



Volume 1 | Fall 2022

# रतुलोबा

Journal of the Hindu Community Institute



# Table of Contents

	Page No.
<b>Letter from the President</b>	
Introducing the HCI Journal   Kailash Joshi	<b>3</b>
<b>From the Editor</b>	
Welcome to Kutumba   Lakshmi Srinivasan	<b>5</b>
<b>Counselor of Hindu Tradition Course</b>	
CHT Course Updates   Usha Narasimhan	<b>6</b>
Gains from the CHT Course for me and South Africa   Vithagan Rajagopaul	<b>7</b>
<b>Feature Articles</b>	
Learn to Serve: Give-Ananda, the Joy of Giving   Gaurav Rastogi	<b>8</b>
Hindu Chaplaincy   Neeti Soota	<b>9</b>
The Critical Need for Hindu Chaplains on US Campuses   Arnav Kejriwal, Sohini Sircar	<b>11</b>
Why Should You and I Care about Palliative Care   Mukund Acharya	<b>13</b>
<b>Perspective on Receiving Service</b>	
Remembering Dear Arunay   Sharmistha Chakraborty, Tarun Pruthi	<b>15</b>
<b>Meditations</b>	
A Meaningful Invocation   Lakshmi Srinivasan	<b>16</b>

## Editorial Board

Kailash Joshi, Gaurav Rastogi, Lakshmi Srinivasan  
Contact: [journal@hinduci.com](mailto:journal@hinduci.com)

## Letter from the President

# Hindu Community Institute (HCI) and ꣳꣳꣳꣳꣳꣳ



Namaste,

Hindu Community Institute (HCI) was founded in 2018 to provide foundational training for community volunteers and spiritual care providers, such as Spiritual Directors and Chaplains. On our 4th anniversary, we are proud to introduce the semi-annual newsletter, “ꣳꣳꣳꣳꣳꣳ”. The name ꣳꣳꣳꣳꣳꣳ represents the Hindu tradition of

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, translated as “universe is a family”.

ꣳꣳꣳꣳꣳꣳ also sums up the workings of HCI as a “by the community, for the community” institution.

On behalf of our network of over 300 volunteers (board, management, faculty, instructors, and trained CHTs), we would like to share the following

highlight of HCI's accomplishments of the last 4-years:

1. The first of its kind "Counselor of Hindu Tradition" (CHT) course - this global graduate certificate course will graduate its 4th cohort in August, 2022, with scholars from the US, Canada, Australia, India, and South Africa.
2. The HCI-GTU new pathway to Hindu chaplaincy- CHT's with advanced degrees can enter GTU ([www.gtu.edu](http://www.gtu.edu)) for the Interreligious Chaplaincy Program (ICP). The first three CHTs are currently on their way to becoming Hindu Chaplains through this prestigious pathway.
3. The new Fellowship fund, in collaboration with the Motwani Jadeja Foundation ([mjf.world](http://mjf.world)), to support the training of Hindu Chaplains for universities.
4. Start of a dial-in guidance services on Hindu tradition and quality of life- On the HCI website [www.hinduci.org](http://www.hinduci.org), one can request guidance services from HCI volunteers.
5. Our daily free yoga classes started as pandemic relief. To date HCI has conducted over 3,000 classes with over 40,000 attendees.

Our plans are to continue on a growth path and help connect the Hindu Diaspora through HCI's training and service programs. We are also building strong bridges with interfaith institutions and have begun the accreditation process for HCI as a global online training institution.

We welcome you to connect with us in your area of interest.

“

OUR DAILY FREE YOGA CLASSES STARTED AS PANDEMIC RELIEF. TO DATE HCI HAS CONDUCTED OVER 3,000 CLASSES WITH OVER 40,000 ATTENDEES.

### Kailash Joshi, Ph.D.

Kailash Joshi, PhD, is President of Hindu Community Institute. He is a retired IBM division GM and has been engaged in managing positions and mentoring of entrepreneurs and startups in Silicon Valley. He is a co-founder of TiE ([www.TiE.org](http://www.TiE.org)) and AIF ([www.aifoundation.org](http://www.aifoundation.org)).



