to South Asian immigrants.

8th Graduation Ceremony at HSCI

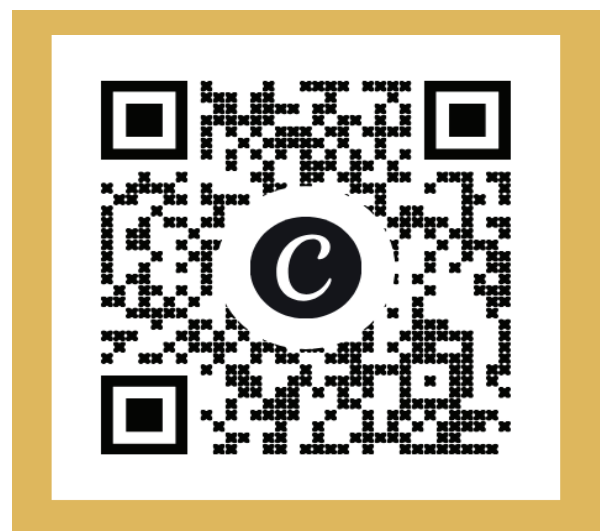
Friday, August 28, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. PDT

We invite you to join us with your family and friends to cheer our new graduates.

Zoom link: Scan the QR Code to join the Graduation Ceremony
In addition to the graduation oath ceremony, we will celebrate:

- Keynote Speaker
- 2026 HSCI Karma Yoga Honorees,
- New Master of Arts (MA) degree in inter-religious chaplaincy
- BCCI Validation
- HPC Purohit Course
- MOUs with SAHMS & VHPA

We look forward to welcoming you!



HINDU SPIRITUAL CARE INSTITUTE



Graduation Program



HSCI Cohort-8 2026



Friday, August 28 @ 6 pm (PDT)

Guest QR Code for Zoom Link (All are invited)

6:00	- Welcome Slides & Music	
6:13	- Opening Prayer	Ms. Kavita Paudwal
6:16	- Welcome Address & Dean Introduction	Dr. Aditya Varma
6:20	- Dean's Address	Mr. Gaurav Rastogi
6:26	- Entertainment	
6:32	- Address by Graduates	All Scholars
6:44	- Entertainment	
6:48	- Commencement Address	Dr. Rita Sherma
7:03	- Oath & Award of Certificates	Mr. Gaurav Rastogi
7:11	- 2026 Karma Yoga Honoree	Dr. Abhijit Dam
7:19	- 2026 Karma Yoga Honoree	Ms. Payal Sawhney
7:27	- Alumni Who Inspire	Dr. Rajinder Gandhi
7:31	- Alumni Who Inspire	Mr. Sharad Patel
7:35	- President's Remarks	Dr. Kailash Joshi
7:41	- Vote of Thanks	Dr. Aditya Varma
7:43	- Closing Prayer	Mr. Gaurav Rastogi
8:00	- Adjournment	

What They Taught Me...

Sharad Patel

She was a few hours from the end of her journey.

I walked into her room, sat beside her, and took her hand. I said nothing. There was nothing to say. And somewhere in that stillness, she knew I was there. I watched the tension leave her face—slowly, completely—and in its place came something I can only call peace. She was ready.

She passed not long after. And then I went to find her family.

That moment is still with me. And if I am honest with you—and I think that is why I write now—both of those moments changed me far more than any difference I may have made for them.

Because this is what I want you to understand: our work does not end when the person leaves. It begins again with the people remaining. Grief has its own silences, its own needs, its own moments where someone simply needs to not be alone. The scope of what you are stepping into is wider than any single bedside—it touches every difficult crossing in a life, not only the final one.

I want to leave you with three things I have carried from this work.

First: be present. Not helpful. Not informative. Present. Your body in the room, your hand offered, your silence held—this is the work. The people we serve do not need our words. They need to know they are not alone.

Second: our tradition is a gift—not a barrier. The families I have sat with find deep comfort when someone walks in who understands—who knows what it means to whisper a prayer, to honor a life, to hold space in a way that is familiar to the soul. What you carry from your heritage is not baggage. It is the most important thing you bring.

And third: this work will change you. It already has, or you would not be here. Let it. The people you serve will teach you more than any boardroom or classroom ever will. You are stepping into sacred work—and it will meet you at every stage of life, not only at its threshold.

Go gently. Go bravely. And when you don't know what to say—you don't need to say anything at all.

Simply—be present.

Mr. Sharad Patel is a 2025 CHT and an advisor to the HSCI board

The Joy of Serving

Rajinder Gandhi, MD

My parents' devotion to Sanatana Dharma and community service has inspired me throughout my life. Growing up in a small town in Myanmar (Burma), my siblings and I participated in weekly Vedic homa ceremonies and attended traditional religious education and Hindi classes at our local Arya Samaj *mandir*.

After 50 years of medical practice, including 44 years in Pediatric Surgery, I decided to devote my retirement to providing spiritual care to patients at the hospital where I had practiced. I was already a chaplain with the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office, teaching meditation to law enforcement personnel, had completed Disaster Chaplaincy training, and had taught meditation and mindfulness to medical staff, hospital employees, and local houses of worship for several years. Still, the hospital chaplain told me I needed formal training.

I then reached out to Dr. Rita Sherma ji, who graciously introduced me to Kailash Joshi ji and Gaurav Rastogi ji. They warmly welcomed me into the HSCI course. Even after completing it, I faced challenges, but with support from the hospital foundation, of which I am a donor, I was welcomed as a volunteer Spiritual Care Counselor one and a half years ago.

On my first day, I accompanied a hospital chaplain on her rounds to visit a 40-year-old Hindu patient who had suffered a massive heart attack. I learned that his son was being treated for blood cancer and that no family members could come to the hospital. I prayed with the patient and his two friends. Soon afterward, he passed away.

Today, my weekly hospital visits involve spending half a day counseling Hindu patients and those of other traditions. This experience allows me to meet people in many circumstances with compassion, listen deeply to their fear, anger, and sadness, and offer emotional support and meditation to patients and families facing stress, pain, and grief. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve them in their most difficult times.

