



Sangh Mail

Witnessing History Unfold!

January 2024

info@hssuk.org • www.hssuk.org • Registered Charity No. 267309

Sangh Mail – January 2024

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Ram Mandir
Inauguration

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Parliament
Week 2023



Image from - <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/09/15/india/india-ram-mandir-ayodhya-modi-bjp-intl-hnk/index.html>



जय श्री
राम

On 22nd January 2023,
we all witnessed a moment
in history.

The Pran Prathishta of the new
mandir in Ayodhya for Shri Ramlalla
(the child form of Shri Ram), holds a
dearest space in the hearts
of all Hindus world wide.

Waiting for over 500 years, Hindus
welcomed Ram Lalla in the grand
Janmabhoomi Mandir, the birthplace
of Bhagwan Ram.

Over 200 Hindu organisations
including HSS(UK), joined in prayers
and bhajans whilst watching this
divine event, with several events and
celebrations hosted across the UK.

HSS (UK) Mananeeya Sanghachalak
(President), Shri Dhiraj D Shah, was
honoured to witness this in person on
the historical day!



Image from -
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Parliament>



Parliament Week is a programme of events and activities that connects people with Parliament and democracy in the UK.



Dr Harsha Jani

In November 2023 Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK [HSS(UK)] celebrated 7 years of educating, engaging, and empowering through UK Parliament Week [UKPW] activities. During UKPW, HSS(UK) showcased activities centered around the core Hindu values of Sewa (Service to Humanity), Sanskar (Spiritual Value-based development), Sangathan (Coming together in community spirit) culminating in the promotion of responsible citizenship.

Parliament-style debates and elections followed by balloting, polling, mock Prime Minister Question Time, panel discussions, quizzes, learning how to lobby a Member of Parliament, writing to MPs and Peers about issues, being an MP for a day, campaigning, parliament visits, and workshops are the varied activities that were available for participation.

Around 2050 enthusiastic participants aged 5 to 91 experienced what it means to engage in democracy. This year, HSS(UK) has hosted 19 MPs, 42 councilors, and 2 mayors as well as several dignitaries. Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK as winner

of the '2020 UK Parliament Week Official Partner of the Year' Award seeks to take our influence and engagement to the next level.

A success story we are delighted to report is that of Prem Raghvani of Ashton Shakha. As a Member of the Youth Parliament, he spoke in the chambers of the House of Commons. In a debate, Prem spoke eloquently on the inadequate provision of suitable food for Hindus. We wish Prem continued success.

HSS(UK) has participated in a podcast 'Why Parliament works'. Speaker of the House of Commons and Lord Speaker of the House of Lords have commended HSS UK for embracing the opportunity to engage effectively with Parliament.

Amongst the many MPs who have attended the activities in 2023, Shakhas up and down the country have welcomed several MPs.

'The discipline and commitment of HSS participants to UK Parliament Week event is highly commendable'. Theresa Villiers said, **'I can see budding future Parliamentarians amongst you and who knows even another Hindu Prime Minister!'**



‘During UK Parliament Week I learned the importance of speaking up and getting my voice heard on issues that matter to me and my mum and dad’.

Young Sevika
Esha



‘ I was amazed at the different ways in which I can participate in parliament. After UKPW at Shakha. I feel empowered and confident about raising issues with my MP’

Dhillon



**MAKE A
DIFFERENCE**



As we progress in our understanding of the workings of the UK Parliament, we are better equipped to deal with issues that concern the Hindu community. Aspiring young politicians from the UK Hindu communities can make a profound Dharmic contribution to the political landscape of the UK.



National event

"British-Hindus are a major contributor in British Society. So, why can't we take pride in Parliament?"

Ashton Shakhya Swayamsevak Prem Raghvani addressed the 13th sitting of the Youth Parliament in the UK Commons Chamber. His speech focused on the vital topic of 'Food for Learning.' Prem emphasized the inadequate provision of suitable food for Hindus, shedding light on a pressing issue. His advocacy sparks crucial conversations on the need for improved food provisions.

You may be asking, how Prem ended up in the Commons, and why you should too?

