



Heritage Voices: Program

STARTALK Yuvā Summer Hindi Camp 2010

About the Author



Ashok Ojha, a New Jersey-based author, journalist, and teacher, regularly contributes to a number of publications in Hindi and English. He writes on international affairs, culture, tourism and social issues. He directed the STARTALK Summer Hindi Program 2010 at Kean University, New Jersey, and serves as president of Yuvā Hindī Sansthān, a non-profit group dedicated to teaching and promotion of Hindi as a world language.

The Program

In the summer of 2009, a committed group of Hindi teachers, journalists, and scholars, while attending a Hindi teaching workshop in the campus of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, decided to set up a non-profit organization to promote Indian culture, heritage, and values through the vehicle of Hindi language.

The organization, conceived as youth centric, was named Yuvā Hindī Sansthān (YHS). The founders, led by Dr. Surendra Gambhir, vowed to work for the sole aim of revitalizing and promoting Hindi among youth in the United States and other countries. Yuvā Hindī Sansthān Inc. strives to create opportunities to improve the communicative capacity in Hindi of youngsters through youth-centered workshops, camps, cultural events, and other educational, academic, and community-oriented activities throughout the United States.

Within a year, YHS succeeded in organizing an educational language and culture camp in Atlanta, GA, known as the STARTALK Yuvā Summer Hindi Camp 2010.

In this program, one hundred school children attended a ten-day camp from June 19 to 28, 2010. Approximately 54% of the students came from Hindi-speaking families, and 46% came from families in which Bengali, Tamil, Gujarati, and Marathi are spoken.



A group of YHS members and sympathizers with NJ Assembly Dy. Speaker Mr. Upendra Chivukula in March 2010

The students were grouped on the basis of their proficiency in Hindi. Most of the teachers in the program were experienced instructors who had received training in the STARTALK institutes organized by the University of Pennsylvania and New York University. The program had active support from Emory University and the Hindi Urdu Flagship program at the University of Texas at Austin.

A Typical Day at the STARTALK Yuvā Summer Hindi Camp

The curriculum of the camp was guided by ACTFL national standards. Use of Hindi was expected in all classes and activities from 9 am to 6 pm. The students began their day with a Yoga session conducted by a trained instructor followed by 3-hour classroom sessions where they practiced three modes of communication (interpersonal, presentational, and interpretive) and learned literacy skills.



An interactive classroom practicing interpersonal skills

The classroom activities included theatrical performances, singing, and playing games. In their afternoon computer class, students browsed Hindi websites, read stories in Hindi, and prepared PowerPoint presentations. They participated in a number of engaging activities such as arts and crafts classes and sports, such as cricket. At times students had to be reminded to speak in Hindi only. The day ended with dancing to the tunes of Bollywood music.



Playing cricket with all interactions in Hindi

On a field trip the students were introduced to the architectural beauty and religious symbols of a Hindu temple called Akshardham, where a guide spoke to them in simple Hindi. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Museum was the second stop of the day, where they learned about the philosophical connection between Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi. The trip ended with a visit to Global Mall, an exclusive Indian shopping plaza, where the students bought ice cream and snacks while speaking Hindi to all vendors. The vendors were alerted in advance to speak in Hindi only.



Students outside the Akshardham Temple in Atlanta



Students in front of Mahatma Gandhi Statue outside the Martin Luther King Jr. Museum in Atlanta

On June 27, the program organized a bazaar, with lots of food and other Indian merchandise. Students and their parents bargained prices in Hindi with the vendors. This was followed by a cultural program that the students presented before a large audience comprised of their parents and invited guests.

A sense of accomplishment prevailed on the faces of young students as they received their certificates of participation from the program director, Dr. Surendra Gambhir. The 2010 STARTALK Yuvā Summer Hindi Camp came to a close with the parents watching their sons and daughters with great satisfaction and students demonstrating better understanding of Hindi and Indian culture.

The communities of Atlanta have discovered a new way to engage their younger generation in learning, practicing and appreciating another culture that will enrich the lives of the next generation. The teachers and functionaries of yuva Hindi Sansthan have promised to come back next year to work with another set of youngsters of Atlanta with the same enthusiasm that was visible this year.

To learn more about the STARTALK Yuvā Summer Hindi Camp, read the [program profile](#) or visit the [Yuvā Hindī Sansthān website](#).

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