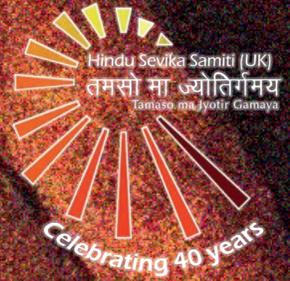


April - June 2015 - Yugaabd 5114

# Sangh Sandesh

## संघ सन्देश



A journey

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Charan vai madhu vindati charantsvadu mudambaram.  
Suryasya pashya sremanam yo na tandrayate charan.  
Charaiveti, charaiveti."  
Aitareya Brahmana\*, 7.15

The honey bee, by its motion, collects honey, and birds enjoy  
tasty fruits by constant movement. The sun is revered, by  
virtue of its constant shining movement; therefore, one should  
be constantly in motion. Keep moving, keep moving on!

# Editorial

This year marks 40 years since Hindu Sevika Samiti in the UK started. A lot has changed in the UK since 1975 - for one, Sangh Sandesh is now printed in colour!

For many of us, life has become busier and more congested - more time is spent in work, more cars on the road mean more time in traffic, friends and family live further away so more time is spent travelling, the list could go on. All of these things can contribute to our mental wellbeing. In fact, the Office of National Statistics in the UK found that between 2007 and 2014, there was a 5% increase in GDP per person but no change in life satisfaction.

Another interesting study was conducted by Ofcom (the UK communications regulator) who found that UK adults spend an average of eight hours and 41 minutes a day on media devices - that's more than an average night's sleep!

There are various demands on our time, yet it is encouraging to see that so many girls and women continue to be involved in Samiti's activities here. In this issue of Sangh Sandesh, you will read about a number of sevikas' journeys through Samiti and how this has influenced them.

We were fortunate that Rashtra Sevika Samiti's President, Vandaneeya Shantakka visited us this year and sevikas have shared their experiences of meeting her and the messages she gave.

Sangh Sandesh also spoke to some modern day inspirational women and you can read about the positive changes they have made to their lives, whether by choice or necessity, reminding us that we have control over our time and our reactions to difficult situations.

Our regular activities continue and you can read reports of the recent Praudh and Balagokulam Shibir as well as an innovative way to gain inspiration from the experiences of our elders.

We hope you enjoy the articles!

Poonam Davdra - Kendriya Saha Sampark Pramukh

# A Journey

As an outpouring of one's profound gratitude for Hindu Sevika Samiti and the strength of womanhood, Reena Rabadia a Sevika from Woolwich poetically expresses her own personal journey.

*She says that a woman is an inspiring force,  
She says it for the family and the nation,  
Our society cannot progress,  
Unless this force can awaken.*

*This message has spread worldwide,  
And hit our nation like a storm.  
1975 marked the birth of a great significance,  
Where she has come in human form.*

*My journey began at childhood.  
With a hesitant step towards the light.  
An array of knowledge filled my aura  
And shone like a blazing meteor in my dark night.*

*Life building values were gained and taught,  
With Sewa and love at the core.  
A message of the world as one family,  
Is a hope forever more...*

*I knew what it meant to be a part of something,  
To belong to something amazing,  
This holy cause is like a new life for me,  
Like a golden sun that is forever blazing.*

*Knowledge has collated as an ocean,  
And life-long bonds have been created.  
Life cannot be imagined without it,  
Its greatness continues to be underestimated.*

*There is still a long way to go,  
Not everything can be learnt in one life time.  
Perhaps that's why God gives us many chances  
No matter how difficult the climb.*

*She says that a woman is an inspiring force,  
She says it for the family and the nation,  
Our society cannot progress,  
Unless this force can awaken.*

# Living a "Designer" Hindu Life

## Hindu Sevika Samiti celebrates 40 years with V.Shantakkaji

On 11th April 2015, Hindu Sevika Samiti (UK) hosted the event "Living a 'designer' Hindu life" as part of its 40th year celebrations. The chief guest – Vandaneeya Shantakkaji - presented her thoughts on the day. Sangh Sandesh (SS) interviewed Poonam Davdra (PD), a sevika from Birmingham about the event and Shantakkaji.