## From the Editor

# Welcome to रतुलुबा

Namaste,

We are proud and happy to introduce the inaugural issue of रतुलुबा, the journal of the Hindu Community Institute (HCI).

HCI trains professionals from all fields for community service and for further studies towards Hindu Chaplaincy. HCI's objective is to provide spiritual care and compassionate services to the broader community regardless of race, religion or ethnic background. रतुलुबा will expand on this vision by presenting the work of our dedicated volunteers, providing updates on our Counselor of Hindu Tradition (CHT) course, featuring resources that can be helpful when providing counseling support, and highlighting opportunities for learning and serving

This inaugural issue contains exciting news from our CHT alumni including from Neeti ji, who is among the first cohort of Hindu chaplains currently training at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, and Vithagan ji who reflects on the benefits of his CHT training and his plans to expand volunteer efforts in South Africa. We also hear from Hindu university students who discuss the critical need for spiritual support on US college campuses. Our feature piece is from our esteemed colleague, Mukund Acharya ji, who details how to provide a compassionate presence at the end of life. In each issue of रतुलुबा, we will feature perspectives on receiving service. In this issue, Sharmistha ji and Tarun ji poignantly reflect on the value of community support in the face of immense tragedy. They inspire us with their efforts

to make our coastlines safer for all.

We hope you enjoy what we have put together, and we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our HCI family. We also welcome your feedback.

### Lakshmi Srinivasan, M.D.

Member, HCI Editorial Board

Graduating CHT-2022



## CHT Course

# Counselor of Hindu Tradition Course - Cohort 5

We listen, and we refine!! CHT Cohort-5 starting in October, 2022, will have more depth and more discussions that will make it a big win-win for scholars and faculty.

The shift is to focus on scholars - what do the sessions convey to them and what personal lessons do they receive from them. The 24-session course will be run in 2- parts of 12 -sessions each, with a 3 -week break in between.

Scholars will have ample time to review the pre-recorded lessons ahead of class. Each scholar will belong to a discussion group that will have an interchange before the class. The classroom will be a live 2-hour session led by the Resident Faculty, where global scholars will present, followed by an interactive segment with faculty. Scholars will be able to work within their notes.

We hope this will make the CHT experience richer and more attractive for future scholars.



### Usha Narasimhan, MBA

Usha Narasimhan is a 2020 graduate of the CHT course. She is among the first three scholars to enter the Hindu Chaplaincy course at GTU. She serves as Asdistant Dean at HCI.



“

WE LISTEN, AND WE REFINE!! CHT COHORT-5 STARTING IN OCTOBER, 2022, WILL HAVE MORE DEPTH AND MORE DISCUSSIONS THAT WILL MAKE IT A BIG WIN-WIN FOR SCHOLARS AND FACULTY.

# Counselor of Hindu Tradition (CHT)

## Graduate Certificate Course | Global Online

Applications Open: July 2022

### Learn to Serve

as a Professional  
or Volunteer

### Limited Seats

Details and Register at:  
<https://www.hinduci.org/learn>

### Why the CHT course?

- Join the growing international network of karma-yogis (US, Canada, Australia, India, South Africa)
- Create a **new** career option to serve professionally as a Hindu Chaplain
- Taught by world class faculty and mentors
- Enhance your personal and professional life
- Let us put the Hindu Tradition to Work

### HCI Academic Team

Dean and Five Resident Faculty  
Forty Visiting Faculty  
Twelve Faculty Associates  
Management Team  
Academic Partner Organizations  
Service Partner Organizations (see website)

### Classes start-October 2022

#### 24 Online Sessions on Weekends

From Oct 2022 to June 2023 (9 months)

#### Curriculum:

- Bhagavad Gita and Hindu tradition
- Spiritual care in the community
- Essential counseling skills
- Knowledge of wellness services
- Enhancing Quality of Life

#### Admission Requirements:

- College graduate
- English language proficiency
- Commitment to community service
- Bhagavad Gita awareness

#### Tuition Options:

**Administrative Fees of \$500** (for US and Australia)  
**and 50-hours of project work**

**Desirable:** Recommendation by a CHT, a service or partner organization



email questions | [community+cht@hinduci.org](mailto:community+cht@hinduci.org)

apply online

<http://hinduci.org/learn/>

Hindu Community Institute is a California 501(c)(3) non-profit institution dedicated to service learning.



