



# SANGH MAIL

**Sanskār • Sewā • Sangathan**

**April 2023:**  
**Celebrating Mahavir Jayanti**

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*Sangh Mail is a monthly publication showcasing the activities of Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (UK) for circulation to it's members and well-wishers.*

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# BHAGWAN MAHAVIR Apostle of Non- Violence (Ahimsa)

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*(Celebrating Mahavir Jayanti,  
4 April 2023)*



This year millions of Jain Hindus across the world are celebrating 2550 years of Mahavir Nirvana (salvation). According to Jain tradition, Bhagwan Mahavir was the 24th and last Tirthankar (spiritual teacher) in a succession of spiritual beings who achieved enlightenment and guided others to do so as well. The first Tirthankar was Rishabdev who is mentioned in Mahabharat and Bhagwatam also.

Bhagwan Mahavir was born in 599 BC in a royal family as Prince Vardhaman to King Siddhartha and Queen Trishala of the Ikshvaku dynasty, in Vaishali (present-day Bihar). At the age of 30, he renounced worldly life and became a monk. For the next 12 years, he endured rigorous spiritual practice, including meditation, fasting, and self-discipline. He traveled widely throughout India barefoot and without clothes, teaching and spreading his message of non-violence (ahimsa). It is believed that during this period, he took food for 349 days only and even in those 349 days he ate only once a day. At the end of 12 years of penance, he obtained Kevalagnana (total enlightenment). For the next 30 years, he traveled all over India to teach and spread the message of non-violence (ahimsa), truthfulness (Satya), Non-stealing (Asteya), detachment (Aparigraha), and chastity (Brahmacharya). He promoted respect for all living beings, regardless of their size or form. He attracted a large number of followers including royals and laymen. He created a tradition of monks and nuns who followed a strict code of conduct known as the Jain monastic vows.

He continued to preach and teach until his death at the age of 72 in 527 BC. Today, Bhagwan Mahavir is revered as a great spiritual teacher and his teachings continue to inspire millions of people around the world. Present Jainism is based on his teachings and is considered to be one of the most peaceful and non-violent religions in the world. His legacy of non-violence, compassion, and respect for all living beings remains an important part of Jain philosophy and continues to be a source of inspiration for people of all faiths.

**Dhiraj D Shah**  
Sanghchalak (President) HSS(UK).





# Shakha Events







## WEST DRAYTON

# Holi Celebrations



Tulsi Bal Gokulam Shakha in West Drayton organised a Holi event in the month of March. More than 100 people celebrated this most exciting and colourful Holi festival. It was a great family fun day out. The event brought an exhilarating ambience blending our culture and history with entertainment. Not only did it bring communities of West Drayton together but also embraced our diversity. There were exciting games for all age groups. We ended the event by filling the colours and our laughter in the air. It was one of the most memorable, successful, and indelible events held.

Tulsi Bal Gokulam Shakha runs every week. It is not only for children but for all age groups, promoting family atmosphere. Aside from learning Shlokas and stories, various activities are focused on inculcating Sanskar, social consciousness and awareness, leadership skills in the children.



Reading Nagar celebrated Holi - The festival of colour, as an outreach event with the local community.

In the morning Shri. Tusharji – Kendriya Samaj sampark pramukh gave an interview on BBC Radio - Berkshire, about the meaning behind the festival and how it is celebrated in different parts of the world and UK.

The festival marks the arrival of spring and triumph of good over evil. It is celebrated with great energy with food, music, dancing and customary throwing of bright colours to mark to concept of “Unity in Diversity” to build strong bonds between all sections of the community.

Over 240 people from the wider community including local councillors from Reading and Wokingham attended the event. Everyone enjoyed the carnival atmosphere, cultural performances like classical dances, Holi songs, Holika dahan skit performance, music and the food.



# GLIMPSES OF INDIA



## *Bharati Shakha, Newbury*



**Laura Farris MP** ✓

16 h · 🌐

What a treat to watch Glimpses of India cultural event at the Phoenix Centre in Newbury this afternoon.