### SS: Who is V. Shantakka?

PD: V. Shantakka is currently the Pramukh Sanchalika (President) of Rashtra Sevika Samiti, Bharat. Originally from Karnataka, where she studied and became a teacher, V. Shantakka retired in 1995 and dedicated her life to Rashtra Sevika Samiti as a Pracharika (full time worker). Over the years, she has held a number of responsibilities ranging from local, regional and national activities. Throughout all this, she has remained a motherly figure, sharing her ideas and experiences to help Samiti work remain strong.

Many of our current Shikshikas first met V. Shantakka in Bharat at various shibhirs. She is fondly remembered for her energy, her wide smile and calming presence - this has not changed. During her visit to the UK in April, she packed a lot into her short stay, including visits to all six vibhaags where she met and interacted with sevikas and karyakartinis. She even found time to give a Skype Bauddhik!

### SS: That sounds really amazing. Tell us more about the event in London.

PD: The event was held at the Swaminarayan Mandir in Stanmore and had over 85 participants from various Hindu organisations.

In preparation for the event, reaching out to other Hindu organisations was both exciting and challenging. On the day, there was a real buzz around the mandir where Sevikas and Swayamsevaks of North London had enthusiastically volunteered their time to ensure the event ran smoothly.

During the first part of the event, guests participated and shared ideas in three interactive workshops where they explored what it meant to live Hindu values in the various stages of life, both as an individual and as part of a community.

**SS: What message did V.Shantakka give?**

PD: V. Shantakka then spoke on "the strength and influence of Hindu women". She highlighted the great role that woman have in building and moulding the future citizens of the world and their inherent ability and capacity to perform this. She spoke of the necessity to strive for good qualities and the importance of being in the company of great people.

In response to one of a number of thought-provoking questions, V. Shantakka reminded us of the important role men need to play, not least in offering support to ensure that women have the opportunities to interact with others, outside their immediate family, and share this message of strength.

The event ended with all participants taking a minute to reflect on the thoughts and ideas that had been shared throughout the programme.

**SS: How was the event relevant to Hindu Sevika Samiti and Sevikas living in the UK?**

PD: Many times in our life, we become preoccupied with our external image, overthinking about our careers, indulging in how we dress or what car we drive. In the midst of this, we miss the opportunity to encourage ourselves to look inwards. Introspection is an important part of our day-to-day life – a time to reflect on how



we can integrate our Hindu values and principles into our everyday life.

We live in a country where the legal system affords men and women the same rights – the right to vote, the right to education, the right to be treated equally. It is our responsibility as women not to take these rights for granted but instead to grasp these opportunities and use our inherent strength and capacity to nurture and bring people together and create an environment for our future generations to grow and flourish.

Poonam Davdra, Leicester



# Van. Shantakkaji's Vibhaag Pravaas

I had the privilege of spending some time with Vandaneeya Shantakkaji during her recent visit, where she told us about a few of her experiences throughout her time at Samiti. A story that particularly resonated with me was about a small fishing village at the time of the Tsunami in 2004. This was one of the deadliest natural disasters recorded in history, causing hundreds of thousands of deaths and enormous devastation, including this small village in Tamil Nadu.

There was a worldwide humanitarian response to the tsunami in order to help the countries and the people whose lives had been turned upside down. A large part of the response involved volunteers from all sorts of charities going to the affected areas to provide basic survival packages to people. When word was received of the necessity for volunteers Shantakaji, along with other sevikas, managed to travel to Tamil Nadu in order to help this particular village. They spent a week assisting with tasks in conditions that most of us would be unable to function in. The tsunami had destroyed homes, livelihoods and families leaving dead bodies in floods of water.

During their time there they got to know a lot of the villagers, particularly the orphaned children that required particular care and attention. The volunteers had a significant impact on the people of the village, as a mother offered to adopt one of the orphans. As she did this, other mothers also stepped forward and took on the responsibility of looking after those children that has lost their parents in the tsunami. The volunteers, through their hard work and humility, created a sense of family and responsibility among the villagers. They emphasised that a mother's love and compassion should be extended even to children who are not her own, ensuring that these children were not left abandoned or sent to orphanages.

I realised the sphere of Samiti work extends well beyond shakha, and how instrumental we can and should be. For example, reaching out to communities in times of hardship whilst conveying our values through our actions and thoughts. Shantakkaji's stories were inspiring to say the least. I hope to visit some of the places she spoke about so that I can get involved in some of these amazing initiatives.