## CHT Course

# Gains from the CHT Course for me and South Africa

The CHT course has given me the knowledge, skills, attitude and values that will enable me to give expression to my desire to serve my community effectively. My exposure to seasoned professionals and karma yogis in the fields of basic counseling, aging, Hindu scripture (Bhagavad Gita), public speaking, estate planning, parenting, palliative care, Hindu memorials and tradition, coping with illness, incapacity and stress has provided me with a broad and strong foundation to meaningfully support those who need these valuable services.

Moreover, the course content has been presented in such an innovative way that it serves to build confidence and expertise while at the same time making me aware that I am the important 'first person of contact' who will refer clients to appropriate professionals when required. All of this will be done in the 'Learn-Serve-Learn' spirit of the HCI. We are deeply grateful to HCI for this opportunity not only to learn to serve but also to grow ourselves.

HCI and its various Karma Yoga programmes have inspired us to replicate the programmes here in South Africa (SA). We envisage an HCI chapter here in SA as we do not wish to create any new organisation. We hope to use the existing infrastructure and knowledge systems of the HCI to launch the chapter. We will need to recruit local subject matter experts (SMEs) in fields that have a distinctly South African context based on legal and cultural nuances. Our immediate priority is to recruit as many committed CHT candidates as possible for the next cohort.

We look forward to strengthening our SA service profile and bonding with the diaspora Hindu community.



### Vithagan Rajagopaul, Ph.D.

Dr Rajagopaul is a South African citizen of Indian descent living in Cape Town. He has served in the education system for more than 42 years and is currently employed as an Education Researcher in the Dept. of Basic Education. Dr Rajagopaul's Ph.D study focused on the leadership role of school principals in the context of poverty and HIV/AIDS. He has a deep interest in counseling, especially in using Hinduism as a foundation for caregiving and support to the community.

## Feature Article

# Learn to Serve: *Give-Ananda*, the Joy of Giving

“

I BELIEVE THAT TRUE SATISFACTION COMES FROM DOING THINGS FOR OTHERS. MONEY CANNOT BUY IT, AND TIME CANNOT STEAL IT.



One of the most prominent yogis of the 20th century was a medical doctor in the Himalayan town of Rishikesh. From his small free-service hospital next to the Ganga river, he launched many teachers of Vedanta that are well-known in

modern times. It was said of this doctor, Swami Sivananda, that he used to love serving others so much that his name should rather be “Give-ananda,” the swami who gets his joy from giving to others.


We could all be give-ananda, if we knew how. We are all born with an endless capacity for the joy that comes from serving others selflessly. But not many of us are fortunate enough to experience it; we live our entire lives without ever learning to serve. We look for satisfaction from our work, wealth, and experiences. Late in life, some of us might arrive at the futility of the endeavor, but by then, it is too late, and we find ourselves set in our habits of consumption and complaining.

We started HCI as a school for Karma Yoga, the yoga of selfless service. Our vision is to enhance the quality of life in the community by reconnecting with each other through service. In this process, we are ourselves learning to create a service-learning organization.

The building process has been educational; our team is “learning to teach” the program that is “learn to serve”! When we began the program, it was just a handful of us with minimal funds and only a sense of what we wanted to build. We had to build everything from scratch: our website, board, curriculum, and volunteer network. Everything was new, and everything was done freely, with no expectation.

People are attracted to visible enthusiasm and selfless service. The more people met us, the more they wanted to be associated with the program. Our ambitions grow yearly, and somehow the vision has become clearer and dearer in this process. All this from no expectations and selfless action.

I believe that true satisfaction comes from doing things for others. Money cannot buy it, and time cannot steal it. We invite all our readers to learn to serve and taste the joy of selfless service.



**Gaurav Rastogi, MBA, ERYT-500®**

Gaurav Rastogi is an entrepreneur with twenty-five+ years of executive experience. He has led executive roles at large companies and startups as a professional. Mr. Rastogi holds an MBA from IIM Ahmedabad and a Mechanical Engineering undergrad from Delhi Technological University (DCE). He is the author of three business books and several podcast episodes on the future of work.

