



## OUR 2019 ADVOCACY DAY WAS A SUCCESS!

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# OUR 2019 ADVOCACY DAY WAS A SUCCESS!

On June 24, our delegation of 80 Hindu Americans took the issue of terrorism in Kashmir to over 100 Congressional offices during our 16th Annual Advocacy Day. Dozens of Hindu Kashmiri Pandits from around the country joined our delegation to provide first hand accounts of the situation in Kashmir and advocated for passage of H.Res. 408 (Condemning the Feb. 14 Pulwama Terrorist Attack in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir). Delegates also advocated for the passage of H.R. 2123 (The U.S.-India Enhanced Cooperation Act of 2019).

In a first, this year's Capitol Hill Reception was co-hosted by HAF and the Indo-American Kashmir Forum, with the partnership of Kashmir Hindu Foundation — all groups advocating for justice for the Hindu Kashmiri Pandit community.

“For too long the religio-ethnic cleansing of the Kashmiri Pandit community from the Valley of

Kashmir has been overlooked by the international community,” noted HAF Board Member Rajiv Pandit, himself a member of the Kashmiri Pandit community, now living in Texas.

Over 300 people attended the reception to honor this year's awardees which included:

- + **Bansi Pandit**  
*Dharma Seva Award*
- + **Subhash Kak, Ashok Koul, Arti Tikku Kaul**  
*Award for the Advancement of Dharmic Arts and Sciences*
- + **Vijay Sazawal, Deepak Ganju, Sunil Fotedar**  
*Award for the Advancement of Hindu Human Rights*
- + **Representative Brad Sherman (D-CA)**  
*Friend of the Community*
- + **Ambassador Sam Brownback**  
*Mahatma Gandhi Award for Advancing Pluralism*





POLICY

WATCH: The History of the Kashmir Conflict

One of the biggest myths about Kashmir is that it's disputed territory. It's not. It's an integral part of India.

Its political leaders may have changed many times, but for centuries Kashmir has been an integral part of the geography and cultural milieu of India.

It's been a renowned center of Hindu and Buddhist learning, of the arts and material culture, going back millennia.

In 1947, Pakistan (and the departing British) wanted to force the merger of Kashmir with Pakistan, leading Pakistan's military to invade and occupy much of the state. Kashmir's ruler at the time then appealed to the newly independent state of India for help and decided to legally join India.

And just a few decades ago the Hindu Kashmiri Pandit community was ethnically cleansed from their ancestral home in the Valley of Kashmir.

If you listen to the mainstream media tell the story though, you'll get none of that.

So HAF took action. We've released two videos of a three part series that presents the facts about the conflict of Kashmir. Search for "Hindu American Foundation" on YouTube to find the first two videos.

COMMUNITY

To Use or Not To Use? Guidelines for Commercial Use of Hindu Images

In June, HAF released general guidelines for manufacturers, retailers, and marketing departments for where images of Hindu deities and other religious symbols shouldn't be used, not only to avoid causing offense, but to be culturally respectful with iconography that over 1 billion Hindus around the globe consider sacred.