Rajinder Gandhi, MD is a 2025 CHT graduate and a 2026 honoree as "Alumni who Inspire us"

Living with Mystery: Reflections on a Hindu Chaplain's Pastoral Theology

Ashok Chandrasekhar, PhD

Abstract

This reflective essay explores how my Hindu tradition has shaped my ministry as a chaplain. Rather than presenting a systematic explanation of Hindu theology, it reflects on how teachings on suffering, karma, the witness (*sākṣī*), and living with mystery have shaped a pastoral theology that informs my presence with patients and families. I suggest that the greatest contribution of these teachings is not that they provide answers to questions such as why we suffer, but that they have shaped the way I offer presence to those who suffer. My Hindu theology accompanies me into every patient encounter. It shapes the person who walks into the room, but remains quietly in the background unless invited into the conversation.

not simply what my Hindu tradition teaches about suffering, but how those teachings have shaped the way I care for those who suffer. These reflections are, in many ways, an exploration of my own pastoral theology.

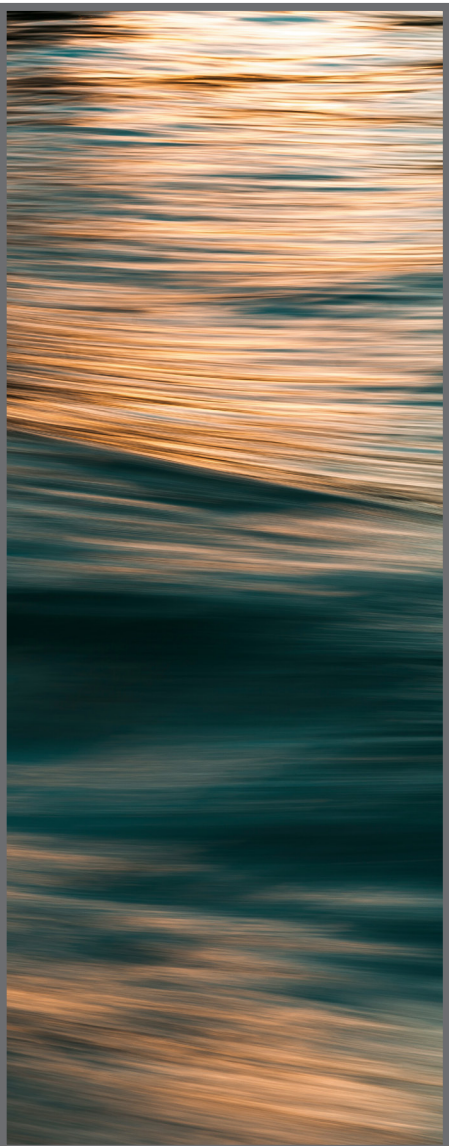
A traditional story attributed to Ādi Śaṅkarācārya has remained with me throughout my spiritual journey. In the story, a seeker learns that pain and suffering are not the same. That simple distinction has become an internal compass in the way I accompany patients and families.

My experiences in chaplaincy have reinforced this observation. Two people living with the same diagnosis may experience their illness very differently. Their physical pain may be similar, yet their suffering can be worlds apart. My Hindu tradition has taught me that suffering (*duḥkha*)¹ extends beyond physical pain. It includes grief, fear, uncertainty, and the search to make sense of illness, loss, and change.

One teaching that has profoundly influenced me is **viveka**—the discernment between what is lasting and what is temporary. We naturally become attached to our health, relationships, achievements, and expectations of how life should unfold. When those change, we suffer. Hindu theology does not ask us to deny grief. Rather, it gently reminds us that our deepest identity is not exhausted by what illness or loss can take away.²

Equally formative has been the concept of the **sākṣī**, the witness.³ I understand the witness not as an arm's-length transaction, but as compassionate presence. The witness observes without becoming uncaring or aloof, yet without becoming tangled in the patient's world. It is about being steady and centered without becoming overwhelmed or judgmental. Over time, this understanding has quietly shaped my ministry. It reminds me that before I speak, I must first learn to listen. Before I seek to guide another person, I must first learn to accompany them.

Another teaching that has profoundly shaped me is the Hindu understanding of **karma**. Few concepts are more misunderstood. Occasionally, patients ask, "What did I do in a past life to deserve this?" My Hindu tradition does not give me an answer because, quite simply, there isn't one to give. Karma is not a



As chaplains, we are often invited into moments where life is unraveling. A devastating diagnosis, the death of a loved one, or uncertainty about the future can raise questions that medicine cannot answer and theology cannot fully explain. It is in these moments that I have come to appreciate how profoundly my Hindu tradition has shaped not only what I believe, but how I seek to be present with those who suffer. As I have reflected on my own spiritual care, I have come to realize that the more important question is



running tally that allows us to trace present suffering back to a specific action in a previous life. To claim otherwise would be both presumptuous and pastorally unhelpful.⁴

Instead, this question has taught me humility. Not every question has an answer. More importantly, not every question needs one. Rather than searching endlessly for explanations that may remain beyond our understanding, my tradition has taught me to live with mystery. The search to make sense of our experience is often more important than the search for definitive answers.

This understanding has transformed the way I practice chaplaincy. Although my patients—even my Hindu patients—rarely hear words such as *ātman*, *sākṣī*, or *avidyā*, they do not need to. Those concepts belong to my own spiritual formation, not necessarily to theirs. Their purpose is not to become the patient's theology, nor is it my role to become their theologian. Their purpose is to shape my own presence as a chaplain.

My Hindu theology accompanies me into every patient encounter. It shapes the person who walks into the room, but it is not the message I bring into the room. I meet patients within their own theological or spiritual framework without forgetting my Hindu roots. Unless a patient wishes to explore Hindu beliefs, my theology remains quietly in the background, informing my presence rather than becoming the focus of our conversation.

Clinical Pastoral Education deepened this understanding. It reinforced that my calling is not to

explain suffering or resolve another person's spiritual questions. My role is to create a compassionate and respectful space in which patients and families can reflect on their own beliefs, values, hopes, and fears. If meaning emerges, it must be their meaning—not mine.

My Hindu tradition has not given me answers to every question about suffering or the self. Ramana Maharshi's enduring inquiry, "Who am I?" reminds me that some of our deepest spiritual questions invite continued inquiry rather than simple answers.⁵ My tradition and my own searching have taught me to live with mystery, to become comfortable with unanswered questions, and to trust that compassionate presence can sometimes be more healing than explanation. If my theology has done its work well, my patients will remember not the concepts that shaped me, but the compassion and presence I offered, and the space we created together where they could begin to make sense of their experience and their suffering.