Shivani Chedda Croydon

It was a great opportunity to invite V.Shantakkaji at our home and inspire us with her words over bhojan, and enlighten us with the qualities of a sevika. In addition to this, at Shri Laxmi Narayan Mandir, V.Shantakkaji addressed sevikas and swayemsevakas from Bradford and Leeds with, "Women are inherently empowered. What is needed is to realize and recognize this". The event attracted a total sankhya of 46.

She stressed on retaining the Hindu identity among Diaspora families. She said that it is essential for Hindu families to raise their children with the Hindu values of Sewa (service) and that the Hindu principle of "seeing God in everything" can only be taught to children if they are encouraged to volunteer and serve the needy. Shantakka called upon Indians living in UK to bring fame to both Bharat- their Dharma-bhoomi - as well as UK - their karma-bhoomi through their actions and their contributions to different fields they work in.

She added that courageous and selfless women leaders like Laxmibai of Jhansi, Ahilyabai Holkar and Jija Mata are role models for Bharatiya women and that Bharatiya culture could withstand foreign aggression and Colonial rule through women who played a pivotal role in protecting and propagating our values. She said that the organisation is working towards organising women in India and inspiring them to be leaders and agents of change in society.

That evening has given us a strong, thought-provoking question on "what is my role and contribution in society and the community in which I belong?"

Reshma Patel, Bradford Savitri Shakha



# Selfie of the Modern Hindu Woman

**Has the role of a Hindu women in society and the household evolved over the last few decades?**

Women are naturally seen to possess timeless qualities of empathy, courage, strength, patience, compassion and motherliness.

In my opinion however, a few more things are added to the mix when considering womanhood from a Hindu perspective. Growing up hearing stories of Sita, Savitri, Kunti, Rani Laxmibai, Draupadi, Jijabai and many more, I have come to realise that their lives were lived for something much greater than themselves. As a result, within Samiti, we admire the qualities of assertiveness, devotion and selflessness.

These descriptions can be viewed as rather idealistic for the contemporary women. How does one balance cultivating these values – the selflessness of Sita, the courage of Rani Laxmibai, the assertiveness of Draupadi – whilst pursuing full time careers? We all battles with these two sides that appear to us as a dichotomy.

Globally, the Hindu woman of today is being pulled in many different directions. She wants to study, progress in her career, attend to household duties, look after family, attend corporate socials, work long hours, travel, make healthy meals, do everything their husbands do. This has all but become the standard .

Simultaneously, the Hindu woman of today strives to hold onto family values, regarding them as her sacred duty. She longs to instil the same values into her children by teaching them love, compassion, timeless ancient wisdom, the mother-tongue, be involved in community work and strive to advance in her career.

**How can we – modern Hindu women – achieve all of the above? Is it even possible?**

I was honoured to be part of a meeting in Woolwich with Vandaneeya Shantakka, during her recent visit to the UK. She shared many useful thoughts with us, but one key point she mentioned really simplified the role of the Hindu Woman for me. She explained that, "wherever the Hindu woman is, she should bring positive change in

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her environment and surroundings."

This statement made me realise exactly who I need to be. As long as I brought positive change to my surroundings – wherever I may be, whenever I can – why shouldn't I be able to achieve such a goal?

As long as we hold onto this simple yet profound guidance, to the innate altruistic characteristics will come shining through. Modernity will then complement us rather than weaken us. This has instilled faith in myself and future generations.

Through us, future generations will prosper; through Sangh Karya we will find in ourselves, the Sita, the Rani Laxmibai, and the Draupadi. We can tackle the added strains of career, social pressures and communities in the same way as our mothers in the past. The struggles may be different, but the inspiration and strength is ever-intact.

We may hold PhDs, become CEOs, attain esteemed qualifications and recognition; but I believe maintaining our identity, following our principles and positively influencing others through our behaviour is the timeless role of the Hindu woman.

I leave you with a quote from Swami Vivekananda – "Women will work out their own destinies -- much better, too, than men can ever do for them. All the mischief to women has come because men undertook to shape the destiny of women".

Sneha Mehta

# Transforming Lives



The work of Hindu Sevika Samiti UK over the last 40 years has had a profound effect on sevikas. In this article, sevikas from around the country express their personal experiences of transformation.

