

30th September 2021

Professor Stephen Kelly
Pro Vice-Chancellor
Massey Business School
Massey University
Private Bag 11222
Palmerston North 4442

Dear Professor Kelly

RE: Community Concern about Care White Paper titled Cultural Hindutva and Islamophobia

We, the undersigned Community Organisations of New Zealand who jointly represent over 100,000 Hindus, wish to express our great concern at the contents of a recent white paper published by the 'Center For Culture-Centered Approach To Research And Evaluation' (CARE) at Massey University.

The paper entitled "Cultural Hindutva and Islamophobia" tries to connect All Hindus to an Islamophobic ideology, and suggests that Hindutva is that ideology. The paper makes unsubstantiated claims that an extremist ideology is being propagated in Aotearoa New Zealand through Hindu cultural practices and art.

This suggestion is baseless. The author presents no such evidence, but instead makes far-fetched extrapolations from the complex political dynamics of India, and some very limited and sketchy studies in the USA, both of which are not relevant to New Zealand. The first noted settlement of Hindus in New Zealand dates back to the arrival of sepoys (Indian soldiers) in the 19th century, with the first communities from the Punjab and Gujarat arriving in the 1890s. Since then a steady stream of Hindu migrants both from India and other countries have made Aotearoa their home and have an unblemished record of peaceful coexistence.

Hinduism is based on the concept of "Vasudev Kutumbakam", meaning, "the world is one family". It promotes unity, tolerance, peace, prosperity, compassion, humility and the care of all beings of the creation, and the Mother Earth.

The manifestation of these principles is evident in the way of life of Hindus in New Zealand. They are peace loving, caring, hardworking, adaptive and active participants, in all walks of life, as employees, community workers, employers, investors, entrepreneurs, and more.

They engage positively and with respect across social, spiritual, commercial and political spheres, with diverse groups of people and organisations across the country, for the common good of all. It is not surprising that Hindus in New Zealand have a history of assimilating very confidently and efficiently in the fabric of the pluralistic New Zealand Society.

It is disappointing that without a single example of issues in New Zealand arising from Hinduism, the white paper goes on to conclude by calling for a close examination and interrogation of (a) the elements of Hindutva (*deemed unjustifiably in the paper to be the culture and art forms of Hinduism*) in Aotearoa; and (b) the funding of Hindu cultural and arts organisations thereof.

This is an unwarranted attack on the foundational pillars of Hinduism in New Zealand – the Hindu organisations, their art forms and cultural performances. Pillars that have for many years helped to,

- promote harmony across the different groups that make up the New Zealand society;

- and also to help citizenship development of its own members that have chosen Aotearoa as their home away from their original home.

In summation therefore, we find that the white paper:

- is based on unsubstantiated claims and extrapolations from elsewhere, is disrespectful and stigmatises Hindus and their practice of Hinduism in Aotearoa;
- is an expression of prejudice against Hindus and their freedom to practice Hinduism in New Zealand – by definition, this is hate speech (*noting that hate speech is prohibited in New Zealand under the Human Rights Act 1993 under sections 61 and 131.*);
- has the undertones of fear-mongering, and the potential to ignite hostility towards Hindus in New Zealand;

Furthermore, the paper fails to meet both:

- the academic standards (*for its unsupported claims and generalisations*);
- and Massey University's own "Policy On Academic Freedom, Free Speech And Freedom Of Expression" (*for its disrespect, insult, fear-mongering, and cultivation of hatred and hostility*).

The Hindu community in New Zealand is hurt. Moreover, we are deeply concerned about the harmful consequences of the white paper – creation of hatred, disharmony and hostilities. These can seriously damage the multiracial and multicultural fabric of New Zealand society, which is made of numerous groups interweaved harmoniously together, and who co-exist peacefully.

