



## Hindu Americans organize HAVAN, Prayer and Yoga on “National Day of Prayer”

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### **Hindu Americans organize HAVAN, Prayer and Yoga as they allocate relief funding during COVID- 19 crisis on President Trump’s call for “National Day of Prayer”**

March 15, 2020

The following statement was issued by World Hindu Council of America (VHPA)

Responding to President Trump’s call for “National Day of Prayer” today, Hindu Mandir Executives’ Conference (HMEC), a body representing 400+ Hindu Mandirs, institutions, Meditation & Yoga groups in North America, organized HAVAN and prayers across North America. The effort is aimed at addressing growing mental health and anxiety concerns arising from the COVID- 19 pandemic.

Vallabha Tantry, one of the coordinators of this efforts, explained that “keeping in mind the concerns of mass gatherings, a two-pronged approach was adopted, i.e., Prayers at the Temples & Organizations and Prayers by the Individuals (Virtual Satsang)”. She added “Devotees were encouraged to ‘Pray from Home’ when the Havan was being performed at their respective Temples by the Priests. Facebook live or video recording were enabled by the Temple Management for the devotees to participate remotely in the prayer proceedings”. Thousands of people across North America joined the prayers and many more are planning to join in the coming weeks.

Ajay Shah, Executive VP of the World Hindu Council of America (VHPA) noted that “Temples, Gurudwaras and other Dharmic institutions and communities, will continue to Pray for Global Health which tie-up with Hindu thought of ‘Sarve Santu Niramayah – May all be free from illness.”

Pointing to a recent health guideline report published by Harvard Medical School, Anil Sharma, a community organizer who was part of this initiative, noted that “Aasana,

Dhyana and Praanayama, could go a long way in mitigating the isolation anxiety that is gripping communities across the United States.”

Over the past month, the spread of COVID-19, with its global implications, have affected the lives of billions around the world in an unprecedented manner. Millions of lives have been affected around the United States and Canada. Leaders around the world, including President Trump, have been encouraging the public to embrace “Namaste”, a traditional Hindu greeting, as one of the safest protocols for public interaction. Such time-tested spiritual and social protocols have withstood thousands of years of global pandemics, and have emerged as “best practices” for healthy community interactions.

The World Hindu Council of America (VHPA) has allocated funds for helping international students in need of emergency resources, in partnership with Hindu Students Council. As more funds are being raised, Five thousand dollars have also been immediately released for donations to the Federal government institutions that are providing relief to vulnerable communities. As we raise more resources, we thank the Mandirs, Institutions and Meditation and Yoga Centers across the United States and Canada who participated today. We, at VHPA, encourage everyone to follow the CDC and local health department guidelines regarding COVID-19.

About World Hindu Council of America (VHPA):

World Hindu Council of America (VHPA) is the most prominent organization of Hindus in the USA.

Founded in 1970, it has branches across the country. VHPA runs educational programs for Hindu children and youth in addition to community service (seva) activities.

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