Endnotes

1. Eknath Easwaran, trans., *The Bhagavad Gītā*, 2nd ed. (Tomaes, CA: Nilgiri Press, 2007), 2.14–15.
2. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 342–350.
3. Śaṅkara, *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, trans. Swami Madhavananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2007), vv. 120–130.
4. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, 2:342–350.
5. Ramana Maharshi, *Who Am I?: The Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi* (Tiruvannamalai: Sri Ramanasramam, 2008), 15.

The Quantum Connection: Musings of a Palliative Physician on the Transference of Consciousness

Abhijit Dam, MD, PhD

I. My Saṅkalpa: Escaping the Clinical Death

Back in the year 2000, during my arduous hours working as an intensive care specialist in a Critical Care Unit (CCU), a deep sense of unrest began to build within me. Day after day, I watched patients die lonely, painful, and undignified deaths hooked up to life-support machinery. Their hands were restrained, and they spent their final moments desperately searching for a familiar face among the masked, foreign visages of healthcare personnel. Meanwhile, their families waited helplessly just forty feet away behind brick walls. As the patient's *prāṇa* (soul) left the *sthūla śarīra* (gross body), it left a mortal frame steeped in regret.

I realized that rather than saving lives, I was frequently just prolonging the painful process of dying. Out of that clinical frustration, *saṅkalpa* (solemn promise) was born: to ensure that the final exit could be dignified, pain-free, and holistically meaningful—physically, psycho-socially, and spiritually.

I was not born into a rich family, but I took out a loan to purchase a plot of land. Alongside my family and a dedicated colleague who invested her own savings, **Kosish-the Hospice** was born. Set in a rural landscape in Jharkhand with a rivulet running through the center, Kosish became a sanctuary designed to address the deep spiritual and existential concerns surrounding terminal pain.

Taking inspiration from Dame Cicely Saunders' patient David Tasma—who famously requested "*what is in your head and in your heart*"—I designed a hospice where clinical skill met unconditional love. At Kosish, local village women are trained as Palliative Nursing Aides through the Bulbul Finishing School. They learn to lay a table beautifully, cook a nourishing bowl of soup, practice the art of deep listening, and use ancient Siddha Varmam touch therapies to soothe a breaking body.

II. The Truth in the Elimination: A Lesson from the Upanishads

I was a staunch atheist to begin with. Early in my medical career, I openly scoffed at religion, ritualism, and ancient cultural traditions. However, interacting intimately with the dying forced me onto an unexpected journey of self-realization. I delved deeply into scripture to find a framework that could help my terminal patients make meaning out of their suffering and learn the delicate art of "letting go."

During this evolution, a radical verse from the **Taittiriya Upanishad (10.2)** shattered my remaining rigidities:

"There is Truth (Brahman, Self, Divinity) in the work you do with your hands; in the movements you make with your feet; and in the discharge from your anus... these activities are all ways of worship at the human level."

I was hit hard by the reality of this verse during our very first homecare visit to a 70-year-old gentleman suffering from metastatic

lung cancer with cerebral metastases. He was mildly confused, severely nauseous, and heavily constipated from his morphine doses—his last bowel movement had been six days prior. His abdomen was painfully distended, and he was belching out foul gases.

I looked up expectantly at my team for assistance, but eye contact was discreetly avoided. I did not blame them; the smell was overwhelming, but a leader must show the way. There was no time to administer additional sedation and wait for it to take effect. I gently explained the procedure to the gentleman, sought his cooperation, positioned him on his side, and inserted my gloved finger into his rectum.

My fingers immediately encountered hard, heavily impacted masses of stool. The intense odor made me gag, and it took every ounce of my internal strength to



maintain a neutral face. Yet, as I manually cleared the blockage, I watched the lines of tension vanish from his face. Seeing his profound expression of physical relief, a wave of immense happiness and deep humility swept over me. It was a living execution of *Tat Tvam Asi* (That Thou Art). I realized that unconditional love is not found in abstract sermons; it is found in the physical work of your hands.

III. The Quantum-Vedanta Frontier

As I expanded my grassroots homecare programs using local village women, I began to notice a fascinating paradox. While my rural, economically impoverished patients faced immense structural challenges, their existential suffering was no less than that of the affluent, resource-rich patients I encountered.

To offer a hope that carried a robust cultural, psychological, and scientific basis, I began documenting the End-of-Life Dreams and Visions (ELDV) experienced by dying individuals across different Indian subcultures. The profound nature of these visions ultimately led me to publish my research and book, *Does the Moon Exist?*

The title draws directly from Albert Einstein's famous critique of quantum mechanics at Princeton, where he defensively asked Abraham Pais: "Do you really believe the moon is not there when you are not looking at it?" Einstein was advocating for classical realism, but quantum physics ultimately proved him wrong. Breakthroughs by Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg revealed a "participatory universe," demonstrating that nothing in nature can be proven to exist independent of an observer.

This subatomic reality mirrors Ādi Guru Śaṅkarācārya's teachings in Advaita Vedanta. Vedanta posits that the tangible world we experience through limited sensory faculties is *Māyā* (an illusion). It asserts that individual distinctions dissolve into Brahman—the ultimate, unified cosmic reality. Quantum decoherence and wave-function collapse

indicate that physical reality is fundamentally shaped and sustained by consciousness itself.

IV. Death as a Transference of Consciousness

When we combine these two fields, death ceases to be a medical failure or an instantaneous termination. Instead, it is a highly ordered transference of consciousness. Our underlying spiritual essence does not cease with bodily demise; it simply continues as an unbreakable part of an all-encompassing universal consciousness.

This realization inspired the creation of the first culturally appropriate death-doula training course in India. Through the **International Death Doula Foundation**, we train committed individuals—whom we call **Farishtey** (Angels)—to use ancient Vedantic teachings, non-pharmacological therapies, and the traditional Buddhist practice of *phowa* to mindfully guide and anchor a patient's consciousness as it prepares to leave the *sthūla śarīra*.

We heal not by falsely promising a physical cure, but by providing realistic hope grounded in the ultimate reality of our existence: immortality.