He got into the local Youth Council / Cabinet, and got elected by members in February of 2022 to be the MYP representative of Oldham. If you would like to get involved, you may want to contact your local council and see how you can do it.



Amersham

Electing an MP session

As part of UK Parliament Week 2023, Amersham Shakha organised a detailed session on the process of electing an MP. Four young contestants stood for the elections as future MPs. They all came up with their party names and logo and presented a 5-point manifesto on why they should be elected. After they completed their campaigning, all voted for them at the polling booth.

The whole process gave a good insight to all youngsters on how the voting system works and everyone enjoyed being part of the session.



Ashton

Debating artificial intelligence

Special invitees to our Parliament Week session were Rt. Hon. Angela Rayner MP, Rt. Hon. Jonathon Reynolds MP, Rt. Hon. Navendu Mishra, and Councillor Vimal Chokshi.

The youngsters took part in a debate on the role of AI, discussing its advantages and disadvantages.





Bedford

Motivational talks

West Northamptonshire councillor and a prospective Bedford and Kempston Conservative Parliamentary candidate, Pinder Chauhan, and former councillor Dr Arun D graced the UKPW session.

Pinder ji Chauhan shared her journey from her childhood to the present as a Parliamentary candidate and gave motivation to the people to join politics and the importance of the role in politics.





Bradford

Social Media – boon or bane?

Bradford Shakhya held our Parliament Week event on 17th November. Councillor Ibrar Hussain attended our event. Our young panellists were given the topic of 'Social Media – boon or bane' just 3 days back and were all asked to prepare for and against arguments. We only informed them minutes before the debate whether they would be arguing for or against.

Councillor Hussain commented on how impressed he was with the way our young panellists articulated their points. He could see future leaders in our youngsters.





Bromley

Get to Know your MP and Councillor!

Bromley Sanskaar Shakha organised a session of "Get to Know your MP and Councillor". As this was the first shakha event being attended by MP Gareth Bacon and Councillor Mike Botting, initially they were introduced to HSS.

Mr Bacon then took the floor to explain the job and role of MPs, the Parliament, and how the entire system works. We also heard about how Bromley Council operates. An interesting and thoughtful Q&A session followed, with the younger members asking excellent questions.

The whole process gave a good insight to all attendees on how the local and central government system works and everyone enjoyed being part of the session.



Bushey

The big debate: Tech and AI in education

On 3rd November 2023 we were delighted to welcome Dean Russell MP for Watford joining us and participating in our Parliament Week session.

Activity-packed sessions included Parliament quizzes, educational videos, the BIG debate in the house on Technology and AI in Education, visiting the polling stations to vote, an interactive Q&A with Dean Russell MP, video messages from Oliver Dowden MP for Hertsmere & Deputy Prime Minister, and Cllr Abhishek Sachdev of Hertsmere Borough Council.

A key message from Dean was to continue being students daily, take up the time for volunteering, and learn about yourself whilst serving the local community.





Cambridge

UKPW meets deepavali utsav

HSS Cambridge celebrated UKPW and Deepavali Utsav, with a debate on "social media-a boon or bane".

Public speaking and art activities for baal gana , a video, and presentation on Deepavali Utsav followed by guest speeches by Councillors Steven Drew, and Helen Leaming.





Cheltenham

“Question time!”

On Sunday 19th November, VIP guests attended our shakha Parliament Week session. Mr. Alex Chalk, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Mr. Ben Evans, Councillor Churchdown, Mr. Max Wilkinson, Councillor Oakeley, Cabinet member for Economic Dev, Tourism, Culture and Wellbeing, Mrs Jessica Baddama, Councillor Tewkesbury North

A “Question Time” session where Senior school group children asked questions on various topics to the guests.

Topics were on various areas: UK education, use of electronic media vs books in education, energy crisis, Illegal Immigration/asylum seekers, would Maths and English be made compulsory for A levels, wokeism and its effects, and even cryptocurrency.

In our own MP Alex Chalk’s words, he noted he hasn’t come across any other organisation with this level of engagement, commitment, and planning.





Finchley

Encouraging conversations

Guests included the Mayor of Barnet Cllr. Nagus Narenthira, MP Hon. Theresa Villiers, Cllr. Jennifer Grocock & London assembly candidate Julie Redmond.