He is a Dhyana meditation and yoga teacher (MBA, ERYT-500®) and has taught in Silicon Valley for more than ten years. Mr Rastogi is also a Board Member and Dean at Hindu Community Institute.

## Feature Article

# Arrival of Hindus at the “Chaplaincy Table”

Very often in life, we find ourselves in need of support for emotional or spiritual issues or to restore a sense of community and belonging. In institutional settings, it is a chaplain’s job to build relationships within the community, create support groups, and aid members in dealing with grief, anger, or depression. Where chaplains are employed, the jobs are filled by ordained Christian clergy, and increasingly by persons of other faiths, such as Islam or Judaism. The vocation

“

IF WE DON'T HAVE HINDU CHAPLAINS AS GUIDES TO SERVE PEOPLE FROM OUR FAITH AND TRADITION THEN THAT GAP GETS FILLED BY PEOPLE WHO GIVE THEIR VOICE TO OUR FAITH.

of “Chaplaincy” has become universal, generic, and readily accepted by all major traditions. The evolution of interreligious chaplaincy has increasingly brought these services to the common human framework.

However, Hindus have not followed this path to chaplaincy, instead leaving followers of other faiths to minister to needs at our most vulnerable times in life. We need to change this, and I am amongst the first set of trained Hindu Chaplains to enter this path.

Among Hindus, the term *chaplain* is still not very familiar. A chaplain is, traditionally, a cleric (such as a minister, priest, pastor, rabbi, purohit, or imam), or a lay representative of a religious tradition, attached to a secular institution (such as a hospital, prison, military unit, intelligence agency, embassy, school, labor union, business, police department, fire department, university, sports club), or a private chapel. (*Wikipedia contributors, 2022*)

Chaplaincy was originally understood in a Christian context but as defined above and in settings like healthcare and education it is growing in various faiths like Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism etc.

The Hindu diaspora needs to appreciate the need for spiritual care, as we now live in scattered communities instead of joint families or village environments. Accommodating Hindu religious practices in the above mentioned settings is the gap we need to address. If we don't have Hindu chaplains as guides to serve people from our faith and tradition then that gap gets filled by people who give their voice to our faith. A Hindu chaplain or a spiritual caregiver is a person who supports Hindu care recipients in our communities both in public and private institutions, a “go to” resource where one can expect authentic advice within the protocols of privacy and respect.

I am privileged to be among the first professionally trained Hindu chaplains who completed the Counselor of Hindu Tradition (CHT) course at HCI in 2021 and am now in the process of completing my Chaplaincy Program (ICP course) ) at Graduate Theological Union ([www.gtu.edu](http://www.gtu.edu)) in 2022.

The vision of HCI, since its founding in 2018, has been to institutionalize spiritual care by training counselors and chaplains. All the training programs are founded on Hindu Vedic traditions and values. It is therefore important that the community participates in the HCI activities and supports it by way of volunteer time and donations. The trained Hindu counselors and chaplains will serve Hindus and others with appropriate sensitivity and respect. The guiding principle of HCI training and education is “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” or the universe is one family.

### Neeti Soota, MS

Neeti Soota is a 2021 graduate of the CHT course. She is among the first three scholars from HCI to enter the Chaplaincy course at Graduate Theological Union. She serves as Assistant Registrar at HCI.



## University Campuses Need Hindu Chaplains

### Invitation to Apply- Fellowship Tuition Grants Available

#### Who Qualifies for Fellowships offered by Motwani Jadeja Foundation (MJF) & Hindu Community Institute (HCI)?

- Faculty & staff at US universities (active & retired)
- Interested individuals with a Masters/Doctorate degree

#### Classes Start Sept 2022

- Global online sessions
- Flexible schedules
- World-class faculty
- Course duration estimated 12-18 months

**[Apply Here \(https://bit.ly/mjfhci\)](https://bit.ly/mjfhci)**

**Fall Application Deadline July 15, 2022**

### Two-Part Curriculum for Hindu Chaplaincy

#### Counseling in the Hindu Tradition

<https://hinduci.org/learn>

- Bhagavad Gita and Hindu tradition
- Hindu spiritual care practices
- Essential counseling skills
- Enhancing Quality of Life
- Interfaith cooperation

