

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

A SURVIVOR'S STORY



Sangh Mail

Unforgettable
Events

February 2024

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Sangh Mail – February 2024

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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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HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Be the light in the
darkness ... Never forget

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Holocaust Survivors Story

This talk will include a Q & A session followed by a discussion on Ethnic Cleansing of Hindus in Jammu & Kashmir

HSS(UK)

A Talk on Holocaust Memorial Day

On Sunday 28th January, HSS(UK) hosted a Talk on Holocaust Day. The subject was 'A Survivor's Story' of the Holocaust. Dr. Harshaben Jani and other members, seniors, and youngsters keenly listened to the account of the horrific events, as narrated by Mr. Francis Morton, a surviving member of the Holocaust.

It was stressed that these kinds of events should never be forgotten, wherever and whenever they occur.





Holocaust Memorial Day



HSS(UK) Bradford

Holocaust Memorial Day

Sanghchalak (President) of HSS North East Region, Rajni Parmar, together with Reshmaben Patel & Ushniben Rabadia attended Holocaust Memorial Day held in Bradford City Hall.



Ram Lalla Returns



Basingstoke Nagar

The Shri Ram Utsav in Basingstoke commenced with great fervor during the Rath Yatra on January 20, 2024. The sacred Shri Ram Rath traversed through Hindu community hubs, creating a divine atmosphere at Carnival Hall, Crown Heights, Dextra Court, Chapel Gate, Witherthur Way, Sinclair Drive, Rooksdown, Popely, and back to Carnival Hall. At each hub, the devotees engaged in Pooja, Aarti ceremonies, received sacred Mangal Akshata from Ayodhya, and were treated to a captivating street play narrating the profound learnings from the Ramayana. This sacred journey garnered enthusiastic participation from over 700 people.

The Rath Yatra seamlessly navigated through the community, fostering integration with the local communities. We were fortunate to have the esteemed presence of our beloved Councillors during the celebrations. Councillor Paul Harve, Councillor Laura James, and Councillor Arun Mummalaneni. Post the Rath Yatra, an Akhand Ramayana Paath unfolded which was live-streamed on Facebook.

On the evening of January 21, 2024, a culturally enriched event captivated the audience, featuring Rama Bhajan, a Ramayana Drama, soulful songs, mesmerizing dance performances, and concluding with Aarti and the distribution of prasad. The event witnessed an attendance of over 350 people in person, while more than 500 joined the online channel, embracing the cultural richness. The festivities culminated with a Maha Pooja on January 22, where participants collectively watched the live telecast of the Ayodhya program, uniting the community in prayer and celebration.

Celebration for the inauguration of Shri Ram Mandir

Hundreds Hindu inau

MORE than 700 people participated in a Hindu inauguration celebration in Basingstoke.

The inauguration of Shri Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on January 22, 2024, reverberated through the Hindu communities in Basingstoke, inspiring a grand celebration that unfolded over three days.

The Shri Ram Utsav in Basingstoke commenced during the Rath Yatra on Saturday, January 20.

The sacred Shri Ram Rath traversed through Hindu community hubs in the town, with celebrations beginning at Carnival Hall followed by

Crown Heights, Dextra Court, Chapel Gate, Winterthur Way, Sinclair Drive, Rookdown, Popely, and back to Carnival Hall.

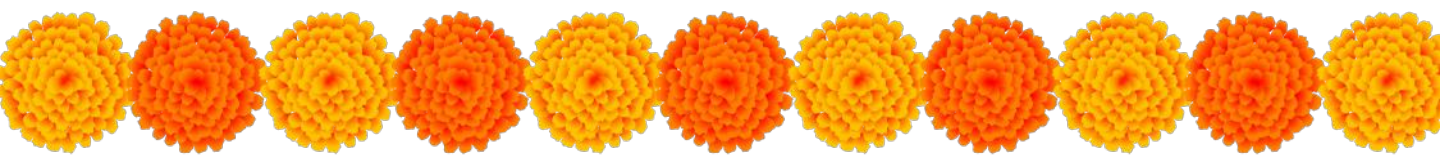
At each hub, the devoted participants engaged in Pooja, Aarti ceremonies, received sacred Mangal Akshata from Ayodhya, and were treated to a captivating street play narrating the profound learnings from the Ramayana.

More than 700 people participated in the event, including Councillor Paul Harvey, Councillor Laura James, and Councillor Arun Mummalaneni.

The event on January 20 was



Hundreds gather for Hindu inauguration celebration in Basingstoke Image: Contributed



celebrate inauguration

live-streamed on Facebook, with over 1,500 viewers tuning in to witness the celebrations.

On January 21 the celebrations continued with soulful songs and mesmerizing dance performances to hundreds of people, while on January 22, celebrations culminated with a Maha Pooja and a live telecast of the Ayodhya program, uniting the community in prayer and celebration.