Organised by Bharatiya Sanscruti, an Indian cultural group if featured music and dance from every region in India and was a riot of colour & energy involving performers of every age. Just brilliant 🌟



The Glimpses of India event at the Phoenix Centre Newbury captivated audiences with its colourful representation of India's rich cultural heritage. The event was organized by the Karyakartas of Bharati Shakha Newbury under the banner called "Bharatiya Sanskritik", with local MP Laura Farris in attendance.

The event opened with a mesmerising devotional song, followed by regional dance forms of different states and finally the choir performed "Mile Sur Mera Tumhara to Sur Bane Hamara". Audiences were encouraged to learn more about India's cultural heritage through interactive displays presentation. The event provided the attendees with an unforgettable journey through India's vibrant culture and diversity. It also stressed the importance of preserving traditional art forms for generations to come. Overall, the event successfully achieved its goal of bringing the community together.





# GLIMPSES OF INDIA

*Bharati Shakha, Newbury*







## H.H. SHRI SANJEEV KRISHNA THAKURJI VISIT

### *Leicester Nagar*

In a pleasant surprise for Shree Ram Shakha, Sindhu Shakha, and Guru Nanak Shakha, on the occasion of Varsha Pratipada, H.H. Shri Sanjeev Krishna Thakurji - founder of Samarpan Gaushala Goverdhan, attended the utsav. He gave an inspiring baudhik.

To celebrate Chaitra sud Aatham of Chaitra Navratri, all played Garba together.





# Shibirs





# Kishor/Kishori Shibir - 2023

## London



On Saturday 1st April, Greater London Sambhag held its first-ever Kishor/Kishori shibir. 160 shibirarthis and 37 karyakartas from 18 nagars attended this shibir.

The day was a smashing success! From the start to the end, the energy was high. All Kishors/Kishoris arrived only knowing their own shakha but left having made many new friends and connections.

The morning session consisted of bauddhiks, charcha, karyashala and a khel. The highlight was definitely the Hindu Avengers-themed Mahakhel which engaged all the shibirarthis through different exciting challenges and missions.

Another part of this weekend was bringing together the Shikshak team, many of whom were first-timers, to develop a bond between them so that they remain motivated and connected to Sangh.

Overall it was a wholesome weekend, filled with fun, learning, and building lasting bonds.





# Sambhashana Shibir

*Sanskrita Bharati, UK*



The 13th residential Sanskrita Sambhashana Shibiram of Sanskrita Bharati, UK took place in April. This Annual event returned for the first time after a break of 3 years due to Covid.

About 60 people including 20 children enjoyed the facilities and the coaching of Sanskritam, near Loughborough. There were three groups (beginners, intermediate a childrens' group) created to cater for different needs and expertise in the knowledge and speaking skills in Sanskritam. The daily timetable was well structured with Parthana & Geetam followed by Sambhashana Sanskritam. There was Madhurashtakam Parayanam and some Chitra Darshanam (videos to learn) for the kids. Very soon all the children made friends with each other and bonded together well. Every day there were prayers, Isha Chintanam, Geetam, bhajans with some variation.

The teaching method was excellent, Shikshak would hardly speak English (deliberately), the purpose being sambhashana sanskritam! The Shibiram is highly recommended for all those interested in learning Sanskritam, especially in developing and improving their skill in conversation (sambhAshana).





## More News!

संगठन में शक्ति है!

Sangathan main shakti hai!



**Theresa Villiers** ✓

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Thank you to [HSS UK \(Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh\)](#) for inviting me to their Edgware Karyalaya at the weekend to discuss their important work promoting Hindu culture.



## Karyalaya Visit

*Rt. Honourable Theresa Villiers*

The Right Honourable Theresa Villiers, MP visited the Sangh Karyalaya. Mananiya Dhiraj D Shah (Sanghchalak), Madhviben Haria (Sah Karyawaha) and Harshaben Jani (Sah Sampark Pramukh) received her. She later posted about her visit and HSS(UK).





# Turkey Earthquake Appeal

## Sewa UK

A delegation from Sewa UK met with Mr. Seyfi Onur Sayin, Consular General of the Republic of Turkey in Manchester on 4th April 2023 to extend our solidarity with the Turkish people following the earthquake there.