Swayamsevaks and sevikas were having conversations with the guests and asking about participating in politics, visiting council chambers to hear debates, and becoming members of the youth council.

MP Theresa Villiers commented,
'It's heartening to see HSS taking UK PARLIAMENT WEEK seriously, asking questions and discussing issues and encouraging young people to be involved in politics and the democratic process.'

Cllr Grocock commended the discipline at Shakha, **'It is rare to see youngsters who are disciplined and keen to learn about politics'**.



Halifax & Huddersfield

“Should we add an age limit to social media?”

On 26th November 2023, we came together to celebrate UK Parliament Week activities in our Shankaracharya Pariwaar Shakha. Councilor Tyler Hawkins from Dalton Ward in Huddersfield joined us and inspired our young children.

Our Kishore had a fantastic debate on *No one under the age of 16 should be allowed to use social media*.



High Wycombe

Journey in politics

On 19th November, we organised our UK Parliament Week Celebrations 2023. We had invited councillors Phanindra Koya & Nidhi Mehta. They kindly explained about their journey in council and parliament. We all had a good insight and debate about how the council operates.

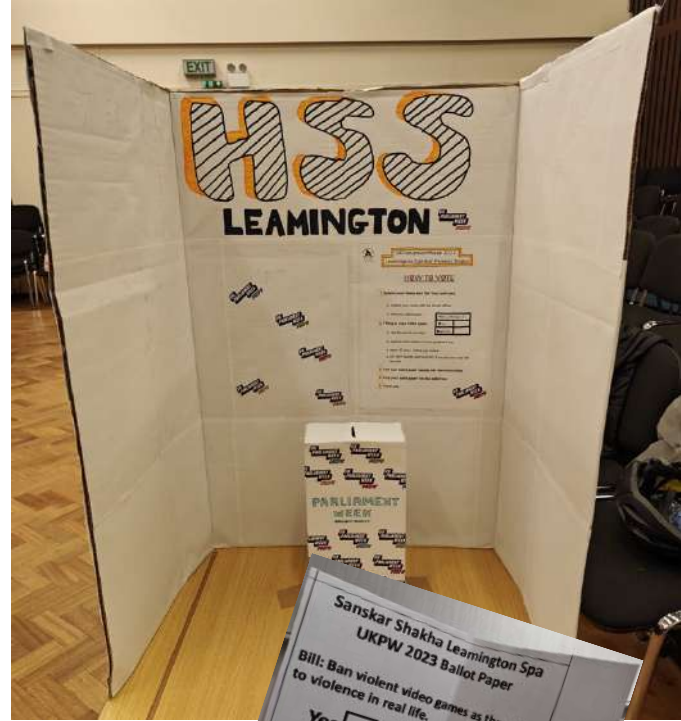




Hounslow

Enthusiastic discussions

On 5th November 2023, 30 of us, of all age groups, gathered to celebrate a small part of democracy in our shakha. We had a debate about the important issue of 'Artificial Intelligence', and everyone participated in the discussion enthusiastically. Younger children made a beautiful bunting for UKPW. MP Ruth Cadbury sent her message of encouragement to our team, for a successful Parliament Week activity.



Leamington

Debate and vote sessions

Parliament-style Bill was debated and everyone had a chance to vote on the motion. Attended by The Mayor of Royal Leamington Spa Alan Boad, councillors Sarah Boad, Savita Lekhi & our own Hema Yellapragada.

It was inspiring to see youngsters making well-researched impassioned speeches and showing genuine interest in the workings of parliament.



Liverpool Fun filled day





Milton Keynes

"Should climate change activists meet a minimum age criteria?"

