Not In Our Name: Resist Hindu Fascism

This guide accompanies the Solidarity Is This podcast (January 2020) called "Not In Our Name: Resist Hindu Fascism." The podcast features Nouf Bazaz (Kashmiri activist and professor) and Yashica Dutt (Dalit writer and journalist) in conversation with Deepa Iyer. Listen to the podcast here and take action. Below is a roadmap for solidarity practice for Hindu communities in the United States.

If you are Hindu and want to speak up in #solidarity about the Indian government's actions to suppress the rights of non-Hindu religious minorities through policy, clampdown of dissent, internet shutdowns, and police violence, here are 7 steps to take:

Reflect on Proximity to Privilege: To be an ally, we must be clear about the access, benefits, and power we have garnered by our proximity to the Hindu caste hierarchy. Even if we may not subscribe to or participate in caste discrimination in our daily lives, we are nonetheless beneficiaries in a myriad of ways. To understand how the caste system pervades the lives of Hindus, especially upper caste Hindus, read this, this, and this.

Own Privilege: After self-reflection and self-awareness, there is the opportunity to step into allyship. To do that, we must not hide our privilege. We can't assume that people will assume that we don't subscribe to a caste hierarchy. It's important to state our privilege and proximity to the Hindu caste system, and to state our commitment to dismantling it. To understand why upper caste Hindus must do this explicitly, read this and this.

Center Analysis and Values: If you are reading this, you believe in equality, justice, self-determination, and liberation for all peoples. To develop a political and social analysis that is based in these values, it is important to understand the needs, ideas, and requests of those directly affected. Learn about the requests of Dalit, Bahujan, Adivasi communities, of Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians, and of Kashmiris. Learn about the Kashmiri struggle, which has been ongoing for decades. Though many Kashmiris have joined the recent protests in India and across the world, their struggle is in their own words different and more about self-determination and independence from India itself. and about Kashmir here. Be careful not to flatten different struggles.

You can find starting points about CAA here and here and about Kashmir here. South Asian Reads has compiled a list of resources around the CAA and NRC here.

Take a Stance: A community-informed analysis informs the declarations to end Hindu fascism, to dismantle the caste hierarchy, to call for self-determination for Kashmir. It's important to remember that as allies, there isn't room to equivocate about the analysis – ie. to sugarcoat what's happening in India with soft language, to use excuses such as "this is a political issue happening in India and has no impact here" or to look at both sides of the issue. If you're still unclear about the threat of Hindu fascism in India, read this and this. If you want to learn about the long arm of Hindu fascism here in the US, read this, this and this.

Find Your lane: To be an ally, we have to get comfortable with a lane on the proverbial social justice highway. We follow the lead of those affected and don't "overtake" them. We call in the people in our lane who might be veering off course. We influence bystanders and fence-sitters who are idling on the side of the highway – and urge them to get into our lane.

For Hindus living in the United States, a lane to occupy is the one in which we can influence others like us who are also Hindus, upper caste Hindus, and Indian Americans. These could be our family members, our peers, our family's uncle and aunty group of friends, local temples, Indian Students Associations, Indian and Hindu elected officials, Indian and Hindu associations, Indian and Hindu cultural workers and artists, and Indian and Hindu celebrities and social media influencers.

Take Action: Being an ally requires us to take risks with our reputations (perhaps people won't like us or think we are taking sides) and our relationships (perhaps people will unfriend us or stop talking to us). But there are many people who are on the same path that you are. Find them and work together.

Here are ways to take action:

- If you are a student leader or member of an Indian (or South Asian) Students Association, you could ask your organization's leadership to issue a statement to the campus community (here's an example), and dedicate Holi 2019 to dismantle Hindutva (learn more about https://www.holiagainsthindutva.com/ here.
- Ask your Indian American elected officials at the local and federal levels whether they have made a public statement about Hindu nationalism.
- Conduct a dialogue or panel at your local temple in partnership with youth groups
- Write posts on social media each week to share information about what's happening in India with your social networks. Here are some reporters and activists to follow: @EqualityLabs @dalitdiva @standwithkashmir @aziakashmir @sasresist
- Support, thank, and acknowledge organizations and individuals who are speaking out. These include Representative Pramila Jayapal in Congress, organizations such as Equality Labs, South Asian Students Against Fascism, the Indian American Muslim Council, Polis Project, Stand With Kashmir, and South Asian Americans Leading Together.
- Join or organize a solidarity march. All across India, students are taking to the streets and facing threats of violence and prosecution. Stand in solidarity with students in India by organizing a march or vigil. If you're organizing your own, check out these powerful free and downloadable posters from http://creativesagainstcaa.kadakcollective.com/. For protests in India: https://docs.google.com/.../1btFS2-q3oFpRXkhY-CA.../mobilebasic.... For protests all over the world: https://google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit....

Show up again and again: To be a strong ally, we have to be consistent with our voice and our presence. It's natural to feel tired or numb at times. During those moments, listen to your body and mind to give yourself the break you deserve and park your vehicle on the side of the highway. Trust that there are others who will be moving along, and that you can catch up when you are able.