Bharat Vadukal, secretary of Sewa UK thanked the Consul General for the tremendous support he and his team gave to Sewa UK in making sure we were able to get donated goods to Turkey via Turkish Airlines. The Consul General was also very appreciative of the work and support of Sewa UK.



# First Aid Courses, UK Wide



With more than 110 activity centers throughout the UK, the required presence of certified first aiders at every session has been a priority, particularly when the activities involve physical sports with the potential for injuries.

As a result, First-Aid certification courses were held at various venues to train first aiders for small and large events in sporting settings.

\* A 3-Day First Aid at Work course (suitable for all HSS events covered) in Leicester.

\* A 1-Day Emergency Life Support (suitable for weekly Shakha cover only) at Halifax, London, Leicester, Birmingham

Everyone who passed the course successfully, received a certificate.

Heartfelt thanks to Kantibhai Chhaabadia and Darshita Rabadia, our national First Aid Leads. If anyone wishes to hold a course in their locality, please contact Kantibhai Chabbdiya at: [kantihc@gmail.com](mailto:kantihc@gmail.com)





# H.H. Shri Sanjeev Krishna Thakurji

## Birmingham



Mananiya Dhirajji D Shah (Sanghachalak) met H.H. Sanjeev Krishna Thakur Ji at Shree Geeta Bhavan Mandir. Shri Dhirajji was also invited by Pujya Thakurji to address the audience at the Shrimad Bhagavad Katha recital.



Pujya Thakurji echoed the great work that Sangh is doing and expressed the wish to visit some of the projects being worked on locally.



So the very next morning, Shri Amrat Chandegra (Kendriya Sewa Pramukh) escorted Pujya Thakur Ji to our Sewa UK charity shop and also to the 'Friday Morning - Sewa at the Mandir' group. All volunteers were certainly enthused and blessed with the surprise visits.



# Shraddhanjali

## *Late Shree Liladhar Bhagwanji Raithatha*

Late Liladharbhai was the heart and soul of Hindu Sahitya Kendra (HSK) which he developed with remarkable dedication and commitment. He lived a fulfilled life of 93, independent and fully aware mentally and intellectually till the end, but physically he was restricted for the last few years. Though he never attended shakha, he had the qualities of a Sangh Swayamsevak which are dedication, commitment, and sewa-bhaav to a cause.

After retirement, he volunteered to help in the HSK shop in Leicester and soon he completely immersed himself in its work. With Dhanjibhai as his dedicated colleague, he promoted and increased sales at the shop. His punctuality and regularity at the shop were noteworthy. HSK had become a part of his life and was embedded in his genes. He worked and took care of HSK as if it was his personal ownership, always thinking about its expansion and progress. HSK and Liladharkaka (as he was known in Sangh circle) had become synonymous. He was known across the country by swayamsevaks and sevikas. Not only did he work for HSK, but he also looked after the Sangh Karyalaya. He extended hospitality to many karyakartas and guests who visited the place.

