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Press Release

HINDU AMERICAN FOUNDATION FORMALLY LAUNCHES WITH DINNER RECEPTION ON CAPITOL HILL

DATE: May 5, 2004

WASHINGTON, DC - The **Hindu American Foundation (HAF)** formally launched with a dinner reception in the U.S. Capitol on May 5, 2004. The event marked the first time that an organization interacted with members of the United States Congress with the purpose of furthering understanding of Hinduism and promoting its ethos of tolerance and pluralism. Hosted by **Rep. David Dreier (R-CA)**, special guests included the co-chairs of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans, **Rep. Joseph Crowley (D-NY)** and **Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC)**, who attended the reception with many other members of Congress and their staff.

HAF President, **Dr. Mihir Meghani**, introduced, **Sri Sri Ravi Shankar**, of the Art of Living Foundation, to the attendees as an ambassador of Hinduism's spiritual assets. "HAF considers it an honor that Sri Sri Ravi Shankar is blessing this occasion as he personifies the Hindu values so relevant today—peace and tolerance," remarked Dr. Meghani.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar addressed the audience emphasizing the need for an organization such as HAF today. "Honoring diversity and the concept of one world family is the very breath of Hinduism. Liberty, assimilation and pluralism are the salient features of both American and Hindu cultures," **Sri Sri Ravi Shankar** said. He added, "To combat the ills of society, leaders from the fields of spirituality, politics and business must work together and I am confident that HAF will play a vital role in bridging the gaps in society, both at home here and in the international arena."

"I am delighted to help inaugurate the first ever reception on Capitol Hill by a Hindu American group, the Hindu American Foundation, and to welcome Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, India's great spiritual and humanitarian leader, to our nation's capital," said **Rep. Dreier**. The attendance of many Congressional leaders was a reflection of the rising numbers and growing contributions of Hindu Americans throughout the United States. **Rep. Dreier** stated, "The Hindu American community is contributing to America in many ways as it becomes a force for tolerance and pluralism in our society. I am pleased to have been invited to sponsor this reception."

The evening reception followed a full day of individual meetings with members of Congress. HAF members met with over a dozen legislators and discussed various issues of concern to Hindu Americans. Policy briefs, prepared by HAF, discussing issues including terrorism and human rights violations against Hindus in Pakistan, Bangladesh and India's Jammu and Kashmir state, as well as domestic concerns, such as separation of Church and State, were presented. Additionally, HAF presented material about Hinduism, Hindu demographics, and Hindu contributions to the world, as brief introductions to the Hindu diaspora. HAF offered itself as a resource to government officials for input from the growing, politically informed Hindu American constituency in the United States. HAF identified liaisons in each office that will enable direct communication of Hindu American concerns and interests directly to their representatives in government.

"These meetings represented the first time that a delegation of Hindu Americans met with government officials solely to ensure recognition, understanding and support for Hindu Americans as an empowered, vocal and politically aware constituency," said **Sheetal Shah**, HAF Government Outreach Coordinator.

The recently formed Hindu American Foundation (HAF) is a human rights group whose purpose is to provide a voice for the 2 million strong Hindu American community. HAF interacts with and educates government, media, think tanks, academia and public fora about Hinduism and issues of concern to Hindus locally and globally. Promoting the Hindu and American ideals of understanding, tolerance and pluralism, HAF stands strong against hate, discrimination, defamation and terror.

For further information: Please [contact HAF](#).

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