DON'T DO IT : WILL CAUSE OFFENSE

Bathmats, toilet seats or seat covers; underwear (men's or women's), socks,

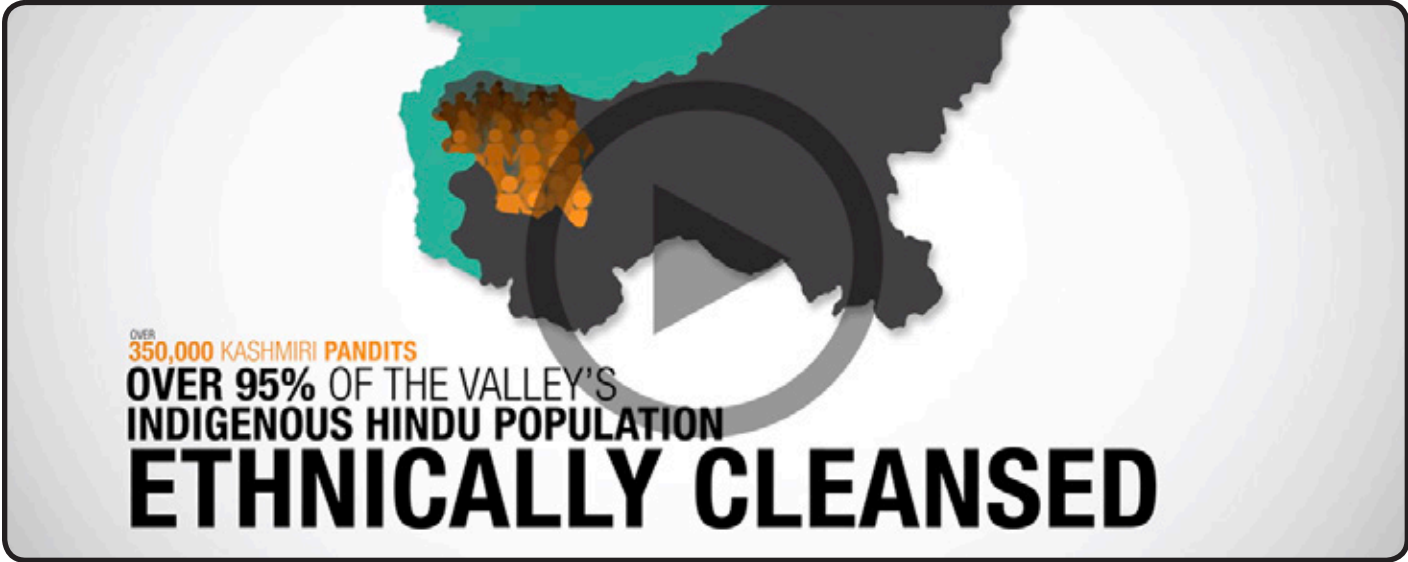
pants or shorts; footwear, of any type and material; swimwear; door mats, rugs; alcohol, meat; yoga mats, skateboards, anything where the image is likely to be destroyed through normal intended usage, intended to be stepped upon; anything intended to be placed in spaces reserved for defecation, or placed on or near bodily organs of reproduction and elimination.

CAUTION: MAY CAUSE OFFENSE

Bath towels, shower curtains, dish towels; mouse pads; leather items; any item with significant material modification of a Deity (placing non-traditional items in the hands of Nataraja, for example); any item that is likely to get regularly dirty through normal intended usage.

GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE: LESS LIKELY TO CAUSE OFFENSE

Shirts, hats, pins, stickers; magnets; shawls; wall hangings, decorations, and decals; phone covers, laptop covers; tote bags; vegetarian food products (keeping in mind that eggs are not traditionally considered a vegetarian food by many Hindus), vegan food products.



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC POLICY

Growing up in South Florida as an American of Armenian descent, and the great grandson of genocide survivors, I know first hand what life is like for a second generation American.

After graduating from Florida Atlantic University with a BA in Political Science, I moved to Washington, DC in 2006, where I joined the Armenian Assembly of America, the largest Armenian advocacy organization in the US. I was proud to advance several pieces of legislation, some of which became law, related to human rights, international religious freedom, and U.S. foreign policy issues in Congress.

During my 10+ year career on Capitol Hill, I earned a Master's Degree in Political Management from The George

Washington University, and I began to study the growing and diverse number of ethnic advocacy organizations in Washington, DC.

What I learned was that the Hindu and Indian American community is a lot like the Armenian American community – strong family values, a unique and ancient cultural identity anchored by a religion with a profound ancient tradition, a proud (and often overlooked) people who had contributed richly to human civilization – and it has huge potential to be a driving force for sound US policy that reflects our shared vision for a better, safer, more inclusive world.

It's therefore my honor and privilege to join HAF to advance our common cause.

I see great value in the mission of “promoting dignity, mutual respect, and pluralism.” That’s another way of saying “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

HAF has many impressive state and federal accomplishments in our brief history and it is my goal to expand on that success and help take HAF to new heights.



Whether it is advancing US policy on Capitol Hill and with the Administration, raising accurate awareness of Hindu Americans, Hinduism, and India in the academic and think-tank spheres of influence, or simply expanding the HAF footprint in our nation's capital, I am excited to be a part of the HAF family.

Taniel Koushakjian  
Director of Public Policy, HAF

MEET THE INTERN CLASS OF 2019

This year's cohort of outstanding undergraduates spent eight exciting weeks in our nation's capital, thanks to the generosity of Professor Dinesh O. Shah. His \$50,000 donation provided these young leaders with unparalleled experience in Hindu American and public policy advocacy. Take a moment to meet our interns.