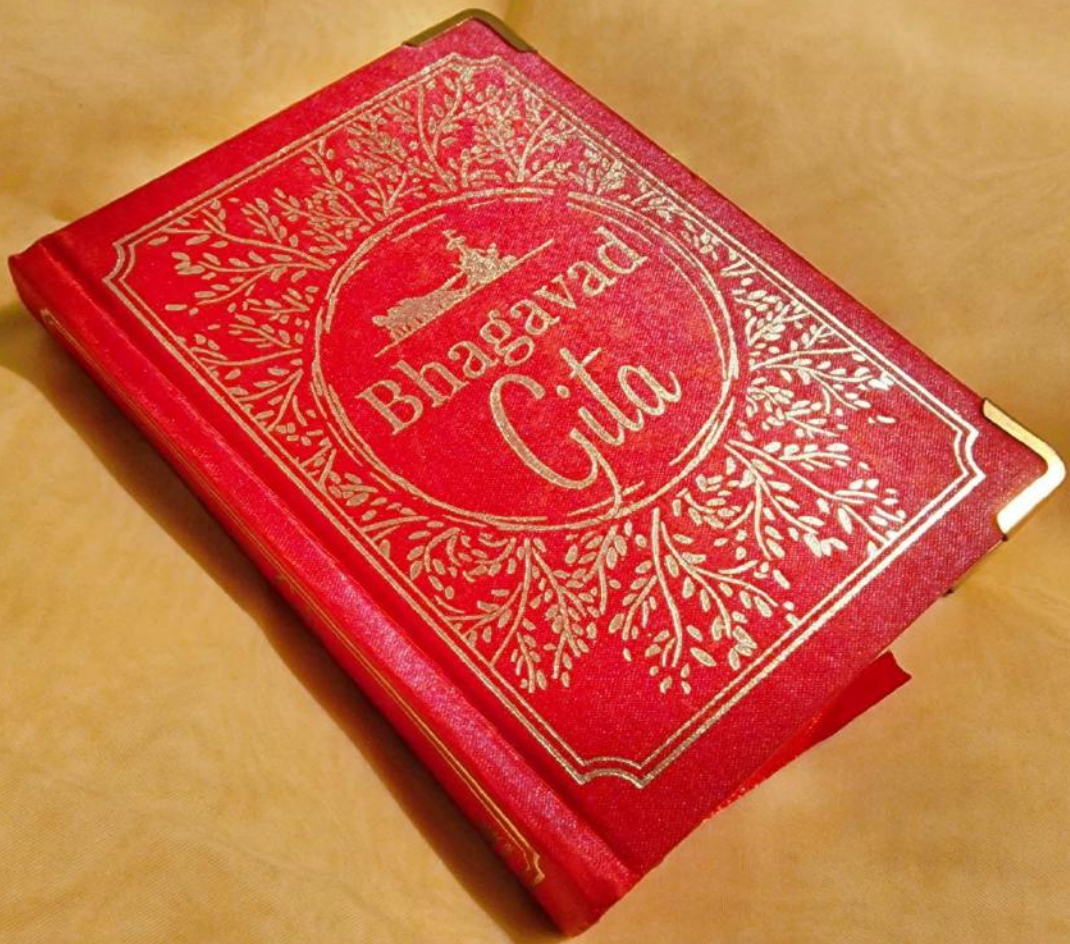
For the last couple of years, he was housebound but kept contact with swayamsevaks via telephone. He always enquired about HSK. Swayamsevaks and sevikas of Leicester Nagar visited him regularly and promptly came to his aid when required. During the last few days, he expressed his contentment with his life and gratitude to the swayamsevaks and sevikas for their care of him. He once said, 'If I had not involved myself with HSK after retirement, I would not have lived healthy and for so long'. He has set a shining example of a Vanprasthi Karyakarta (retired but active worker).

With the above thoughts and on behalf of HSS(UK), I express our heartfelt condolences and prayers for eternal peace and Sadgati to the punya aatmaa of Liladharbhai. May his life and legacy inspire many.

- Dhiraj D Shah  
Sanghachalak (President) HSS(UK)







## Essential Reads

*“The gift of **knowledge** is a far higher gift than that of food and clothes; it is even higher than giving life to a man, because the real life of man consists of knowledge”*



*- Swami Vivekananda*



## REMEMBERING BHAGWAN MAHAVIR'S ESSENTIAL TEACHING OF AHIMSA

Some of my favourite childhood memories are playing cricket in the garden with my brothers. Whilst batting, my grandmother would say, 'don't hit the ball in the trees and plants; they feel pain too.' These words have left a deep imprint on my mind, and whether the verifiability of these statements is actual or not, it does highlight a key trait in all Indian thought - **the respect for all living beings**.

With this thought, we celebrate Mahavir Jayanti - a festival commemorating the birth of Lord Mahavir, the 24th and last Tirthankara of Jainism. This year the Mahavir Jayanti falls on Tuesday, 4 April. He was born into a royal family in 599 BCE in Bihar, but at the age of 30, he renounced worldly pleasures, dedicating his life to spiritual enlightenment. Lord Mahavir's core philosophy centred around **Ahimsa (non-violence)** which he believed was vital to spiritual liberation. He also promoted the importance of practising self-control, detachment from material objects, and living a simple life. Fast forward many centuries - in today's world dominated by materialism - how can *Ahimsa* help us tackle some of the world's most urgent issues, such as climate change and international conflict?

