

HINDU AMERICAN FOUNDATION

910 Seventeenth St., Suite 316A

Washington, D.C. 20006

hinduamerican.org | 202.223.8222



August 19, 2021

Dear President and esteemed university administrators,

We write to you to express our serious concern regarding an event to be held September 10-12, 2021, entitled “Dismantling Global Hindutva” (DGH). This event is being promoted as co-sponsored by your institution with your institution’s name and logo appearing on the DGH [website](#), [promotional materials](#), and [social media posts](#). If this event is not endorsed by your institution, or if the logo is being utilized in contravention to university policy, we respectfully request that you:

1. ask the event organizers to remove your university’s name and logo from its website, promotional materials, and social media posts,
2. ensure the safety and wellbeing of Hindu students, faculty, and staff on your campus who may feel targeted, threatened, or face hostility or harassment as a result of this partisan, anti-Hindu event.

The Hindu American Foundation (HAF) which we represent, wholeheartedly supports [free speech](#) and academic freedom as we are guided by the Hindu precepts of *satya* (truthfulness), *vāda* and *saṃvāda* (debate and discussion), and *viveka* (discernment). We ask that institutions of higher learning support the same and also privilege academic integrity by promoting open inquiry, encouraging a diversity of viewpoints, and modeling constructive disagreement.

This event, however, is the antithesis of all of these values.

The DGH organizers trade on the prestige of your institution’s name to host, not an academic conference, but a partisan event related to politics in India. The event platforms activists with extensive histories of amplifying Hinduphobic discourse even while denying the existence of [Hinduphobia](#). Many of these activists [equate](#) the whole of Hinduism with caste [bigotry](#) and other social ills; deny the subcontinental indigeneity of Hindus and Hinduism; and support or minimize [violent extremist and separatists](#) movements and deny the resulting [genocides](#) and [ethnic cleansings](#) of Hindus.

DGH organizers [describe](#) Hindutva as a “political philosophy” in an attempt to distinguish the participants’ critique of it from criticism of Hinduism and Hindus. But then they go on to deny the existence of Hinduism by reducing it to being only “heterodox, continuously under contestation, and often contradictory,” rather than the coherent and diverse living tradition it is for its 1.2 billion adherents.

They do not acknowledge spiritual teachings and practices such as Oneness of existence, yoga, non-violence, loving devotion of God, and selfless service, all of which inform the shared values and spiritual lives of Hindus around the world and millions of seekers of all backgrounds. Instead, they problematize Hinduism, against any conceptual and emic understandings of Hindu teachings, [writing](#)

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that: “Hinduism has rightly been critiqued for the deep inequities in Indian society, most importantly for the caste system.”

Holding Hindus to double standards, defaming or falsely alleging dual loyalty against Hindu Americans, or dehumanizing Hindus by portraying them as inherently bigoted or dangerous crosses the fine line between legitimate criticism of policies of the Indian government and anti-Hindu hatred.

While academics at your institution may choose to engage in political partisan activism concerning India, we hope you would agree that your institution should not. In fact, strict neutrality and independence are critical to the integrity of academic institutions. The use of your university’s name and logo, in this regard, implies overt institutional partisanship and endorsement of the event’s political and discriminatory motives.

We respectfully request you to ask for the removal of your university’s name and logo from the DGH [website](#), [promotional materials](#), and [social media posts](#).

We also ask that you ensure the safety and wellbeing of Hindu students, faculty, and staff on your campus leading up to the DGH event, and provide support and protection to those who may feel targeted, threatened, or face hostility or harassment as a result of this divisive event.

Hindu students are [targeted](#) and report [feeling under attack](#) for opposing Hinduphobic depictions of their religion in the classroom and for opposing anti-Hindu hate on [college campuses](#).

Thank you for your attention and for urgently addressing this distressing matter unfolding with the apparent support of your university.

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Suhag Shukla'.

Suhag Shukla, Esq. - HAF Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Samir Kalra'.

Samir Kalra, Esq. - HAF Managing Director

The [Hindu American Foundation](#) is an American non-profit, non-partisan 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization focused on educating the public about Hindus and Hinduism and advocating for policies and practices that ensure the well-being of all people and the planet. We promote dignity, mutual respect, and pluralism.