

Akhil Chopra - A tearful homage

It is with great sorrow that we share the tragic news of Akhil Chopra's demise. Akhil, who was 28 years old, was fatally shot by an unidentified robber around noon on August 11th 2005, while he was meditating in a Houston park.

Akhil Chopra touched the lives of hundreds of Houstonians with his cherubic smile, cheerful demeanor and ever-helpful personality. With a caring, friendly nature, he always had the nicest, most positive things to say about everyone around him at work and his neighborhood. It is no surprise that his co-workers, friends and neighbors, both American and Indian, loved and admired.

Akhil Chopra was also actively involved in serving the following non-profit organizations (in alphabetical order): Hindu Students Council (HSC), Hindus of Greater Houston, Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, Indic Culture And Traditions Seminars (ICATS), India Development & Relief Fund, Samskrita Bharati, Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anushandhana Samsthana (sVYASA Yoga), Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHPA) and several Hindu temples in the Houston area. He also offered his services for SEARCH, a homeless shelter in downtown Houston. He read the Sunday news section on The Voice of Sanathan Hinduism Radio Program. His services were also used in other organizations in Houston, including regular blood donations and twice making the MS150 Multiple Sclerosis charity bike ride from Houston to Austin, a 150 mile journey.

A talented media-person, Akhil dedicated his life to spreading goodwill and interfaith harmony. He was one of the key media coordinators of the Global Dharma Conference 2003, held in New Jersey. He was also taking the lead role in organizing the Houston Janmashtami festival this year for the benefit of the Indian-American community. The Houston Janmashtami Committee has instituted an annual service award in the name of Akhil Chopra, to honor his legacy of selflessly serving humanity.

A very spiritual and profound scholar for his age, he was also a talented and dedicated certified yoga teacher. While also being a vegetarian, he fasted every Saturday but continued helping individuals and organizations even while fasting. Akhil's cherished dream was to learn how to read "Upanishads" in original Sanskrit script, which he had recently begun by means of correspondence courses.

Mr. Akhil Chopra came to the United States in 2001 and later came to Houston and joined Star Pipe Products as a summer intern from University of Texas, Arlington in June 2002. Impressed with his hard work and dedication, Star Pipe offered him a full-time position. While working at Star Pipe, he completed his Masters in MIS from the University of St. Thomas.

A memorial service was held on Sunday, August 14th. Over 400 people were in attendance and ranged in various ethnic backgrounds, age groups and occupations. Two dozen speakers gave their eulogies and spoke warmly about their past association with Akhil from various professional, personal and community service perspectives. A prayer service was also held on the 15th at Keshav Smruti Community Center at Star Pipe Products. His body has been cremated Haridwar, on the banks of holy Ganga.

Akhil is survived by his parents, his brother and his extended family in Ahmedabad & New Delhi, India. He will be deeply missed by the Houston community and beyond. The world is a poorer place today without his angelic presence.

A Memorial Fund has been set up under Sewa International – Akhil Chopra Memorial Fund, Bank of America, Account No. 003255020705, Routing No. 061000052. Checks can be mailed to: P.O. Box 441505, Houston, Texas 77244. The Akhil Chopra Memorial Fund will benefit the charities in which he supported, along with his families wishes. Star Pipe Products has made a donation in the amount of \$20,000 to support his Memorial.