### THE HARM PRINCIPLE OF MILLS

Before we delve deeper into the philosophy of *Ahimsa*, let's discuss **the harm principle**, which has influenced western thought since its inception in 1859 by John Stuart Mills. He argued that the actions of individuals should only be limited to prevent harm to other individuals. In other words, people should be free to act however they wish unless their actions cause harm to others. For example, an individual has the right to drink alcohol, but driving under the influence harms others. Therefore, the state intervenes, and drink-driving is forbidden by law. In straightforward scenarios like this, the *harm principle* works well and serves as a deterrent to human behaviours that cause harm to other human beings or humanity at large. It is a legal enforcement of ethics. This may be essential for a flourishing society. But is it sufficient?

### WHAT IS AHIMSA?

Indian thought takes the harm principle a step further through *Ahimsa*. *Ahimsa* is a Sanskrit word which translates to 'non-violence' or 'non-harm'. It's a key virtue in all the traditions stemming from India. Though difficult to date, *Ahimsa* has been practised in India for millennia with references found in ancient Hindu texts such as the *Rig* and *Yajur Veda*. Over time, the significance of *Ahimsa* strengthened as Jain and Buddhist traditions spread. For Jains, *Ahimsa* is seen as the most important ethical code where compassion and consideration is extended to plants and even small insects. For example, many Jains do not eat root vegetables such as potatoes and onions because tiny life forms are injured when the plant is pulled up. Buddhists also hold the *Ahimsa* principle as violent acts lead to negative karma, whilst compassionate acts, such as saving animals from slaughter, lead to karmic merit.





In the *Yoga* tradition, *Ahimsa* plays an essential role in Patanjali's Ashtanga system. A yoga practitioner will only progress if the foundation of their personality is based on specific ethical codes of conduct, one of which is *Ahimsa*. *Ahimsa* encourages us to be kind in thought, word and deed towards other humans and all living beings, including nature. The *Mahabharata* explains *Ahimsa* and praises its importance.

***“Causing no harm to any living being, or at least as little harm as possible, is the way of life that represents the highest expression of Dharma.”***

## AHIMSA AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The UN describes climate change as 'the defining issue of our time.' Scientists warn that if temperatures exceed 1.5°C the impacts of climate change will be irreversible and catastrophic. Some of the disastrous consequences of exceeding 1.5°C include:

- More regular and intense heat waves
- Increased flooding in some areas and drought in others
- Significant vulnerabilities in food security
- Changes to river flows which will threaten freshwater supplies
- Mass extinctions of many species

To mitigate and even reverse some of the anthropogenic causes of climate change, we can all help. It requires us to introspect and periodically ask three questions:

1. Do my actions hurt or show gratitude towards all living beings?
2. Am I revering nature or exploiting it?
3. Am I trying to acquire more and more at the detriment of nature and other living beings?

For Western audiences to incorporate these questions in our daily lives may seem odd. But, in Indian cultures (and other indigenous cultures), nature is not an object to be exploited; rather, it is a revered living entity. In elevating our sense of connectivity to the natural environment, these traditions personify nature. For example, the Earth is revered as *Bhumi* - a Mother who provides for all our needs. The wind is called *Vayu* (Wind God); the sun, *Surya*; and the oceans, *Varuna*. This personification and resultant rituals (connectivity practices) embed this interconnectedness with nature.