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The Accidental Chaplain and the Practice of Compassionate Presence

Zachary Ginder, PsyD

In my early 20s, I was an evolving yogi and working in the field of chronic pain as a manual therapist; doing energetic healing work, myofascial release, and cranio-sacral therapy within a multidisciplinary practice. Occasionally, we would receive referrals for house calls for hospice patients. Driven by the pain of the body and of a life soon ending, the humans behind these referrals were often labeled “difficult” patients, non-compliant, or argumentative. They often included a concern for which the standard treatments were exhausted. Family and friends would sometimes explore alternatives, of which my practice was one. The time I spent with one particular individual was special and impactful for me, and it continues to inform my lens of compassionate presence to this day. I would like to believe that I also had an impact on his final days on earth.

V.K. was a renowned physicist who was suffering from a terminal disease. The chances of survival were zero, and V.K. had decided to stop most all life-sustaining treatments. I was called to help alleviate the now excruciating, chronic pain he was enduring every minute of his waking day. His life expectancy was determined to be about a month. When I arrived at the address listed on the referral, I found a grand Victorian home. Inside, I encountered a stoic, frail individual, his body beginning to waste away. Mostly confined to a bed in his living room, his only view of the outside world was the infrequent visitor and a large picture window in the living room. Although he did not initially let on, he was in immense pain and had very little mobility. His remaining family found it difficult to visit and witness his declining condition. As a scientist-atheist, he had declined chaplaincy or any other type of spiritual care.

After my first visit, he began to open up to me, first expressing his beliefs about his end, his objections to beliefs about the afterlife, and his belief that there was nothing beyond his current existence. I believe “soapboxing” would be an appropriate descriptor. He believed he had led a good life and made an impact, which was good enough for him. He carried on this way for some time, as if reaffirming his own beliefs to himself to soothe a worried soul.

At one point, he paused as I was moving his IV stand closer to his bed, and asked, “What do you believe?” My beliefs were very different from his, and standard training is to reflect back. I replied, “I’m here for you, and vocalizing my beliefs is inconsequential to your care.” As a good professor and scientist does, he

countered and pushed. He debated. Eventually I shared, believing that he had a spark to understand and explore alternatives before his passing. I noticed he listened with intent and asked questions, not to dissuade, but to ponder. The days went by, and we spent a number of afternoons exploring his views of spirituality and some of my own throughout each treatment.

Some memories remain visceral, and I distinctly remember the sun shining through the front bay window, the rays hitting the dust in the air, the smell of the medical equipment, the faint hiss of the oxygen tank and hose, the room, and, most importantly, the presence and existence that we shared together. I grew to look forward to our chats each week, and at some point, despite his declining health, I began to forget that our time together was finite.

I awoke one morning eager to spend time with him again that afternoon, to chat about energy, meditation, yoga, and their intersectionality with science. As I drove up the street to his home, I could see a white coroner’s van in the driveway, the front door of the grand Victorian wide open, and a gurney visible; I knew that he was gone. Although I missed his actual passing, I was blessed to be able to say goodbye to his body before they took it away. Om Shanti.

Later, I began to realize that the experience with V.K. was foundational to an approach known to chaplains and spiritual care providers of holding of space and time in which the sacredness of human connection is allowed to flourish.⁶

Chaplains and scholars of pastoral care have a specific name for what unfolded in that Victorian living room. In an interview conducted during my chaplaincy training, Fire Chaplain Jim Cook of the California Fire Chaplains Association told me that a chaplain’s primary responsibility is precisely this, a ministry of presence.¹ The word ministry carried, for me, a certain residue, recollections of proselytizing encounters from my youth, and it took time to arrive at a different meaning for it. With V.K., I had already been practicing something like it, before the specific lexicon arrived.

Author David Brooks has argued that attention should function like an on/off switch rather than a dimmer switch that gives a person only sixty percent of attention while the rest drifts toward distraction.²

Sitting at V.K.'s bedside, moving his IV stand, listening to him lecture, then debate, then genuinely ask, I was, without knowing the term, practicing the on-switch. I brought the whole of my attention into that room, with its bay window and the hiss of the oxygen tank. I have found that when a spiritual care provider manages this consistently, the recipient is left with an unmistakable message that they are valued and fully seen, and the outside world has, however briefly, ceased to exist.

Sonny Guild, writing as a Christian pastor rather than a chaplain, describes a ministry of presence as a commitment to give others a personal presence rather than simply give them words. When there is less concern for the right words and more concern for being present in another's life, he writes, ministry becomes more meaningful.⁵ I think of this whenever I recall V.K.'s question, "What do you believe?", and my own instinct to deflect. My training told me to reflect the question back to him, but he was a scientist and he pushed past the reflection and insisted on an actual answer. I realized later that the question was merely a door, and my answer mattered less than the willingness to engage and stay in the room and present moment.

I find philosopher Martin Buber's distinction between the I-It and the I-Thou relationship useful here. An I-It relationship is transactional, oriented entirely toward outcome, e.g., pain reduction, symptoms managed, and the visit completed. An I-Thou relationship is something else, a full encounter with the other, one that Buber believed invited the Divine into the space between two people.³ At my young age, my visits with V.K. began with an open mind, and a genuine desire to help, but probably for both of us, it leaned towards an I-It relationship. I was there to manage his pain, and his family hired me to do so. Somewhere in those afternoons of conversation and caring, the relationship became I-Thou, and I stopped identifying the visits as appointments, they were opportunities to suspend time and space, to invite the Divine, and to simply be.

In theory, a ministry of presence, or compassionate presence sounds simple. In practice, it is difficult to resist the compulsion to fix, or to fill silence with reassurance, or something else that the care recipient has not asked for. V.K. had already made his position clear that he was an atheist, and he did not want chaplaincy or spiritual guidance. He had also settled on his decision to end life-sustaining care. Any impulse on my part to "adjust" that stance would have undoubtedly collapsed. The practice of cultural humility encourages a spiritual care provider to hold their own tradition firmly enough to draw on it when invited, while setting aside any need for the other to arrive at the same conclusions. Hindu

wisdom has long made room for this kind of plurality, understanding truth as something approached from many paths rather than "owned" by one. Indeed, there are many ways up the spiritual mountain.