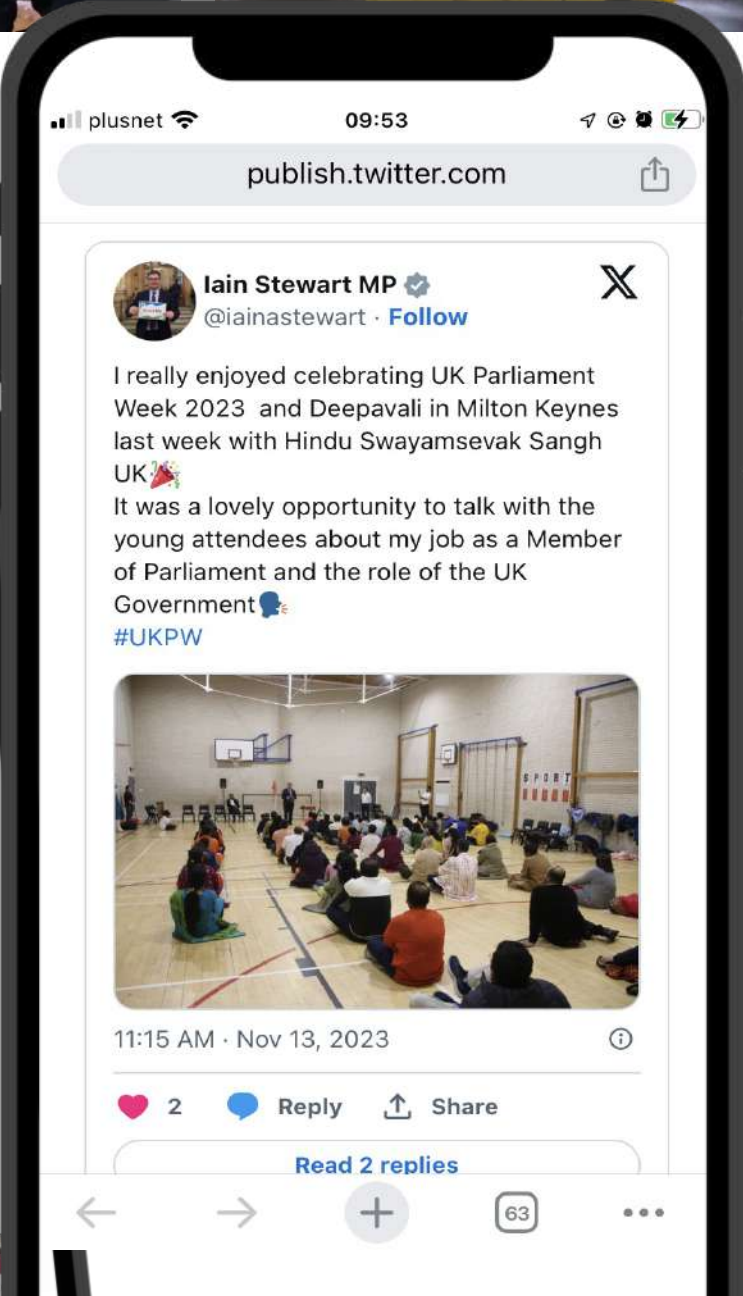
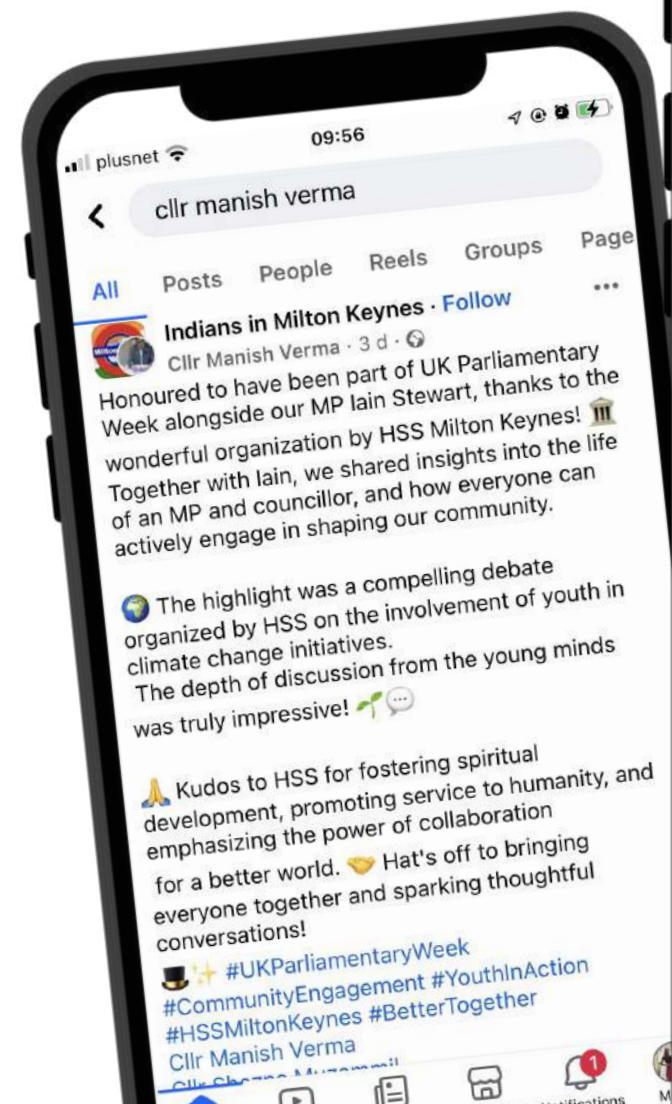
After some warm-ups and Ramayana-themed games, our guests lit diyas (lamps) to begin the main event.