Growing up in a Sangh Parivar, I have never really questioned what role it plays in my life. It has always been an inherent part of my upbringing. When I am questioned about Samiti's contribution to my growth I struggle to define where the contribution starts or ends; Samiti has been the undercurrent of my youth, shaping, moulding and guiding me on my journey.

As a child I remember spending Sunday mornings at Shakha envying all my other friends who were able to sleep in. Over time, Sunday mornings became a part of my weekly routine, spending time with Sevikas playing khel and discussing Indian history. I grew in both my mental and physical capacity through Bauddhik, Charcha, Niyudh and even Khel!

I looked forward to the Regional, National and International camps. Meeting like-minded people from a wealth of different backgrounds was fascinating and before I knew it, I had friends all over Europe, Canada and even Australia.

Without being conscious of my development, I was soon teaching, leading, and motivating others around me. The discipline and passion became part of my personality and at University I went on to become President of our NHSF chapter.

My relationship with Samiti is lifelong – the results are like a butterfly effect... forever unfolding in my life, guiding me, encouraging me and engaging me. Now, it is my turn to give back as a Shikshika, providing the next generation of Sevikas the opportunities to work together and grow together.

Pavni Lakhani, 24, Nottingham

One of the main ways Samiti has impacted me positively is learning my identity as a Hindu. At home we followed many customs and traditions, but often blindly.

At school, RE lessons were given about different faiths, I realised I knew very little about Hinduism when asked simple questions such as "why do Hindus have an elephant God?" I had the ability to give very short answers but could not elaborate further. Luckily, I was attending regular Samiti and I began to learn more about Hindu Dharma. When I was younger, the main reason I attended Samiti was because I enjoyed playing Khel and seeing my friends on Friday evenings. I would learn about our culture through playing games like 'Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesh' and being told who they were. As I was getting older, I was taking part in Samiti a lot more and became a Shikshika. When taking a Bauddhik, I would plan and research the area first; after understanding it myself, I would then proceed to conduct a session with others. This process was very important for my own growth.

I now feel as if I have a good foundation on Hindu Dharma, but there is still a lot more for me to learn. I now have the ability to learn for myself and confidently express my knowledge to others who may be unsure.

Janki Patel, Croydon

Where should I begin? Samiti has played a huge part in my life ever since I was young. I began attending when I was 4 years old. It was somewhere I was able to go, meet new people, learn new things, be active, and most of all, enjoy myself. I have now been a part of Samiti for ten years and I wouldn't change it for anything! It is something I look forward to every week. Over the years I have developed skills in: - public speaking, leadership, self discipline, and communication which will benefit me a lot later in life. It has also helped me improve my knowledge and taught me more about my religion. I have made some of the best friends I've ever had from Samiti, who are now like family to me. My favourite parts to Samiti are: - teaching Shareerik and sharing my knowledge with others, playing khel (especially when it's slightly competitive!). In the end it doesn't matter which team wins or loses because everyone enjoys themselves.

Every year there are two main events I really look forward to - Sewa Day and our annual trip to the beach. Both are equally as fun. Samiti has taught me many things, which I can guarantee will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Archanna Yadav, 14, West Bromwich

# Get Inspired and Just Do It!

## Why more Hindu girls should take part in professional sport

In this article, Dhruvisha Joshi – a 15-year-old Sevika from Leicester – describes her experience in professional sport and the importance of Hindu girls taking a courageous step into it.

I love playing sports and have a great passion for it. I initially started playing for the Leicestershire county cricket team before getting involved in other sports. I particularly love playing rounders, which I have been doing since primary school.

At secondary school, my teachers encouraged me to trial out for England. At first I wasn't too sure what to say but then I was determined to give it my best shot! When I got to the trials, I was really nervous because I didn't know anyone and as I looked around, I realised I was one of the very few Asian girls there. This made me really shy. However, I managed to connect with everyone and make new friends. Unfortunately, despite my best efforts, I did not get in that year.

This made me realise how much more I actually wanted it. I continued playing for my school team and we even became the national champions for the U14 rounders mixed team. With my school team becoming national champions, I went to the trials the following year. This time I was determined to play the best I could and get on the team. About 2 weeks after the trial, I received an email congratulating me on making the team!

Positive thoughts will always have positive outcomes. I was absolutely overwhelmed and both my parents and teachers were very proud of me. If it had not been for their support, I would not have even tried out. Their support has been invaluable. So you see, I now represent England in rounders. By being on the team, I can represent my country, whilst doing something I love. I even get the opportunity of playing a match abroad.