Researchers studying what chaplains themselves regard as markers of a successful encounter found that meaningful connection was among the most consistently cited hallmarks of the work, alongside a felt, often wordless, sense that a visit had met a patient's needs.⁴ I did not have a name for this at the time I sat with V.K. I only knew that I looked forward to our conversations, that I left each one feeling something had happened between us that mattered. This, I have come to believe, is close to the center of what compassionate presence is. It is not just an intervention technique, but more of a willingness to be fully met, and to fully meet another, without needing the encounter to resolve into anything beyond itself. It is also inviting the sacred into a relationship with another soul. To walk alongside them.

V.K. died without changing his own beliefs, without ritual, and still as a self-described scientist-atheist, as he had well intended. Yet, I do not think our time together was without a sacred quality. In the Hindu tradition, seva, selfless service, asks nothing of the one being served in return; it is unconditional. The selfless offering itself, not the outcome, is enough. I did not arrive at V.K.'s bedside as a chaplain, and I did not leave one, though I joke that this was my first experience as an "accidental" chaplain. Sitting with him taught me what spiritual care providers are asked to hold at the center of their work, a presence offered without condition, holding space and time for whatever may come.

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Bhagavad Gītā and Psychological Well-being

Punit Mahendru, PhD

*"Karmaṇy evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana /
Mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stv
akarmaṇi II"*

(Bhagavad Gītā 2.47)

This verse from the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā is perhaps one of the most frequently quoted shlokas among Indians. Yet it is often regarded primarily as a spiritual ideal to be pursued later in life, after one's active worldly responsibilities have diminished. In our achievement-oriented, outcome-focused society, it is frequently dismissed as impractical.

However, the wisdom contained in this verse finds striking parallels in several evidence-based psychological theories that promote resilience and psychological well-being. In this article, I briefly explore its relationship to modern psychotherapies that help people cope with mental illness, stress, pain, and the inevitable challenges of everyday life. At the outset, however, it is important to avoid a triumphalist attitude by claiming that these psychological theories originated in the Bhagavad Gītā. Truth is not confined to any one religion or scripture. Rather, different traditions often arrive at similar insights through different paths.

One of the most extensively researched approaches in modern psychology is **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**, developed by Aaron Beck. CBT proposes that it is not external events themselves that cause emotional suffering, but the way we interpret and think about those events. A common cognitive distortion that contributes to anxiety, anger, and disappointment is "should" thinking—the belief that people, situations, or life itself should conform to our expectations.

When we become attached to a particular outcome in our work or relationships, we often assume a false sense of control. We mistakenly believe that if we behave in a certain way, we are guaranteed professional success, appreciation, or compliance from others. When reality inevitably differs from our expectations, frustration, anger, and despair follow. CBT helps individuals recognize and challenge this mistaken belief, encouraging them instead to focus on what is actually within their control: their thoughts, choices, and actions.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), developed by

Marsha Linehan, has transformed the treatment of some of the most severely distressed individuals. One of its central principles is **Radical Acceptance**—fully accepting reality as it is, however painful or unjust it may seem. Radical acceptance of loss, illness, death, or difficult relationships does not imply resignation or approval. Rather, it frees us from exhausting struggles against reality and enables us to redirect our energy toward constructive action. By relinquishing the demand that reality conform to our wishes, we become more resilient and better able to navigate life's inevitable hardships.

The concept of **locus of control**, extensively studied by psychologists such as Julian Rotter and later popularized in the work of Martin Seligman on resilience and learned optimism, offers another parallel. Individuals with an external locus of control believe that their well-being depends primarily on circumstances beyond their influence. In contrast, resilient people tend to develop a stronger internal locus of control. They devote their energy to what they can influence—their own attitudes, decisions, and actions—rather than becoming overwhelmed by outcomes they cannot fully determine. In this sense, true agency lies in our actions, not in the results of those actions. Arjuna is repeatedly urged to perform his duty (dharma) with sincerity while relinquishing attachment to the fruits of action.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) similarly emphasizes psychological flexibility as a cornerstone of mental health. ACT teaches that emotional suffering often intensifies when we struggle to control thoughts, emotions, or outcomes that are ultimately beyond our control. Instead, it encourages acceptance of internal experiences while remaining committed to actions guided by one's deepest values. This approach closely mirrors the spirit of karma yoga: acting wholeheartedly according to one's values without allowing success or failure to determine one's inner equilibrium.

Likewise, **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)**, developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, cultivates the ability to remain fully present in the current moment with openness and without judgment. Mindfulness redirects attention from imagined future outcomes or regrets about the past to the task immediately before us. By anchoring ourselves in the present, we reduce rumination, anxiety, and emotional reactivity. This

mindful engagement with action resonates strongly with the Gītā's invitation to remain absorbed in one's duty while letting go of attachment to results. The common thread running through these diverse psychological approaches is the recognition that emotional well-being depends less on controlling external outcomes and more on cultivating a healthy relationship with reality. Expectations are not inherently problematic; indeed, goals and aspirations give direction to life. Suffering arises when we become emotionally dependent upon achieving a particular outcome or when we believe that our worth depends upon success.

Thus, the Gītā's exhortation to focus on **karma** rather than **phala** is not merely a spiritual injunction for ascetics or philosophers. It is a psychologically sound principle for everyday living. By directing our attention toward actions that are within our control while accepting the uncertainty of outcomes, we develop greater resilience, a stronger sense of agency, and a more enduring experience of psychological well-being. Far from encouraging passivity, this teaching invites wholehearted engagement with life, grounded in integrity rather than attachment.

8 Cohorts (2018-2026)

9 Countries

**Australia | Canada | India | Malaysia |
Philippines | Qatar | Singapore |
South Africa | United States**



Hindu Spiritual Care Institute certifies that

KARUNA NIDHI

*having completed the curriculum and requirements set forth
by the Board of Directors, is hereby awarded the Certificate of*

Counselor of Hindu Tradition

on this the 28th day of August 2026

Registrar

Usha Narasimhan, LLB, MBA

Dean

Gaurav Rastogi, BE, MBA

President

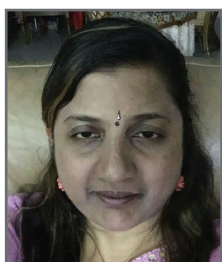
Kailash Joshi, PhD, DSc(Hon)

2026 CHT Graduates



Kumar Shankar Dashmahapatra, I am a retired surgeon with specialization in robotic surgery and surgical oncology. Since retirement, I have been contemplating ways to serve the community with my knowledge and deep interest in Hindu tradition and spirituality.

