



American Hindus Against Defamation (AHAD)

an initiative of HinduPACT



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[This is AHAD's response to the Southern Poverty Law Center Series: Hindu Supremacy in the United States interview with Pranay Somayajula and Safa Ahmed.](#)

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Deconstructing Misconceptions: Unpacking Hindu Nationalism in the U.S.

Recent portrayals of Hindu organizations in the U.S. as part of a "Hindu supremacist" ecosystem reflect a troubling trend of bias, misrepresentation, and Hinduphobia. Reports from groups like the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and related interviews have unjustly targeted Hindu advocacy organizations, conflating their legitimate cultural and political aspirations with far-right ideologies. This mischaracterization not only undermines the contributions of these organizations but also perpetuates harmful stereotypes about Hindus in the diaspora. This blog aims to deconstruct the misconceptions propagated by the interview of Pranay Somayajula from Hindus for Human Rights and Safa Ahmed from the Indian American Muslim Council and provide a balanced analysis to challenge the unfounded narratives that dominate such portrayals.

Analyzing the Organizations: Contributions Over Conflict

The SPLC's report mentions organizations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHPA), HinduPACT, Hindu American Foundation (HAF), and the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS), labeling them as part of a "Hindu supremacist" network. However, a closer examination reveals that these organizations focus on advocacy, cultural preservation, and philanthropy rather than promoting any supremacist agenda.

- 1. Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHPA):**

The VHPA focuses on cultural preservation and humanitarian efforts, such as supporting education for underprivileged communities through initiatives like Support-A-Child. The organization also organizes interfaith events and disaster relief programs, demonstrating its commitment to societal welfare.

- 2. Hindu American Foundation (HAF):**

HAF works to address bias against Hindus in educational curricula, advocate for civil rights, and combat Hinduphobia. Their campaigns are centered on equality and representation, not divisiveness.

- 3. Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS):**

The HSS emphasizes community service, cultural education, and interfaith dialogue. Accusations

of extremism ignore the organization's grassroots work, including food drives and community-building initiatives.

4. **HinduPACT:**

HinduPACT advocates for Hindu concerns within U.S. political institutions, addressing issues such as religious freedom and combating anti-Hindu prejudice. Their activities align with civic engagement and democratic principles.

These organizations are driven by the desire to preserve Hindu identity, contribute positively to society, and address genuine issues like Hinduphobia. Labeling their work as "supremacist" undermines their contributions and ignores their positive impact on the community.

The "Hindu Supremacist" Label: Hinduphobia in Action

The term "Hindu supremacist" is a manifestation of Hinduphobia, reducing legitimate cultural and political advocacy to a narrative of bigotry. Unlike supremacist ideologies that seek to dominate others, Hindutva, often conflated with Hindu nationalism, emphasizes reclaiming Hindu identity and protecting cultural heritage.

Using this label to describe Hindu organizations reflects a double standard, as similar activism by other communities is often celebrated as empowerment. This term silences Hindu voices, delegitimizing their concerns about historical and contemporary injustices. It dismisses their efforts to engage with civic and political systems as "supremacist," while ignoring their lived experiences of prejudice and exclusion.

Hinduphobia Is Real, Not Manufactured

The report's dismissal of Hinduphobia as a "constructed narrative" ignores the growing evidence of anti-Hindu prejudice. Academic conferences like "Dismantling Global Hindutva" and distorted representations of Hinduism in school curricula highlight systemic bias against Hindus. Additionally, hate crimes targeting Hindus, vandalism of Hindu temples, and online harassment campaigns further demonstrate the reality of Hinduphobia.

Efforts to address Hinduphobia, such as the Rutgers conference that developed a working definition of the term, are unfairly dismissed as political tactics. This trivializes the discrimination faced by Hindus and perpetuates a harmful narrative that marginalizes their concerns.

Hindu Support for Israel: A Legitimate Political View

The report criticizes Hindu organizations for their support of Israel, framing it as an alignment with far-right ideologies. This perspective overlooks the historical and strategic context of India-Israel relations, which are rooted in shared democratic values and security concerns. Hindu support for Israel reflects solidarity with another ancient civilization facing modern geopolitical challenges.

Critics also highlight parallels between Hindu organizations and groups like Jihad Watch, particularly regarding concerns about radicalism. Both raise issues about Islamist extremism; Hindu organizations advocate for pluralism and coexistence and shared concerns about extremism do not equate to ideological alignment.

MAGA and Hindu Advocacy: Political Pragmatism Over Ideology

The intersection of Hindu organizations and the MAGA movement is often framed as opportunistic. However, this overlooks the pragmatism behind political engagement. Hindu groups interact with various political entities, including MAGA-aligned conservatives, to address issues such as immigration, religious freedom, and education reform.

The interviewee's focus on "opportunism" overlooks the political diversity within the Hindu community. While some individuals align with conservative values, others advocate for progressive causes. Without recognizing this diversity, highlighting specific instances of engagement with MAGA reinforces stereotypes and oversimplifies complex political realities.

Singling Out Hindu Leaders: An Unfair Attack

The report targets individual Hindu leaders, such as Vivek Ramaswamy, Nikki Haley, and Usha Vance, suggesting their affiliations advance a "supremacist" agenda. This singling out lacks substantive evidence and disregards their legitimate contributions to American politics and society.

For example:

- Vivek Ramaswamy's discussions of Hindu identity explore heritage within the context of American values.
- Nikki Haley's advocacy reflects a broad range of concerns relevant to Indian Americans, including economic reform and international relations.

Associating these leaders with extremism based on selective anecdotes is speculative and unfair, undermining their achievements.

Shared Concerns with Conservative Groups: Context Matters

Hindu organizations may share concerns about extremism with conservative groups, but this does not equate to ideological alignment. Issues like Islamist radicalism and global security transcend political boundaries. Criticizing Hindu organizations for engaging in these discussions reflects a lack of nuance.

Hindu advocacy groups champion pluralism, cultural preservation, and interfaith dialogue, demonstrating their commitment to peaceful coexistence. Conflating their concerns with those of exclusionary far-right groups is misleading.

Exaggerated Allegations of Islamophobia

Hindu organizations do not promote Islamophobia but highlight concerns over Islamist extremism and historical injustices. The interview selectively amplifies instances of anti-Muslim sentiment while ignoring the systemic persecution of Hindus in regions like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and parts of India.

Toward a Balanced Perspective

The portrayal of Hindu organizations as "supremacist" or aligned with far-right ideologies reflects a troubling lack of nuance. It undermines their contributions to U.S. civil society, misrepresents their efforts to combat Hinduphobia, and perpetuates harmful stereotypes.

Hindu advocacy groups are essential to fostering multicultural democracy, addressing anti-Hindu prejudice, and preserving cultural heritage. Their engagement with political entities and global alliances reflects pragmatic strategies to advance their community's interests.

A balanced perspective must recognize their positive contributions and address genuine concerns without resorting to unfair labels or speculative narratives. Constructive dialogue, mutual respect, and informed analysis are essential to fostering understanding and inclusivity.

Hindu organizations deserve the space to advocate for their rights without being maligned. By moving beyond biased portrayals, we can create a more inclusive and pluralistic society that values diverse voices and perspectives.