## AHIMSA AND SUSTAINABILITY

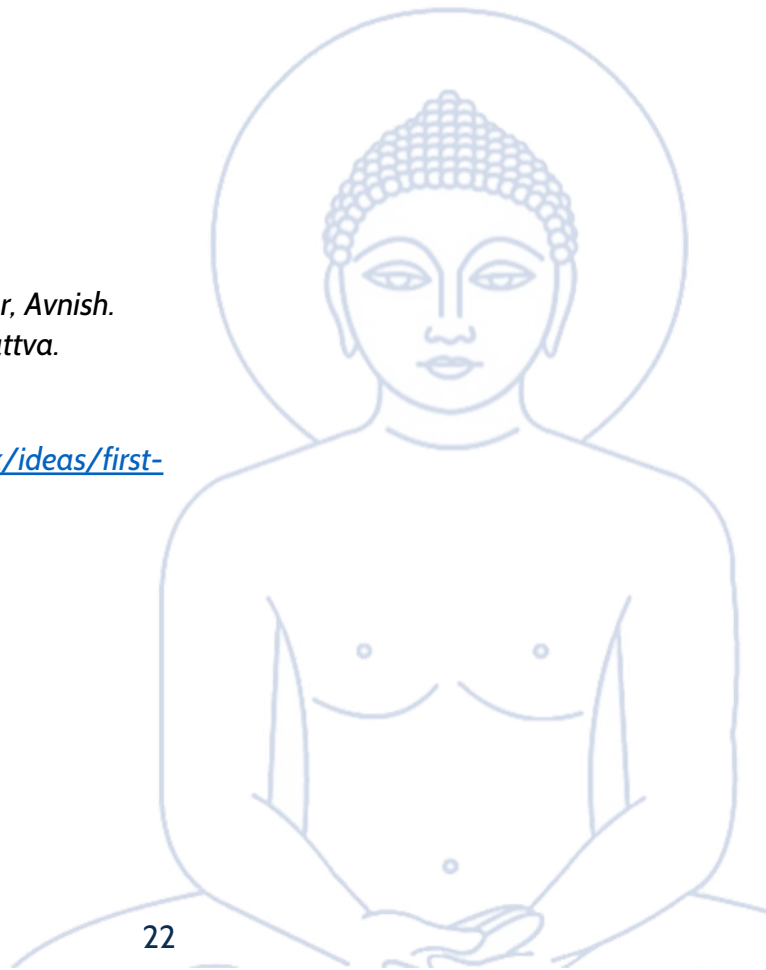
Prime Minister Modi recently said cooperation is the mantra for the 21st century. Unfortunately, recent events like the Russia-Ukraine war show that conflict is still prevalent today. In Chapter 16 of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna lists qualities of the *Daivi Sampad* (nature of the Gods), such as being pure at heart, practising charity, having self-control, being truthful, not harming others, having compassion for others and being free from greed. Conversely, those with the *Asuri Sampad* (nature of the demons) have qualities such as being selfish, arrogant, greedy and having little regard for others, even if it means harming them. If we look at society today, unfortunately, the latter is prevailing. Maximising profit and shareholder value is the most important, even if it means exploiting workers, polluting the environment and depleting the Earth's resources. This is not to say Hindus are against *artha* (wealth). *Artha* is actively encouraged, but it has to be achieved in a way that promotes the welfare of all. 'Sustainability' is a new buzzword, but it's been a prominent part of our culture for millennia.

*Ahimsa* is a philosophy that cares deeply about the world's welfare; a philosophy that refuses to exploit the environment, the poorest and most vulnerable and balances prosperity with sustainability. Despite its antiquity, *Ahimsa* has never been so relevant in shaping narratives and practices that will tackle global challenges. As we remember the teachings of Mahavir, let us imbibe his essential teaching of *Ahimsa* and seek to secure a peaceful and sustainable world.

- Avnish Thakrar  
([www.tattva.org.uk](http://www.tattva.org.uk))

Based on research paper:  
*First, do No Harm. Thakrar, Avnish.*  
Nov 2022. *Emergence; Tattva.*

URL:  
<https://www.tattva.org.uk/ideas/first-do-no-harm>





# SANGH MAIL



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**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

When submitting your articles, here are a few points to consider:

- Provide a summary- keep articles short, highlighting the best parts
- A picture tells a thousand words - select your best photos (maximum of 8) to go with your article in the same email
  - Don't forget to include your Shakha name and location

Send all articles to [sanghmail@hssuk.org](mailto:sanghmail@hssuk.org)