The CHT course has given me the sense of meaning and purpose of life. It brought clarity and understanding of Hinduism and the importance of using this knowledge to help people. I now plan to volunteer as a spiritual counselor in a hospice or end of life setting..



Nirmala A K Nadan Kasinathan, I am a medical officer specializing in palliative care and end of life counseling. In this regard, I believe spirituality and religious principles can greatly help in finding meaning in life and making difficult decisions.

The CHT course has reinforced my conviction and equipped me with knowledge and skills to be a compassionate presence and help others navigate through their troubles, finding solutions and comfort from within.



Prakash Kabe, I have graduate degrees in industrial engineering, math and computer science. I live in Canada and have dedicated my time to volunteer service. I have also formally studied Hindu scriptures with a strong desire to connect with my roots.

CHT course has strengthened my sense of identity and spiritual heritage. I am inspired to pursue chaplaincy and also plan to continue serving individuals and families through spiritually informed care.



Tara Kashyap, I am a qualified Hindu Spiritual Care Provider with a longstanding interest in Hindu philosophy and spirituality. I am passionate about supporting people through life's challenges while respecting each person's unique beliefs, experiences, and spiritual journey.

My approach to spiritual care centres on compassionate presence, active listening, and providing a safe, non-judgemental space for reflection and conversation.



Maryam Jafari Lafti, I hold a Ph.D in Computer Science & Engineering and work as a cybersecurity consultant. I am also a certified Jyotish practitioner and a dedicated *sādhak*. My perspectives have been shaped by a diverse, multicultural ancestry and upbringing. I have served as a mentor and compassionate care provider in my communities.

The CHT course has enriched my multicultural perspective and desire to serve more people with the knowledge and protocol I now possess.



Supreetha Mave, I have BS computer science and MBA degrees. I am a senior IT product manager and certified life coach. My approach to working I also like to leverage my background in Samskrita (language), yoga and *prāṇāyāma*.

With the CHT course and chaplaincy training, my goal is to help bridge the gap between ancient wisdom and contemporary problems and challenges, by building a supporting community in my sphere.

2026 CHT Graduates



Salochana Ori, I hold a degree in education and have retired as a deputy principal in South Africa. I volunteer in my community with preparing meals for the needy, meditation sessions, and performing *pūjā*-s

I find the entire CHT course invaluable with its rigor and meaningful purpose. It will allow me to serve my community in a more structured way where I can also utilize the support of the HSCI network and the SAHMS guidance.



Mogana Ramasamy, I am a former IT regulator from Malaysia. Life took an exciting turn when I became a trailing spouse, offering me the chance to rediscover myself while experiencing new cultures across countries. Now based in Qatar since mid-2025, with my three children. I now have the time and space to explore new passions and possibilities in doing service.

The CHT course has opened new opportunities to explore spiritual care and community to help my family circle and beyond.



Deepak Raval, I have degrees in engineering and business management and have lived in India, Tanzania, Zambia and now in the US. In my retired life, I have devoted myself to the services of Sanatana Dharma including distribution of the Bhagvad Gītā and services at community centers and temples.

By completing the CHT course, I now have deep insight into the emotions and protocol of serving others. It has also broadened my horizons for institutions and people that I can serve.

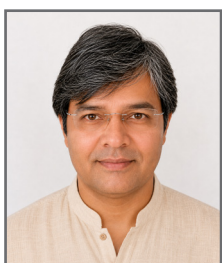


Ruchika Raval, I have a MS degree in Microbiology and have completed a three-year program in Vedanta and Sanskrit course at the Swami Dayananda Saraswati Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Pennsylvania.

Through the CHT course, I can now explore ways to bring a more holistic understanding of healing into healthcare while helping the future generations of the Indian diaspora. I am especially interested in learning the spiritual consequence of displacement on the second and third generation Hindus in Europe, Guyana, Fiji, Trinidad, and USA as they integrate into a new culture.



Vijayeta Singh, I have a PhD in Law and Public Policy, along with graduate degrees in Business Administration and Social Entrepreneurship. My work has centered on long-term community-based research and policy evaluation across diverse socio-economic contexts in India. The CHT course provided an opportunity to revisit many of these experiences through the lenses of Dharma, Karma Yoga, and compassionate presence, transforming my understanding from solving problems towards attentive listening, accompanying others through their suffering. I plan to continue this journey through hospice volunteering and clinical pastoral education while integrating these perspectives into my work in research, mentoring, and community service.



Aditya Varma, I have graduate degree in dentistry and am a self-employed integrative mental wellness provider and educator. I work with youth organisations and educational institutions in mental wellness, yoga, meditation, trauma-informed approaches and holistic well-being.

The CHT course has deepened my understanding of compassionate, culturally rooted, and person-centred care, while reinforcing that caring for others begins with caring for oneself. The program also helped me appreciate Hindu rituals and ceremonies as meaningful practices that support individuals and communities by cultivating meaning, resilience, and inner strength.

HSCI Board & Faculty



Kailash Joshi, PhD

President & Board

Retired IBM executive who conceptualized and founded HSCI in 2018. Dr. Joshi co-founded TIE and also co-founded American India Foundation (AIF), serving as its founding CEO with President Clinton as chairman.



Gaurav Rastogi

Dean, Board & Faculty

Gaurav Rastogi co-founded HSCI to teach Karma Yoga, blending 20+ years in tech with meditation. An ERYT500® teacher and author, he brings Hindu wisdom into modern life.



Punit Mahendru, PhD

Board & Faculty

Punit Mahendru blends evidence-based therapy with spiritual care to support adults through life transitions, drawing on her Kaiser experience and training in both Western and Indian psychology.



Usha Narasimhan

Registrar & Board

Usha Narasimhan brings experience in chaplaincy, finance, and business leadership, having served as CFO before pursuing spiritual work. She mentors students while teaching compassionate presence.



Ashok Chandrasekhar, PhD

Associate Dean and Editor in Chief

Drawing on his journey as a chaplain, executive, and educator, Dr. Ashok Chandrasekhar, PhD, is dedicated to fostering community-based spiritual care for the Indian diaspora and people of all backgrounds and faiths.



Zachary Ginder, PsyD

Faculty Member

Zachary Ginder blends Hindu wisdom and psychology to foster wellness in workplaces and families, guiding with deep meditation and a Doctor of Psychology degree.