Dhruvisha, 4th from right on top line

I think that the biggest thing I've learnt so far is to always give my 100% and to not be scared of new surroundings. Being an Asian girl who plays sports can be tough at times. This is because you can feel as if you don't belong there (as there are no other brown-coloured faces), which may put you outside your comfort zone. But sometimes being outside your comfort zone, forces you to learn to talk to others and by doing this, you'll build up your character as well as your confidence.

Coming from a Hindu background, we are expected (especially as girls) to have a great education. By playing sport, you can relieve any stress you may have, which will then also allow you to concentrate in doing well in studies. It also happens to be an great hobby, keeping you fit and learning timeless values for the rest of your life. These values include self-discipline, perseverance, teamwork and the ability to communicate with others. In my opinion, every girl should do sport and in the future, I hope to see more Hindu girls partaking in professional sport.

Get in touch with Dhruvisha to for some tips on getting involved in professional sport by emailing her.

Dhruvisha Joshi, Leicester  
d4ruvisha@googlemail.com

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# Become your own role model

## A primer for mothers

*With the 40<sup>th</sup> year celebrations of Hindu Sevika Samiti this year, a lot of discourse has centred on the role of women. Sangh Sandesh decided to interview Meera Shah, a young mother and cancer survivor on her unique opinion.*

**SS: Meera, tell us a bit about how you became interested in health and nutrition.**

MS: I have always had a keen interest in health, which led me to pursue a career in dentistry. Although I was always eager to make an effort to eat healthily, my full attention was drawn to it by an unexpected and life-changing health scare a few years ago. Since then I have tried to increase my knowledge of health and nutrition and incorporate small changes into my daily life. I still have a long way to go but I believe we should never stop learning or trying to improve our health. Of course, I still enjoy the things we all should eat less of. I'm only human!

**SS: As you know, this year marks 40 years of Samiti in the UK. Do you feel there are any pressing issues that, as a mother, one should be focusing on?**

MS: Currently we are facing an obesity, diabetes and heart disease epidemic – all related to unhealthy lifestyles. We all need to think about our diet and amount of exercise we do, as well as ensuring the younger generation are doing the same. This is something we should all be doing, not just mothers. With an increased lifespan we must all make sure we stay fit and healthy enough to enjoy our later years. I also feel we need to ensure we look after our mental health as well. Again, with busy and somewhat isolated lifestyles, the effects of stress and depression can dramatically affect one's health.

**SS: With all the physical and emotional pressures of being a mother, do you feel she ignores her health?**

MS: Yes, perhaps she does. Looking after a young child can be all encompassing in the early days of sleepless nights and regular feeding. After that one can become caught up in other day-to-day activities. Once you've thrown in a day at work as

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well, as most of today's mothers do, there is very little time left. If left unaddressed, yes these could become barriers to good health. I personally find that it can be hard to 'live life in the slow lane', and one has to make a conscious choice to do so. This is true for most of the adult population, not necessarily limited to mothers. One needs to make conscious choices to maintain ones health to the optimum.

**SS: What is the role of Hindu women?**

MS: Mmm...that's a difficult one to answer. It is whatever she chooses it to be. It is not my place to suggest what the ideal role is as it will be different with every individual. This will also change with the passage of time.

[pause]

Further to that, why should we define the ideal Hindu women? Surely that puts even more pressure on women to be better. Why not embrace the role that all women already play in their homes, families, workplace, society and the world and credit them for doing their best.

**SS: That's a really refreshing point you've made. What practical advice would you give to the average Hindu mother?**

MS: Look after your health. Exercise regularly. Think about what you are eating and cooking. Do some research as you go along. From a medical point of view attend health screening appointments at regular intervals, monitor your own and your loved ones health and importantly be vigilant of changes, lumps and bumps, and get prompt advice. However most importantly, laugh and enjoy life as you go along.