A spokesperson for the organisers said: "The Shri Ram Utsav not only celebrated the inauguration of the divine Shri Ram

Mandir but also brought the profound teachings and cultural richness of the Ramayana to the heart of Basingstoke.

"It left an indelible mark, fostering a sense of unity and spirituality that resonated across the community over these three extraordinary days. While the event itself was free, we implemented a nominal registration fee to underscore the significance of the occasion.

"In line with our commitment, the funds collected through registration are being directed towards supporting a local charity."



Reading

We had vibrant and joyous celebration of the Shri Ram Mandir Pran Pratishtha Utsav in Reading. The active participation of nearly 300 people, including Swayamsevaks, sevikas, two councillors and community members from Reading and Bracknell, reflected a strong sense of community and devotion.

The chanting of "Jai Shri Ram" throughout the event, along with the recitation of Ramraksha Stotra, Hanuman Chalisa, and Bhajans, created a spiritually enriching atmosphere. It was heartening to see that devotees across different age groups came together to celebrate with emotions, dharmic bhavana, and enjoyment.

The inclusion of a session on the history of Shri Ram Mandir added an educational and informative element to the celebration. Involving kids in activities ensured the passing down of cultural and religious values to the younger generation.

Such celebrations play a crucial role in fostering a sense of unity, spirituality, and cultural preservation within the community. Jai Shri Ram!



Reading



Wellingborough

Wellingborough joined the Ram Mandir Pran Pratishtha celebrations organised by WDHA Mandir. Shri Balmukund ji Bhala gave every individual, the Darshan of aJai Shri Ram Dhwaja (flag) brought from Ayodhya.

Both our Sevikas and the Mandir bhajan mandal, sang beautiful bhajans on this occasion. We were shown very informative videos about the Ram mandir and discussed why it was such an important occasion.

After the function, we volunteered to serve food and provide Sewa (selfless service) in other ways. This was very much appreciated by the Mandir team. The event concluded with a very enjoyable Fireworks display.

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Leamington

Leamington Sanskar shakha had the special Shri Ram Mandir commemoration Shakha on 28th January. Local Hindu families were invited to experience the programme.

Our regular members gave a pradarshan (display) to show case its regular activities, which consisted of Yoga by Balas (Under 11's), Niyayudh (self-defence) and Dumbbells (physical art) were performed by elder members.

The history of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir was researched and presented by the youngsters. To commemorate the Pran pratistha, everyone came forward to light and arrange lamps to create the display of the name Ram.

The momentum of Shri Ram consecration event in Leamington parivar had commenced from 1st Jan and it was concluded with special Shakha highlighting in Bauddhik, a message that this is special moment Shri Ram Mandir inauguration is a beginning of a new journey of **'Mukh mein Ram se vichar aur aacharan mein Ram'** for all of us, and responsibility we have towards Vishwa Dharma.



Crewe

On the auspicious occasion of ShriRam Pran Pratishtha Ceremony, Crewe hosted their first parivar shakha. With the blessing of ShriRam, 67 people came together to celebrate this occasion and engage in shakha activities.

The shakha started with a pushpanjali (flower offering) to ShriRam and involved lots of fun khels (games). A inspirational bauddhik was given, which innovatively explained the Importance of Shakha through Ramayan and how we can be inspired by the skills and qualities of ShriRam, to develop ourselves. Everyone is looking forward to meeting again for our next shakha!



RadheKrishna Balgokulam, Birmingham

On 21 January, Birmingham's RadheKrishna Balgokulam's shakha session was filled with resounding echoes of "Jai Jai Shri Ram".

The celebrations ignited the spirit of the Ramayana, as participants engaged in invigorating yoga sessions, embarked on exhilarating bow and arrow races representing the triumph over Ravana, and united in constructing the Ram Setu (Ram's bridge) within the confines of the hall.

Creativity flourished as individuals created enchanting Raja Ram crowns, crafted stunning depictions of Shri Ram, and immersed themselves in Bal's Ram-themed colouring exercises. Additionally, parents were uplifted by the vibrant energy of the discussions, further enriching the collective experience.



Shiv Shakha Birmingham

Shiva Shakha Birmingham celebrated Pran Pratishtha of Shri Ram. The Celebrations planned by Shree Hindu Community Centre saw hundreds of worshipers attend and take part in the programme.

Our young Sevikas and Swayamsevaks presented bhajans in front of packed audience.

In attendance was the Mayor of Birmingham, Councillor Chaman Lal.