Neeti Soota

CPE Training Guide

Neeti, a technologist with an MS in computer science, has been a leader at HSCI since 2021. She integrates her love for Hindu dharma, nature, and spiritual care, with training from HSCI, GTU, and Kaiser.



Mala Setty, PhD

Faculty Member

Mala Setty bridges tech and mythology, viewing symbolic thinking as key to both. With roots in Hindu tradition and a PhD in mythology, she brings its wisdom to the world of spiritual care.



Sharad Patel

Senior Advisor

Sharad Patel, raised in Tanzania, found success in tech and healthcare before turning to spiritual care. Now training at GTU, he supports families with wisdom and compassion.

HINDU
SPIRITUAL CARE
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HSCI Functional Leaders



Vijay Aggarwal

CFO

Vijay Aggarwal supports HSCI's finances with experience in finance and board leadership. He also volunteers with SDK Temple, Braj Cultural Society, Kaiser Permanente, and Sewa International.



Anjana Bhargava

Director of Admissions

Anjana Bhargava supports HSCI admissions by guiding applicants and reviewing applications with her STEM background. A certified Ayurvedic practitioner, she bridges traditional wisdom and modern healthcare needs.



Sudha Bhat

Case Studies Lead

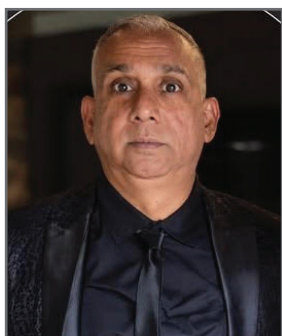
Sudha Bhat leads HSCI's accreditation work, combining engineering, business, and spiritual care training from CIF, CHT, and GTU. An ICF-certified life coach, she supports interfaith dialogue and Hindu chaplaincy standards.



Ashis Khan

Accreditation Lead

Ashis Khan, a longtime engineer, brings the Gītā's wisdom to spiritual care. Trained by HSCI, he supports healing in hospitals and elder care, helping shape accreditation standards through compassionate service.



Naresh Maharaj

Advisory Purohit

Naresh Maharaj, 2025 CHT, is Advisory Purohit — an IT leader, Hindu priest, and community leader shaped by family tradition and spiritual guidance. He spearheaded the MOU launching the HPC Purohit course with SAHMS.



Pooja Parkash

Traya Care System Lead

Pooja Parkash is a software engineer in the Bay Area with degrees from PEC Chandigarh and BITS Pilani. She balances her tech career with devotion to Vedic teachings, bhajans, and raising two sons.



Pt Neil Persad

Advisory Purohit

Pandit Neil Dev Persad blends Trinidadian spiritual roots with modern IT leadership. As HSCI's advisory purohit, he ensures authentic, adaptable practices while also serving as a spiritual advisor and classical musician.



Sudha Ramakrishnan

HCRC Library & Archives Lead

Sudha Ramakrishnan, a medical librarian, supports evidence-based care and studies Hindu and interfaith traditions through Chinmaya and GTU. She brings music and culture to her work and aims to offer spiritual support in healthcare and academia.



Manu Swamy

Assistant Registrar

Manu Swamy combines business expertise with a passion for yoga and service. A certified Vysala instructor, she supports HSCI's programs and student registration while volunteering with several community groups.



Michael Jarrett

Project Manager

Michael Jarrett is HSCI's Project Manager, coordinating the work that sustains the institute's mission. With a background in IT, data analytics, and film, he brings both technical precision and a storyteller's eye.

Volume 6 Authors



Ashok Chandrasekhar, PhD
Associate Dean at HSCI has a strong background in research. As Editor-in-Chief of Kutumba, he focuses on spiritual care to expand the knowledge base for all communities.

Articles: The Road Less Traveled, Living with Mystery: Reflections on a Hindu Chaplain’s Pastoral Theology



Dr. Abhijit Dam Dr. Abhijit Dam pioneers dignified hospice care in rural India, blending Vedantic wisdom with palliative practice since 2005.

Article: The Quantum Connection: Musings of a Palliative Physician on the Transference of Consciousness



Usha Narasimhan serves as a faculty member, registrar and Board member at HSCI. She holds credentials in chaplaincy, law and finance.

Article: HSCI in 2025-2026 and Going Forward!!



Zachary Ginder, PsyD
blends Hindu wisdom and psychology to foster well-being. He leads Pine Siskin Consulting and directs an autism center.

Article: The Accidental Chaplain and the Practice of Compassionate Presence



Punit Mahendru, PhD
blends therapy and spirituality to offer culturally sensitive care. A former Kaiser psychologist, she trained at Rutgers and NIMHANS.

Article: Bhagavad Gītā and Psychological Well-being



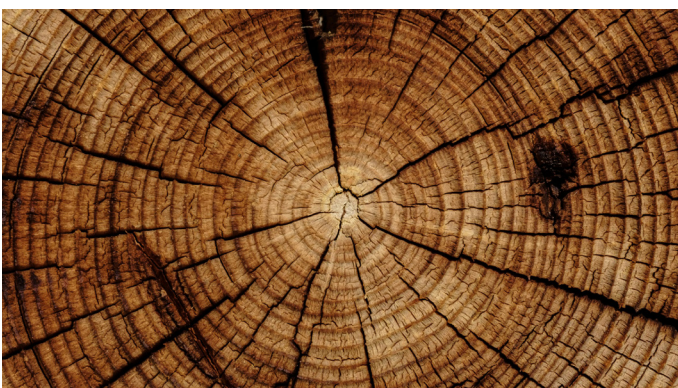
Sharad Patel
has a special way of expressing what is in his heart and mind. A 2005 CHT, he is known in the community as a go-to person for urgent and critical human needs.

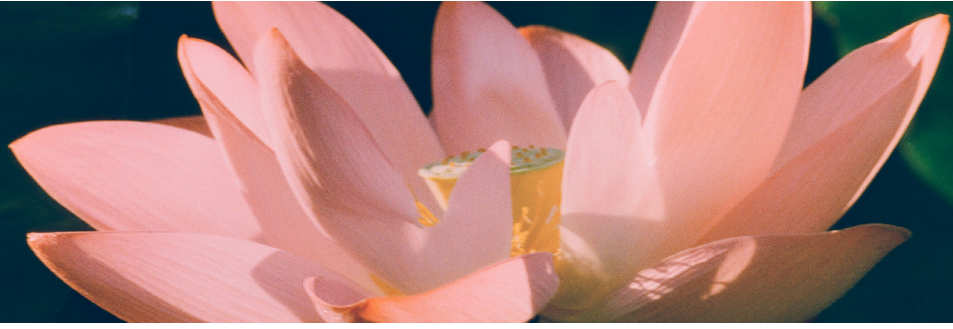
Article: What They Taught Me...