We therefore request, that:

- the white paper referred to here, and any other partisan material (*including those from the series of lectures and related communication from CARE*) that go against the ethos of unity, inclusiveness and diversity is henceforth withdrawn.
- further publications on this matter be stopped until such time that the issues arising from the white paper and those raised in this letter have been addressed to the satisfaction of the Hindu community of New Zealand.
- a meeting take place between the members including the appropriate academics of the Massey University and key members of the Hindu community of New Zealand, with a view to generate better understanding between the parties and to help resolve the issues that have arisen.
- Massey University take immediate steps to ensure that their own "Policy On Academic Freedom, Free Speech And Freedom Of Expression" is not breached in this way again.
- the Hindu community (*or any other community group for that matter, as appropriate*) be informed in advance and given the opportunity to engage early on matters of interest to them and their wellbeing.

We would be grateful for your action and response to the above request by 5pm on Friday 8th October 2021.

We genuinely wish to settle this issue in a mature, amicable and peaceful manner with dialogue and discussion between the parties. If however, we do not hear back from you and our concerns remain unresolved, we may be constrained to seek other avenues available to us under the law of the land to seek appropriate hearing and redressal of our grievance of an issue that is not of our making.

Yours Faithfully

1. New Zealand Hindu Foundation (Community Organisation in the Making)

2. Adarsh Satsang Ramayan Mandali
3. Amma New Zealand
4. Auckland Hindu Malayali Samajam
5. Auckland Indian Association
6. Auckland Ramayan Sanstha Trust
7. Auckland Sri Ganesh Temple
8. Bhartiya Mandir, Auckland
9. Capital City Ramayan Mandali, Wellington
10. Chinmaya Mission New Zealand
11. Datta Yoga Centre New Zealand
12. Dharm Yodha NZ
13. Fiji Indian Association Wellington
14. Gayatri Parivar New Zealand
15. Hamilton City Sai Centre
16. Hawera Satsang Ramayan Mandali
17. Hindi Language & Culture Trust NZ
18. Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh New Zealand
19. Indian Social & Cultural Club Inc Christchurch NZ
20. Maa Durga Bhavan Temple, Auckland
21. Manukau Sanatan Sabha NZ
22. NZ Hindi Teachers Association
23. New Zealand Gayatri Pariwar Hamilton
24. New Zealand Hindu Temple Society Incorporated
25. NZ Sanatan Naari Sabha
26. New Zealand Telugu Association
27. Pooja Cultural Centre Trust
28. Radha Krishna Temple Hamilton
29. Ram Krishna Mandir NZ Inc
30. Sri Radha Krishna Mandir
31. Sri Om Incorporated New Zealand
32. Sangeetha Bharathi Charitable Trust
33. Sanskrit Yoga & Jyotish Trust
34. Sargam School of Indian Music
35. Sanathan Shivarchan Trust
36. Shiva Ashram Charitable Trust
37. Shree Sanatan Dharm Purohit Brahman Maha Sabha NZ Inc
38. Shree Sanatan Dharam Airport Ramayan Mandali, Wellington
39. Shree Sita Ram Ramayan Mandali, Wellington
40. Shri Sanatan Dharam Hanuman Mandir Inc
41. Shri Ram Mandir Charitable Trust
42. Shri Sanatan Dharam Pratinidhi Sabha New Zealand Society 2008 Inc
43. Shree Sanatan Dharam Pratinidhi Sabha Auckland Incorporated Ltd
44. Shri Sanatan Dharam Pratinidhi Sabha Waikato/Bay of Plenty
45. Sri Ganesh Trust Christchurch
46. Sri Sri Radha Damodar Temple
47. The R.A.M.S Foundation
48. Teach Hindi NZ
49. Telangana Association of New Zealand Inc
50. Tik Tek Bhakti Satsang Ramayan Mandali, Lower Hutt Wellington
51. Upper Hutt Ramayan Mandali Wellington
52. Waitakere Ramayan Mandali

- 53. Waitakere Hindi School
- 54. Wellington Bhajan Boys
- 55. Whangaparaoa Ramayan Mandali
- 56. Wellington Navyuwak Ramayan Mandali Inc