**SS: Thank you Meera. That is quite a stern message you have sent to all our readers.**

*Meera was diagnosed with a rare bone marrow tumour shortly after becoming a new mum. She has since chosen to enjoy life in the slow lane by retiring as a clinical dentist and developing a business from home trying to learn more about improving the average person's health. If you know anyone facing a cancer diagnosis in their young adult life, please feel free to contact Meera on [meerashah2910@gmail.com](mailto:meerashah2910@gmail.com).*

# My Yoga Mat



*Following a successful Yoga Seminar in North London Karyalaya on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2015, Sangh Sandesh interviewed an attendee and yoga teacher Rupal Sanghrajka on her journey towards the Yoga Mat.*

## **SS: So Rupal, what brought you to yoga?**

RS: I was brought up in an environment where getting grades was super-important and having a particularly gifted brother made my job even harder! I seemed to get tensed up quite often and was often short tempered. One day my mum turned around to my perfectionist self and said, "you need to learn to let go Rups."

I also suffered from a variety of issues ranging from eczema to hayfever, headaches and digestive problems. Just before a Year 9 exam our head teacher lead a short yoga-posture session following by a 10 minute breathing session to calm our nerves and it really worked! From that day onwards I knew there was something to this phenomenon and that sitting and breathing for 10 minutes was not a waste of time. From then on I began exploring yoga, pranayama, and ayurveda as a holistic approach to healthy living. In particular I was interested in the mind-body connection as it is only within my yoga practice that I was truly mentally at peace and that was a liberating feeling!

## **SS: What made you decide to become a teacher?**

RS: I initially embarked upon a training course simply to improve my own practice and enhance my own knowledge. However, at the end of the course, the idea of sharing this with others gave me such a sense of satisfaction that I couldn't help but teach! I gained immense satisfaction from helping students find a way to feel grounded, present and help them see meaningful change amongst all the physical and emotional needs.

**SS: Some people criticise the way yoga is taught in the west as the focus is perceived to be a purely physical practice, ignoring any of the wider aspects of yoga. What is your view on this?**

RS: From the moment you step on the mat, you are at the beginning of your journey. Just making the commitment to get on your mat every day cultivates the values of discipline and cleanliness. For me yoga started off as a means to good physical health, stress relief and flexibility. BKS Iyengar came to yoga to gain good health – in his words, 'Unless freedom is gained in the body, freedom in the mind is a far cry.'

After practicing for only a few months, I felt less tired and the frequency of minor ailments reduced. The most astonishing impact was on my mind. I was calmer and at ease – a state of mind that enabled me to more easily practice the timeless values of Satya (truthfulness), Santosha (Contentment) and Svadhyaya (Study of One's Self). For me the asana practice led me to explore yoga as a way of life – simple food, a simple daily routine and most of all, simple thinking.

**SS: So that brings me nicely onto how Yoga has had an impact on you?**

RS: The greatest thing about yoga for me is the mind–body connection. For example, the use of a 'drishti' or gaze point in yoga enables you to hold a balancing posture for longer. Simultaneously you are training the mind to be still and preparing the body for meditation and the practice of stillness.

Practicing yoga has transformed my life. It has given me a whole new perspective, provided me with clarity of mind and a sense of underlying peace and contentment. The benefits that have followed from my practice have improved all aspects of my life – whether it is my relationship with others, my productivity at work and my ability to deal with stress and pressure.

What initially started as a physical (asana) practice has now evolved into a path of discovery and learning.

**SS: What practical advice would you give to someone interested?**

RS:

1. Buy a Yoga Mat
2. Find a yoga teacher – this ensures correct technique and reduces chance of injury
3. Just start. Carve out 15 minutes in your daily practice
4. As Pratabbi Jois said "Practice and All is coming"

**SS: Thank you Rupal for that great insight. To all our readership. Charaiveti Charaiveti!**

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## Praudh Shibir

The annual jamboree was enthusiastically held on 5-7th of May at Beaumanor Hall in Leicestershire, in their pristine gardens and cottages. Every year Praudh swayamsevaks from UK look forward to congregate on the first weekend of June at this beautiful place. Anna (Vasantrao) Tamhankar, creator of Jnana Prabodhini called it a 5-star shibir when he attended it as chief guest a few years ago. This year's chief guest Shri Rameshji of NELE (a project of Hindu Seva Pratishtana, Bangalore) also felt same way! He later narrated the work and activities of NELE.

This year around 125 Swayamsevaks from up and down the country thoroughly enjoyed meeting one another, listening to thought provoking Bauddhiks (talks), brainstorming on various subjects, playing games, learning Yoga, doing keep fit sessions and enjoying the delicious food. The key highlights of the shibir were three talks on Sangh work in the UK – its history, present status and future and a group discussion on the influence of shakha on swayamsevaks by way of their social work and fulfilling societal needs.