Shoumik Dabir  
University of Texas at Austin



Kali Luthra  
American University



Dev Desai  
Marquette University



Naman Gupta  
Emory University



Akesh Shah  
Boston University



Komal Kamdar  
University of Virginia



Nidhi Patel  
University of Michigan



## EDUCATION

### Holi Hai! Presenting the HAF Holi Toolkit

Our Holi Toolkit was released this March to teachers across the country and is currently available on our website. This multi-lesson toolkit has a reading primer that explains the importance of Holi, lessons on Holi that a teacher can implement in their classroom, activities that can be done at home with kids, as well as a color wheel that describes the significance of different colors in Hinduism. HAF is hoping that more schools will celebrate Holi in their classrooms and that the meaning of this colorful and auspicious Hindu holiday will be taught to students. Please share this resource with your kids' teachers as well

as use the toolkit at home for a fun and engaging way to educate and celebrate with your family!

### Exciting Education Updates

Stay tuned for some exciting Education updates in the next few months:

- ▶ We are looking to designate October as Hindu American Awareness Month at school districts around the country. And we will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth (October 2nd) and Diwali (October 27th). We will be releasing relevant lesson plans and content for teachers to implement in their classroom.
- ▶ In the fall, we will release our Kashmir Lesson Plan and Primer aimed for high school students in World History, International Geography, and World Cultural Geography classes. This

lesson will teach about the religious and geo-political nuances of this complex conflict and will be a nice intersection of our advocacy and policy work.

- ▶ We will be presenting our Hinduism 101 (H101) content at the Florida State Conference of Social Studies, the National Council of Social Studies, as well as personalized presentations to schools and districts. Since the start of 2019, we have taught H101 to over 350 educators, reaching at least 8,750 students.
- ▶ We will be releasing an Educator's Guide to Hinduism by the end of the year to help teachers and administrators teach about Hinduism as well as to understand the cultural and religious traditions of Hindu students.

# If there's something strange in your neighborhood, who ya gonna call?

## When a condo board in NY told a Hindu American family to remove a Swastika from their doorway, who did the family call? HAF!

The condo board said, "Our policy does not permit any hangings above doors." Yet, mezuzahs adorned many of the doors in hallways. The board refused to dialog with the family.

A letter from HAF reminded the board of the Fair Housing Act and conveyed the message that the family had the backing of a national advocacy organization.

**Message received. The family was permitted to keep their swastika.**

## When a school's principal refused to grant an excused absence for an Upanayana ceremony, who did the family call? HAF!

The principal refused because he was not familiar with the ceremony and did not wish to learn about it. Yet, he would have approved an absence for Eid, he told the family.

HAF contacted the superintendent to explain the religious significance of the ceremony and noted that the principal's actions were discriminatory.

**Request granted. The brothers were granted excused absences.**

## When a lesbian couple was searching for a Hindu priest to perform a puja at their baby shower, who did the family call? HAF!

The couple was hesitant to approach their local temple as it had previously denied a request to marry a gay couple.

We quickly reached out to our network to help us find a priest. Within a matter of days, we connected the couple with a priest who was willing to perform the puja.

**Puja performed.**

## THIS IS HAF IN ACTION

and your support is vital to ensuring Hindu Americans have someone to call when something strange is going on.

**Support YOUR advocacy organization today.**

Visit [www.hafsite.org/donate](http://www.hafsite.org/donate).



Hindu American Foundation  
910 17th Street, NW, Suite 316A  
Washington, DC 20006



Promoting dignity, mutual respect,  
and pluralism.

Visit us online at  
[www.hafsite.org](http://www.hafsite.org)

HAF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.



Check it out! HAF is now  
Platinum rated on GuideStar!

AS A HAF SUPPORTER,  
YOU ARE:

**PROMOTING**

pluralism and mutual respect

**ENSURING**

an accurate understanding of Hinduism  
as a living tradition

**SUPPORTING**

the human rights of Hindus worldwide

**STRENGTHENING**

the Hindu American voice and ensuring  
our community's needs are met

**SHARING**

Hindu solutions to contemporary problems

**BUILDING**

the foundation for future generations



VISIT [WWW.HAFSITE.ORG](http://WWW.HAFSITE.ORG)  
AND SHOW YOUR SUPPORT!