#### Interreligious Chaplaincy

<https://www.gtu.edu/projects/icp>

- Art & practice of chaplaincy
- Chaplaincy in services & industries
- Spiritual care for marginalized communities/Diversity in counseling
- Theological reflections in chaplaincy
- Theologies of death across traditions

### Why consider becoming a Campus Hindu Chaplain?

- Build on your current position at your University
- Provide spiritual support to students and faculty on campus
- Give back and serve for a lifetime
- Enhance your spiritual and professional life



Questions? Call 1-408-982-3542  
or email [community+campus@hinduci.org](mailto:community+campus@hinduci.org)



Hindu Community Institute (HCI) is a California 501(c)(3) non-profit institution dedicated to service learning.

## Feature Article

# The Critical Need for Hindu Chaplaincy on US Campuses

Since the launch of the Hindu Students Council in 1990, the Hindu American community has increasingly understood the importance of building Hindu identity on college campuses. As the population of second-generation Hindu Americans grows, more students are taking the initiative to join (or start) a Hindu student group on their campus, where they aspire towards a community that can provide them with opportunities to learn about and stay connected with their Hindu heritage.

There is a critical need for the Hindu community to bring more Hindu chaplains to university campuses across North America.

Despite the growing awareness and efforts on campus, we have observed that Hindu students struggle to proudly wear their identity for several reasons.

The first challenge in building a Hindu identity on campus is that students are only on campus



for four years. This makes it difficult for students to learn how to navigate and administer a new student group. It also makes it challenging to connect with younger Hindu students who could help to sustain the organization over time.

In addition, many misconceptions exist around Hindus and our culture that require a comprehensive understanding of our long, nuanced history - particularly as it pertains to colonization. Many of our peers still misunderstand

“

THERE IS A CRITICAL NEED FOR THE HINDU COMMUNITY TO BRING MORE HINDU CHAPLAINS TO UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES ACROSS NORTH AMERICA.

Hindu dharma as “caste, curry, and cows” and have little understanding of the beautiful contributions that Hindu civilization has offered to the world in areas such as math, science, medicine, and spirituality. These misguided stereotypes make it difficult for students to foster a sense of pride around their Hindu identity, forcing many Hindu students towards the sidelines.

Lastly, the connection between Hindu students on campus and the broader Hindu community is often missing. The student experience is generally transient, where a student finds themselves in a new city away from home and in a campus bubble. For most Hindu students, the thought doesn't cross their mind to invite Hindu faculty and local Hindu community members to join their events – though this is exactly the level of unity towards which any religious community should strive.

Hindu chaplaincy can shine a light on all of these fronts. As the leading Hindu representative on

campus, Hindu chaplains serve as an anchor that provides a level of continuity for Hindu student groups. Hindu chaplains also have a deep grasp of our long civilizational history and the challenges that we as a community have faced. This empowers chaplains to support students and the broader community in these often misunderstood conversations. Lastly, chaplains can serve as a bridge that unite Hindu students, faculty, and the broader Hindu community.

There is a critical need for the Hindu community to grow our Hindu chaplaincy. It's time to invest in and support new Hindu chaplains on campus.



## Feature Article

# Why Should You and I Care About Palliative Care?



My wife's oncologist recommended a palliative-care consultation during one of her checkups. This was the first time we heard about it and my wife subsequently received beneficial palliative care alongside her ongoing treatment for cancer. I've realized that most people know very little, or are misinformed about palliative care.

[Palliative care is specialized care for people living with a serious illness.](#) It is a type of care focused on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of

different kinds of serious and chronic, progressive illnesses, and is provided in addition to, and concurrent with, ongoing medical care. It supports the patient's ability to feel better while undergoing treatments which could be intense and sometimes not well tolerated. The goal of palliative care is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family.