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Halifax- Huddersfield Shankaracharya Balgokulam Shakha

The Shri Ram mandir Pran Pratishtha Mahotsav celebrations received great interest and participation, with more than 70 people involved. The main attraction of the celebration was the Ram-Laxman- Sita play, presented by the children, which was welcomed/received by all with great spirit and devotion. Spiritual songs, dances and poem recitations of Shri Ram and Hanuman Ji was reverberating all over.

Many families visited our shakha for the first timer, so it was a great opportunity for all of us to show case our shakha activities. We ended the shakha by distributing the Akshad (yellow coloured blessed rice from Ayodhya) to families, which acts as an invitation to visit Ayodha and see Shri Ram's new abode and get blessings.



Warrington

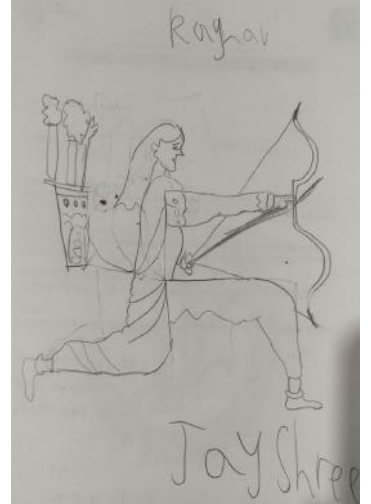
Warrington shakha engaged in several activities over the month of January, leading up to ShriRam's pran pratishtha ceremony. Fantastic drawings were made by the children - a kishore even made a digital drawing using python coding, which was a wonderful combination of computational and artistic skills.

People of all ages engaged in the 'Ram Naam Writing Jap challenge', which involved writing 'ShriRam' several times, as a form of meditation, and bhakti. Dr Shrikant ji Pattalwar hosted an enjoyable geet session in shakha, and taught all the members a beautiful bhajan, 'Rama Naam Tarkam'.

A program was organised at the local mandir, consisting of a presentation of all the above, a recitation of the Ram Raksha Stotra and a video presenting the history of the Ram mandir, to learn about the importance and relevance of this event. These activities and celebrations have reminded us about the good qualities of ShriRam and have inspired us to try our best to incorporate those values into our daily lives.



Warrington





Coventry Nagar

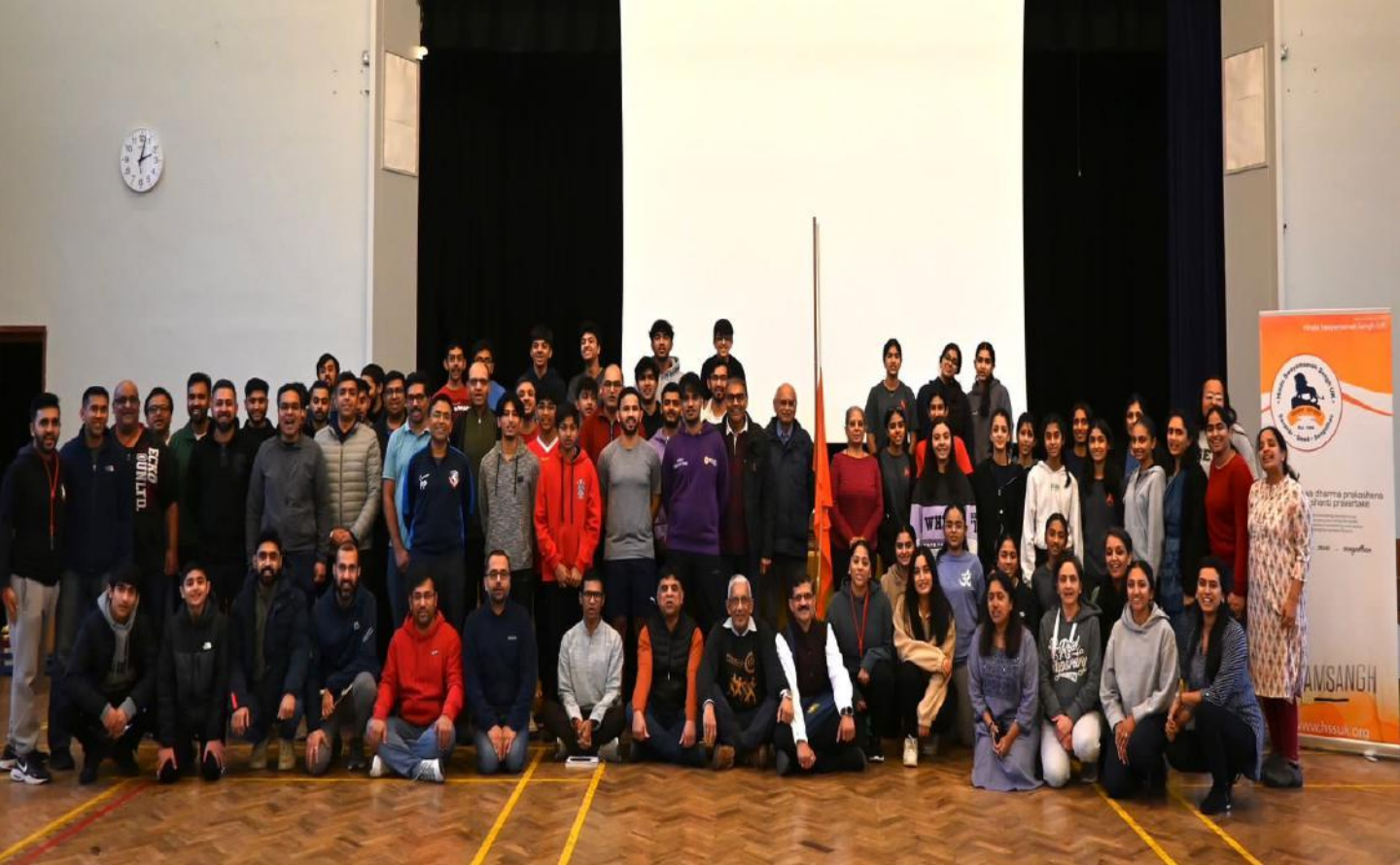
On the 21st of January, Coventry Shakha was fortunate to volunteer with their local Shri Krishna temple to celebrate the Ram Mandir Inauguration. This event was a 24-hour event with Ram Dhuns (songs) running all day nonstop!