Rajinder Gandhi, MD
Retired pediatric surgeon and former associate clinical professor at Columbia University. Supports families navigating end-of-life decisions.

Article: What They Taught Me...

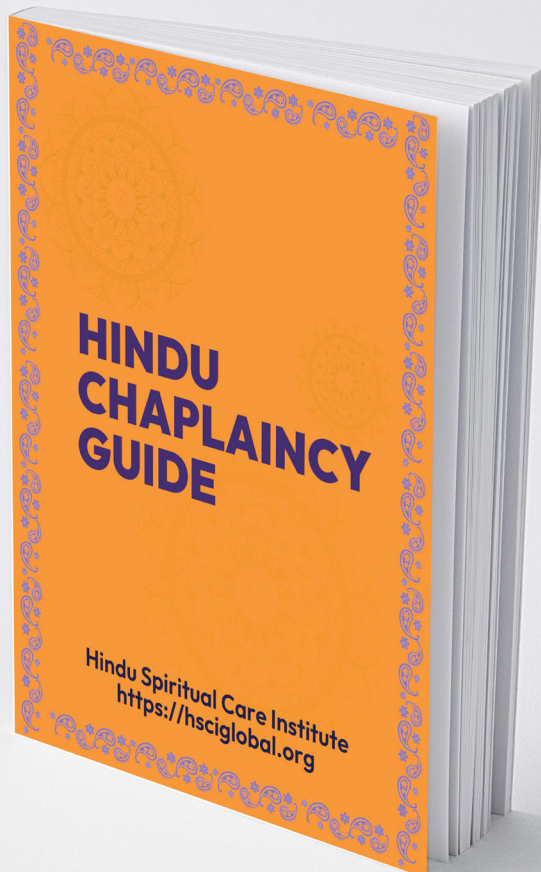




Hindu Chaplaincy Guide

Published in 2025, the first Hindu Spiritual Guide is available globally on Amazon, and the HSCI website.

It describes, in practical terms, the protocols of chaplaincy and spiritual care as well as the practices founded in Hindu tradition. The guide is written for both Hindu and non-Hindu chaplains.



At the Core of the Hindu Tradition

1. Universe is a Family

"अयं निजः परो वैते गणना लघुचेतसाम्। उदारचरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्॥"

All beings in the universe form one family, making compassion and universal brotherhood essential values in daily life.

2. Harmony with Nature

"भूमिरापोनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च। अहंकार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा॥"

The universe is composed of interconnected elements, both physical and subtle, and humans must live in harmony with these natural forces.

3. Blessings of the Elders

"वृद्धस्य वचनं ग्राह्यम्॥"

Elders possess sacred wisdom accumulated through experience, and their guidance brings blessings to one's life.

4. Respect for Knowledge and Teachers

"गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः गुरुदेवो महेश्वरः। गुरुसाक्षात् परं ब्रह्म तस्मै श्रीगुरुवे नमः॥"

The teacher (Guru) represents divine wisdom and deserves profound reverence as the revealer of spiritual knowledge.

5. Respect for all forms of life

"अहिंसा परमो धर्मः।"

Non-violence toward all living beings is the highest form of righteousness and this must guide our choices and decisions.

6. Karmic Balance

"यथा कर्म यथा श्रुति।"

Every action has consequences that shape one's future, creating a cosmic balance of cause and effect across lifetimes.

7. Offering and Gratitude

"कार्त्तव्यं वाचा मनसेन्द्रियैर्वा। बुद्ध्यात्मना वा प्रकृतेः स्वभावात्। करोमि यद्यत् सकलं परस्मै।

नारायणायतिस्मर्यामि॥"

Every action can become sacred through dedication to the Divine, transforming daily life into spiritual practice through gratitude and devotion.

8. Age-Appropriate Living - Ashramas

"चतुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः। चतुर्वर्ण्यं चातुरश्रम्यं च।"

Life unfolds in four natural stages (student, householder, retirement, renunciation), each with distinct purposes for balanced spiritual growth.

9. Life Balance - Purusharthas

"धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणां प्राप्तिर्निरस्य साधनम्।"

Balancing four aims of life: righteousness, prosperity, pleasure, and spiritual liberation for a complete and fulfilling existence.

Hindu Spiritual Care Institute
<https://hsciglobal.org>



Serve at Hospitals, Universities,
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Counselor of Spiritual Care (CSC) – 9 month course

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- Interest in serving the community

***HCP requires Hindu Purohit field experience**

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Meet the graduates from prior years

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For questions or a one-on-one meeting, please email

registrar@hsciglobal.org

By the Community | For the Community

All other pleasures and possessions pale
into nothingness before service that is
rendered in a spirit of joy-

Mahatma Gandhi

Gandhi: An Autobiography The Story of My
Experiments With Truth

kutumba

**Kutumba
Journal of Spiritual Care**

Learn ↔ Serve
A Virtuous Cycle

Hindu Spiritual Care Institute is a 501c(3) non-profit California institution dedicated to service learning.

www.HSCIGlobal.org

HSCI has established a strong bridge into future generations through its continuum-of-care model of spiritual care. Now, trained Hindu counselors and chaplains can apply the wealth of wisdom and knowledge that is our collective human inheritance. This will put the Hindu tradition to work in improving the quality of life in all communities.



Spiritual Care is an evolving discipline across all major traditions, in response to the disconnection and dysphoria that has come to define the contemporary world. HSCI believes that the blend of Hindu spiritual practices and chaplaincy protocols can uniquely serve the entire human community.

This will continue to be the HSCI vision and inspiration, as it expands its education and service programs around the world. Towards these objectives, HSCI has also developed an advanced technology platform that,

1. strengthens the learning process significantly, and
2. enables the delivery of spiritual care to all parts of the world in a culturally sensitive manner.