Iain Stewart gave a very informative speech on what an MP does in parliament and in the community. We had a debate on the topic of "This house believes climate change activists should meet minimum age criteria" with 5 of our regular volunteers aged from 9 to 16 as the speakers and chairperson of the debate. In the end, the opposition team won with majority votes.

In concluding the debate, Manish Verma also gave an insight into his work as a Councillor.



Milton Keynes





Newbury

“Is AI harmful to the human race?”

The topic was “Is AI harmful to the human race?” Deputy Mayor Andy Moore along with Mananeeya Ritu Ji Vadhera (WL Vibhag Karyawahika) and Sanjay Ji Vadhera also attended the event.

Everyone prepared well and enthusiastically participated in the discussion both for and against the topic.

The Deputy Mayor who himself was from a technical background was quite impressed with the way the debates were conducted. He also appreciated the civility and interesting points raised by the debaters.



Newcastle





Nottingham

“Should we make Solar panels compulsory for all households?”

Thanks to the presence of our MP Ruth Edwards, Rushcliffe and also Councillor Hariom Gupta and Councillor Hetvi Parekh, and the Nottingham Scouts Group for joining us today in our UKPW activities.

The participating children joined one of four parties:- Voice of Youth, The National Alliance Party, The AAA party (Aspire, Act and Achieve), and the Pride and Power Party. Each child had 30 seconds to present their views and there was voting for the party that had presented their manifesto in the best manner.

This was followed by debates by our teenagers group similar to what happens in the House of Commons. These included making Solar panels compulsory for all households, providing free school meals for all year groups including a vegan option that follows our Hindu Dharma, making Hinduism a compulsory RE subject in schools, etc.





**MAKE A
DIFFERENCE**

Peterborough

Showcase time

Rt. Hon. Shailesh Vara, MP visited Peterborough Shakha on Saturday 25 Nov 2023.

It was an opportunity to showcase HSS activities and also to listen to Shailesh Vara on how political decisions are taken. This was the prelude to our UK Parliament Week event.



Reading

“Should it be illegal for key workers to go on Strike”

The evening featured two debates:- “Should it be illegal for key workers to go on Strike” and “Should yoga/meditation be a compulsory part of the school curriculum”.

Our guests for the evening included Pauline Jorgensen (Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Earley & Woodley), Cllr Norman Jorgensen (Maiden Erlegh Ward), Cllr Laura Blumenthal (South Lake Ward) and Cllr Rajesh Singh (Kentwood Ward).

The second part of the evening was a formal Q&A between the guests and Durga/Rudra Shakhas. The children were encouraged to take on roles such as councillors, mayors, MPs, and even the Prime Minister, each preparing a canvassing speech for the position they aspired to hold in the mock election.

The highlight of the celebration was the mock election, where all the children participated in selecting their preferred candidates through a democratic process.



Rugby

"Its OK for parents to LIE to children"

On 17th November, we were joined by MP Mark Pawsey of Rugby and local Cllrs John Slinger, Senthil Karadiar, and Ish Mistry. After a short video was played on how Parliament worked and a few ground rules our debate, 'Its OK for parents to LIE to children' started.