What, specifically, does palliative care do? It provides relief from pain, nausea, constipation,

“

QUALITY RESEARCH PROVIDES EVIDENCE THAT THE EARLY INTRODUCTION OF PALLIATIVE CARE RESULTS IN FEWER HOSPITALIZATIONS, A REDUCED BURDEN ON THE FAMILY, AND GREATER SATISFACTION OVERALL.

neuropathy, shortness of breath, or other side effects and symptoms caused by the illness and/or treatment. It helps when patients and their families have trouble coping with the illness and enables them to better carry out their daily tasks and do the things they want. Palliative care can improve the quality of life for both the patient and his or her family.

Care is provided by a specially-trained, multidisciplinary team that typically includes doctors, nurses, medical assistants, social workers, chaplains, and other specialists

Needs could include: help with figuring out what medications should be taken and when; thinking things through and weighing options when faced with decisions on a suggested next step in treatment; help navigating the complexity of a large hospital when referred to different specialists or when various tests are ordered. Sometimes stress can overwhelm the patient, caregiver, or another family member, and they could benefit from having a caring listener or just a hand to hold for a while.

Palliative-care specialists treat people living with [many types of serious and chronic illnesses](#), regardless of their age, stage of the disease, and whether or not they are still receiving curative treatment; Palliative care can be very useful for those managing a long-term illness.

Quality research provides evidence that the early introduction of palliative care results in fewer hospitalizations, a reduced burden on the family, and greater satisfaction overall.

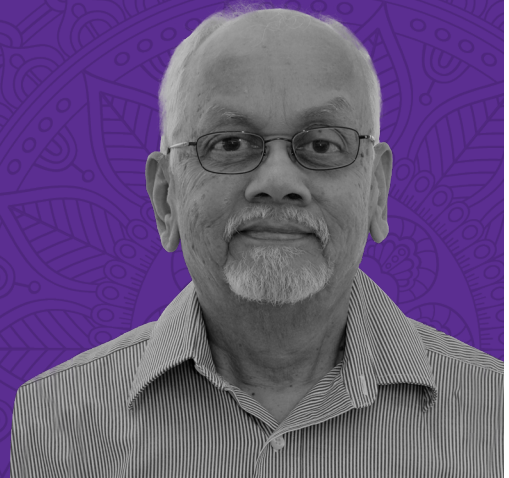
[Most private insurance plans, as well as Medicare and Medicaid, cover palliative-care services](#) in hospitals and nursing homes. However, you should always consult with your insurance provider to understand your coverage in detail.

I hope this has helped you better understand Palliative Care and dispel any related misconceptions.

*This article originally appeared in February 2021 in [India Currents](#)*

## Mukund Acharya, Ph.D.

Mukund Acharya is Resident Faculty for the CHT Program, Director of Ananda Corps and Member of the Board of Directors at HCI. He is also President and a co-founder of [Sukham](#).



## Perspective on Receiving Service

# Remembering Dear Arunay

Jan 18, 2021 was a beautiful day at Cowell Ranch Beach in Half Moon Bay on the California coastline. But it turned into our worst nightmare in just a few minutes when a rip current snatched away Arunay, our 12-year-old son. Against all odds, the entire community came together and searched the coastline for some sign of Arunay for weeks. During those days, while the search was still on, we were confronted with something that no parent should have to think about - the last rites of your child. What does Hindu Dharma say about how parents should bid farewell to their children? Do they have to? Is there a time limit? Can it be done in the absence of the mortal remains? Does it help the child ascend?

We did not know the answers to these questions, we did not even know where to look.

Two weeks after we lost Arunay to the ocean, a close family friend introduced us to Hindu Community Institute (HCI) leaders Madan-ji and Kailash-ji. They knew about this incredibly painful event and offered to be there for us whenever we had doubts and questions. Through HCI we were able to access a group of learned people who could help us understand concepts in Hinduism that were otherwise elusive to us. They came forward to hold our hands (in the midst of a pandemic) and provided us tools as we were trying to navigate life without Arunay.

Growing up in Hindu families we have witnessed various practices to assimilate the reality of the death of a loved one. But that did not prepare us to deal with the agony of outliving our own child

- this did not fit with a natural progression of life. Vishnuji Swami, a Vedic scholar at HCI, explained how to integrate a child's loss into our life narratives and let go of our attachment. Traditions and rituals started to make more sense and became more accessible.