Shri Dhirajbhai Shah, Sanghchalak of HSS (UK) talked on: - the history of shakha, the starting of the first formal shakha in the year 1963/64, growth in the last fifty years, problems faced, and its new initiatives such as (e.g. FISI, NHSF, Sewa UK). Though I have been associated with Sangh for the last few decades, it was indeed interesting to hear how Sangh has grown in the UK.

Our UK Karyawaha, Shri Dhirubhai Shah, elaborated the present status of our work, the number of Shakhas (around 110), progress of Balgokulam, and activities of other Sangh-inspired organisations. It was heartening to know that Balgokulam is taking us to new towns where parents are attracted by it's Sanskaar Kendra.

Shri Chandrakant Sharma, UK Prachaarak envisioned the future of our work with anecdotes. I personally liked his thinking of relating our work to the British society, fulfilling their needs, based on our values and philosophy of life. He stated - "I am Sangh! Perhaps in the future "I am Swayamsevak" or "I belong to Sangh" may not be enough to serve the society." I interpreted it as "Sangh is I" or Sohumi!

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Four groups - Rigved, Samved, Atharvaved and Yajurved - brainstormed Sangh's influence on individuals and how it helped to serve the society in various ways. Indeed this lively debate produced a variety of activities emphasising Chandrakantji's concept of "I am Sangh!"

Shri Ramji Vaidya, Sah-Sanyojak of Vishwa Vibhag, as usual in his eloquent, thought-rolling speech, summarised the deliberations of the Shibhir, put forward challenges, and actions to be taken including next year's Golden Jubilee Celebrations for Sangh work in the UK.

Next year in 2016 a "Maha Shibhir" of HSS, Samiti and Balgokalam will be the highlight not to be missed!

Anil Nene, Croydon

# Balagokulam Shibir

Balagokulam Shibir was held on the 24<sup>th</sup> 25<sup>th</sup> May and had over 400 participants. Activities included khel, for the adults and children, cultural talent shows, bauddhiks and much more. A total of 42 towns/cities in the UK were represented across 25 Balagokulams.

We also had 24 Ladies who came together at the Rugby Mandir to make 1000 puri's for lunch on Sunday!

Overall it was a great success.





# Word search

A	K	F	T	H	K	O	P	A	C	B	J
G	A	M	E	E	R	A	B	H	A	I	H
H	U	R	B	N	O	K	I	T	N	M	A
V	S	N	K	G	H	A	P	T	M	A	N
S	H	R	J	K	E	E	B	H	N	E	S
Y	A	S	H	O	D	A	R	A	Q	U	I
X	L	K	I	R	P	S	T	S	L	K	K
G	Y	T	I	I	A	B	A	J	I	J	I
R	A	D	R	A	U	P	A	D	I	A	R
T	V	E	K	A	S	E	W	A	H	B	A
U	N	I	V	E	D	I	T	A	J	F	N
O	O	L	S	F	T	D	F	V	C	S	I

**KAUSHALYA** - One of three wives of Dashratha raja, who gave birth to the destroyer of Ravana.

**DRAUPADI** - She was humiliated by the kauravas during a gambling tournament

**NIVEDITA** - A disciple of Swami Vivekananda that dedicated her life to the service of India

**KUNTI** - The second wife of Pandu and mother to the five brothers in the Mahabharata

**MEERABAI** - She was fed poison by her husband but it turned to nectar by her sheer devotion to Krishna Bhagwan

**JHANSI KI RANI** - She fought against the British with her baby on her back

**JIJABAI** - Mother of a famous king, who defeated the great Mogul emperors such as Aurangzeb and Shaishta Khan. His guru was Samartha Ramdas

**YASHODA** - Not the biological mother but nurtured and brought up Kanaiya

## Bhojan Pe Charcha

In my humble opinion, I believe it is very important for us as karyakartas and karyakartinis to recognise that many great ideas, discussions and thoughts come about during times of informal and natural interaction, as opposed to formal gatherings and meetings. With this in mind, Sunday 29th March 2015 saw twenty Leicester Shakha Karyakartas and Karyakartinis come together for a novel event - Bhojan pe Charcha!

The concept is simple - an informal, interactive discussion between the younger swayamsevaks and sevikas and a senior person. There would be no fixed agenda, topic, or direction; just to go with the flow and see what comes to mind.