We finished with Q&A with our guests. They gave insight into how debates are conducted in the chambers.



Slough



“Academic Pressure contributes to stress and mental health challenges.”

The event featured four teams engaging in a debate on the motion: "This house believes Academic Pressure Positively Motivates Children" and against: "This house believes Academic Pressure contributes to stress and mental health challenges."

Our distinguished guests for the day were Mr. Jack Rankin (Conservative Prospective Parliamentary Candidate, Windsor), Cllr Sharad Kumar Jha (Councillor from Chalfont St Peter), and Prerna Bhardwaj (Town Council Candidate, Gerrard Cross).

The session concluded with audience polling, and the team speaking in opposition emerged victorious with 28 votes and we came up with the two best speakers for the day. The success of the day not only belonged to the winning team but resonated across the entire Shakha, reflecting the collective spirit of inquiry and intellectual curiosity that defines the community.





South Harrow

What they would you do as an MP

On 24th November, Durga Shakha celebrated Parliament Week wherein we organised a session on the process of electing an MP.

Both teams came up with their chosen party names. The contestants presented a strong manifesto outlining what they would do as an MP and why they should be elected. After the campaign, everyone voted at the polling station. We counted the votes and the winning MP was declared. This was a good way of learning how local MPs are selected.





Sutton and Carshalton Lively debates

Our joint UK Parliament Week event on November 19, 2023, hosted by Chanakya Parivaar Shakha Sutton and Carshalton Parivaar Shakha, welcomed esteemed guests like MP Elliot Colburn, future MP contender Bobby Dean, Cllr Gemma Munday, and Deputy Mayor Appu Srinivasan.

The session began with an introduction to the UK Parliament and HSS's role in Parliament Week. Participants were divided into three groups: children (bal gana), youth (yuva), and adults. The children enjoyed a Deepawali-themed colouring session, while the youth debated English and Math education, and the adults discussed NHS privatisation.

The debates were lively; the youth voted against making English and Math compulsory, while the adult debate remained inconclusive. During the Q&A, guests highlighted their community service experiences, resonating with our shakha's commitment to community betterment.



Woolwich

Quiz time!

We had a great session organised on UK Parliament Week with discussions and a quiz to test our knowledge of politics. Our Balika Sevikas were engaged through a storybook that explained the very basics of politics.



Other areas





UK PARLIAMENT WEEK 2023

DEBATE

IT STARTS WITH YOU

HAVE YOUR SAY

YOUR VOICE YOUR VOTE

DATE
Sunday 29th October 2023

TIME
2pm to 5pm

PLACE
Caxton Hall, Cambridge CB2 3

Jeyur Patel
Councillor, Cambourne Parish Council

Shrobona Bhattacharya
Councillor, South Cambridgeshire District

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MAKE A DIFFERENCE



ESSENTIAL READ

From Ayodhya to the World:

A story of rekindled hope and reconciliation that paves the path to shared heritage

The restoration of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi transcends mere physical construction. It marks the reawakening of a civilization that, for millennia, has championed inclusivity and diversity.

The two most powerful warriors are patience and time.” – Leo Tolstoy

Throughout history, invaders seeking conquest or ideological domination have aimed not just at land or wealth but at the soul of a nation. They attack the very ethos, the identity that binds a people together. But within this dark narrative also lies a counterpoint: the victimized society's refusal to remain broken. The spirit of resistance flares, and the journey to reclaim lost pride begins.

9/11 stands starkly in this historical tapestry. America's living symbols, the World Trade Centers, along with innocent lives, were reduced to dust by those who loathed the very way of life they could not understand or appreciate. Even for the mightiest nation of modern times, recovery from such trauma was not instantaneous. It wasn't fear that held them back, but rather a shattered sense of trust and security. Yet, amidst the pain, a quiet resolve emerged.

Gradually, with missteps and triumphs, the world witnessed a beacon of hope: twin beams of light piercing the night sky, a testament to a spirit unbroken. With the rise of One World Trade Center, a physical rebirth mirrored the nation's internal reawakening. The American spirit, battered but not defeated, had found its way back to light.