Despite our best intentions, there are stretches of days when we get pulled again into the journey of grief and healing. It comforts us to know that we can turn to an organization like HCI for guidance whenever we feel unanchored in our values and ideas.

Thank you for your kindness and wisdom.

**Sharmistha Chakraborty**  
**Tarun Pruthi**

<https://www.arunayfoundation.org>

#### Editor's Note

Please visit the above link to learn about the valuable work Arunay Foundation is doing in reducing beach accidents and coastal drownings

## Meditations

# A Meaningful Invocation

ॐ सह नावतु ।

Om Saha Naav[au]-Avatu ।

सह नौ भुनक्तु ।

Saha Nau Bhunaktu ।

सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।

Saha Viiryam Karavaavahai ।

तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ।

Tejasvi Naav[au]-Adhiitam-Astu Maa Vidvissaavahai ।

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih ॥

May Brahman protect us both. May we both be nourished (relish) in our studies. May we acquire the capacity to study with vigor. May our study be brilliant. May we not misunderstand each other.

Om Peace, Peace, Peace



At HCI, classes and other gatherings begin with the above invocation. This well-known and treasured verse is found in both the Katha and Taittiriya Upanishads. We recite this Shanti mantra (peace chant) to remove obstacles on our path to acquiring knowledge, and so that both teacher and student approach the learning process with a favorable attitude. In the 8th century CE\*, Sri Adi Shankaracharya wrote a renowned exposition

on this verse in his commentary on Book II (Brahmavalli) of the Taittiriya Upanishad.

In his exposition, Shankaracharya details the profound meaning of this shloka. For example, the second line expresses the aspiration that both teacher and student find tremendous enjoyment in learning. The word Bhunaktu conveys that both parties should relish the educational experience.

The use of Viryam in the third line, denotes the intention for these studies to be dynamic and compelling. The student aims to develop the intellectual capacity to receive knowledge at the highest levels, and the teacher must sustain the energy required to transmit that knowledge. In the fourth line, the word Tejasvi signifies the goal that our studies be radiant in their scholarly brilliance. Shankaracharya indicates that this verse is recited when commencing study of the Upanishads which are the path to enlightenment (Brahma Vidya); therefore the teachings and discussions must necessarily be intellectually luminous. In the final line there is an appeal that there be no friction between teacher and student – both should maintain humility and an open mind. As with all Peace Mantras, the word Shanti is recited 3 times at the conclusion to invoke peace in one’s own mind and physical self, peace for other beings in the local environment and peace for the natural world.

The Upanishads place the highest emphasis on seeking knowledge. They state that qualities of discernment, objectivity, focus, and a true desire for enlightenment are paramount when undertaking any educational endeavor. We aspire to maintain these same qualities in every class at HCI and in the pages of our HCI journal, कृतुलुबा.

*\*Dates are disputed, different sources date Sri Adi Shankaracharya’s life to be anywhere between 5th century BC to 8th century CE*

References:

- Swami Chinmayananda “Taittiriya Upanishad”
- Swami Sarvapriyananda, Ramakrishna Mission, Lectures on Katha Upanishad
- Taittiriya Upanishad with the commentaries of Sri Sankaracharya, translated by Alladi Mahadeva Sastry

“

WE RECITE THIS SHANTI MANTRA (PEACE CHANT) TO REMOVE OBSTACLES ON OUR PATH TO ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE, AND SO THAT BOTH TEACHER AND STUDENT APPROACH THE LEARNING PROCESS WITH A FAVORABLE ATTITUDE.

**Lakshmi Srinivasan, M.D.**

Dr Srinivasan is a practicing physician. She lives in Northern California with her husband and children. She is a recent graduate of the CHT program (class of 2022) and is excited to serve on the editorial board of कृतुलुबा, the HCI journal.





Founded in 2018 in the San Francisco Bay Area, Hindu Community Institute (HCI) is the first-of-its-kind service-learning institution designed for the global Hindu diaspora.

HCI is a California non-profit 501(c)(3) founded by professionals driven by a need to develop much-needed community service solutions. HCI provides a strong platform for training and universal community service founded on Hindu tradition and wisdom.

Learn more at [www.hinduci.org](http://www.hinduci.org)