After morning Shakha, we all congregated at former HSS (UK) Sanghchalak, Shri Pravinji Ruparelia's house for a delicious bhojan made by a Leicester Shakha Karyakartini. Following bhojan, we all sat in Pravinji's living room and discussed whatever topics came to mind. At the end of lengthy discussions on various topics, Pravinji gave us his thoughts.

Topics included whether we should be focusing on events and activities pertaining to India or concentrate our efforts over here in the UK. In response, Pravinji advised to be somewhat aware of what is happening in India, but by and large, concentrate our efforts on the UK. Another question related to whether we should continue to work in our own circles in local shakha/Samiti or to go and work in other organisations. The guidance here was that this is very much dependent on the natural tendency of the person and the organisational needs. Following this success, the idea is to replicate this format in different parts of the country with various other senior swayamsevaks and sevikas. If you'd like to conduct this in your town, please get in touch.

Bhavin Davdra, Leicester Dhruv Shakha Karyawah



## Germany Shibir

When shakha is started at any place, I feel it is not a new start or invention, rather a discovery of potential or stated in another way, a manifestation of divine

energy. This energy always exists as a possibility, just waiting for right time to manifest.

I have been going to Germany for a number of years now and I used to meet many good contacts but little success in organisational growth. Last year, the karyakartas in Germany organised a European shibir in Hamburg. Immediately following this, Sangh began to sprout in three more cities, including Munich where shakha had just started and in less than a year Karyakartas in Munich decided to host the Germany shibir. It was a mammoth task for them and they achieved it with great success. Although the weather conditions were unfavourable, it didn't dampen the spirits of the attendees. Approximately a 100 participants of all ages from 8 cities experienced the shibir. All of them were accommodated in the small hall in a complete informal family atmosphere. Four participants came from Italy as well.

Germany karyakartas have literally followed the theme sentence of Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh as ' We achieve by our own efforts'. The whole shibir was completely managed by local volunteers. Each shibir ignites the spirit for others to initiate Sangh in their own towns and cities.

All participants took inspiration to initiate sewa activities, student activities in universities and to start Shakha or Balgokulam. I am confident that karyakartas will reach a new horizon in near future.

Ram Vaidya, Vishwa Vibhag Sah Samyojak



## HSS UK celebrates International Day of Yoga



*“The UK is pleased to support International Yoga Day. We were one of 177 countries to vote in favour of Prime Minister Modi’s proposal, and we are pleased to see the enthusiasm with which it is being embraced, both in the UK and around the world.” David Cameron*

The United Nations, in their charter proclaiming 21st June to be the International Day of Yoga, recognises that the wide dissemination of information about the benefits of Yoga would be beneficial to the health of the world population. The charter also encourages exchange of best practices aimed at building better lifestyles devoid of excesses of all kind.

With this context, Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK and other organisations in partnership organised events in over 25 locations around the UK promoting the practice of Yoga. The objective was very much to put the message of Yoga within the public domain, principally through the practice of Asanas & Pranayama but in many cases also through education of philosophies of Ashtanga and how this relates to our behavioural lifestyles.

The aim of disseminating the message of Yoga is one that Sangh has taken up over the last few years through initiatives such as Surya Namaskar Yagya, closer focus to Yoga in Sangh Shiksha Varg, and also the growth of Yoga Shakhas. What can you do in your home town to nurture and grow this aim?







## Finland celebrates IYD



IYD was celebrated in Helsinki and Tampere. Helsinki event was attended by 350 yogis from 15 countries.

The main organizers were Embassy of India, HSS, Suomi-Intia S Ry, Sahaj Marg, Amma Finland

Sponsor : Intel, Intiamatkat, CCE Finland

Here is the quick 1 min video of what happened during international yoga day at Helsinki: <https://youtu.be/CzOerLs2AQw>

In Tampere, Om Yoga School hosted an event for 55 Yogis and it was being co-hosted by Intiamatkat.

## TSYS International, Cyprus, supports IYD



# From the archives...



# Sangh Sandesh

संघ संदेश



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For any contributions, comments and correspondence please write to:  
Sangh Sandesh, 46-48 Loughborough Road, Leicester, LE4 5LD, UK  
sanghsandesh@hssuk.org • www.hssuk.org • f hssuk



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