Throughout history, religious sites have stood as powerful symbols of faith and culture.

Yet, they have also been vulnerable to destruction, driven by conflict, ideology, or natural disasters. Following are just a few examples that are just representative of the resilience of faith and the ongoing efforts to rebuild and reclaim these sacred spaces.

Mehmed Pasha Kukavica Mosque, Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Built in the 18th century during the Ottoman era, the mosque in Foča endured significant damage during the Bosnian War in the 1990s. Today, restoration efforts are underway to preserve this cultural vestige and symbol of Muslim heritage in the region.



Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem:

A site revered by Christians as the location of Jesus' crucifixion and burial, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre has faced destruction and reconstruction throughout history. Earthquakes and invasions, from the Roman Emperor Hadrian in the 2nd century onwards, have left their mark. Reconstructed five times, the most recent restoration project began in 2017.



Cathedral of Christ the Savior, Moscow:

This iconic Russian Orthodox Church originally stood as a monument to victory over Napoleon's army in the 19th century. However, under communist rule in 1931, it was demolished to make way for Stalin's Palace of Soviets, which ultimately remained unbuilt. Only a swimming pool occupied the site. Following the fall of communism and the Soviet Union in 1991, a replica of the original cathedral was constructed and completed in 1999.



Beyond these specific examples, countless other religious sites around the world stand as silent witnesses to history's triumphs and tragedies. Their stories remind us of the fragility of peace and the importance of protecting not only physical structures but also the values they embody. On January 22, 2024, the world will witness a closure to the centuries old yet live wound by a foreign invader on faith, culture, and civilization with Shri Ram Pran Pratishtha at the birthplace of Shri Ram at Ayodhya.

Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Movement and India's Resilience:

Throughout its rich history, India has seen the rise and fall of empires, invasions, and even the destruction of cherished religious sites. But amidst the echoes of conflict, a powerful thread of cultural resilience has always interwoven with its narrative. One such instance exemplifies this enduring spirit: the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement.

Babur came to India from his birthplace Andijan, Uzbekistan and founded the Mughal Empire on Indian soil. Still he remained alienated from India and despised her culture. At the end of his life, he wished not even to be buried in India, hence his tomb is located in Afghanistan.

In 1528, amidst the tumultuous backdrop of Babur's rule, a deeply revered Hindu temple in Ayodhya, dedicated to Lord Ram, was destroyed by his commander Mir Baqui. This act ignited a centuries-long quest for its reconstruction, a quest not fueled by animosity but by unwavering faith and a yearning for cultural restoration.

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement stands as a testament to the human spirit's ability to rebuild in the face of adversity. It was a story of legal battles fought with conviction, archaeological research meticulously undertaken, and above all, a profound devotion that transcended generations. It was a peaceful yet persistent movement, driven by the desire to reclaim not just bricks and mortar, but the very values, traditions, and beliefs that bind communities together.

In 2019, a historic milestone was reached. The Supreme Court of India, upholding the ideals of justice and reconciliation, ruled in favor of rebuilding the temple. This verdict was not just a legal victory, but a symbolic moment of healing and harmony. The Ram Lalla Pran Pratishtha, the installation of the idol of Child Ram, scheduled for January 22, 2024, adds another significant chapter to this saga.

This event transcends mere physical construction. It marks the reawakening of a civilization that, for millennia, has championed inclusivity and diversity before these words even found their place in dictionaries.

It signifies a civilization that refuses to erase its history, acknowledging both the light and the shadow, but ultimately choosing the path of reconciliation and harmony.

Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement stands as a beacon of hope, not just for India, but for any nation or community grappling with the legacy of a complex past. It demonstrates that through peaceful pursuit of justice and understanding, even the deepest wounds can heal, paving the way for a future where cultural heritage is not lost, but reclaimed and shared with the world.

Courtesy of:
<https://americankahani.com/perspectives/from-ayodhya-to-the-world-a-story-of-rekindled-hope-and-reconciliation-that-paves-the-path-to-shared-heritage/>

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement **stands as a beacon of hope**, not just for India, but for any nation or community grappling with the legacy of a complex past.



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



Who it's from

Don't forget to include your Shakha name and location

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