Our Swayamsevaks and Sevikas supported the mandir with day-to-day support with food serving, directing devotees, and even some Kirtan!





More news



HSS(UK)

National Karyakarta Varg (NKV)

The National Karyakarta Varg (NKV) is an annual refreshers/training day, a conclave of office bearers of the HSS(UK). Over the years, the NKV moved from a central one-venue event to a three-zone event.

However this year, the large number anticipated attendance warranted that HSS(UK) hold it in 5 regions. As accepted, a record number of 702 participants, reflects the growth of HSS work in the UK. The NKV involves sessions for an effective and inspirational Shakha activity and professional development.

Subjects covered at NKV included:

- Safeguarding and first aid
- Community outreach and networking
- Sewa (supporting local charities and communities)
- Delivering Bauddhiks (intellectual discussions)
- Delivering Shareerik (physical activities and games)
- General administration and management





Slough

New Monthly Sevika Shakha

On February 11th, 2024, the Sita Sevika Shakha Slough hosted its first Monthly Sevika Shakha, drawing an overwhelmingly positive response from women and girls across Slough and Langley.

The enthusiastic turnout and active participation of women underscored the significance of initiatives. Through a variety of activities including games, yoga, workshops, and insightful talk, it provided a platform for women to connect, support each other, and strive for personal growth.

A highlight of the shakha was the Bauddhik session, which took on special significance with the inauguration of the Ram Mandir in mind, participants delved into a crafty workshop that was deeply intertwined with the essence of a Mandir and the puja rituals associated with it. This hands-on activity not only sparked creativity but also facilitated meaningful dialogue and shared experiences among participants.

The success of the first Monthly Sevika Shakha serves as a testament to the importance of creating spaces where women can come together, celebrate their strengths, and inspire one another to reach new heights. As Sevikas looks forward to future gatherings, Sita Shakha remains committed to nurturing a supportive and empowering environment for all.

"Shakti Ka Naam Naari Hai," (Female power) echoed the sentiment of the day, encapsulating the spirit of empowerment and solidarity that defines the Sita Sevika Shakha-Slough.



Oldham

New Balagokulam

On Friday, 23rd February Oldham organised Balagokulam open day session, attended by 26. Children engaged in a range of activities, such as arts and games. The session was very well received by the attendees and positive response received from the parents. We are looking forward to more activities in our next session.



High Wycombe

Makar Sankranti

This year High Wycombe Adi Shankara Shakha celebrated Makar Sankranti Utsav with lot of interest and passion. On a cold day morning, a bunch of kite enthusiasts from the community gathered in a local park to fly traditional paper kites. With perfect wind conditions, the kites soared high in the sky and it was an amazing experience for young kids and for adults it brought lot of nostalgia moments. During Shakha Utsav, activities like paper kites and Rangoli making were arranged. We witnessed Kids creative minds once again as kites and Rangolis came out aesthetically stunning . Kids from different regions of Bharat wrote Makar Sankranti wishes in their regional language on the kites.

We also played Tug-of-war, which turned out to be a great favourite for all on the day and was played with lot of vigour by everyone. Ultimately, Til-gul sweets were also distributed to mark the occasion which was attended by 88 Swayamsevaks and Sevikas. The celebrations showed unity in diversity, upholding the key motto of HSS(UK).



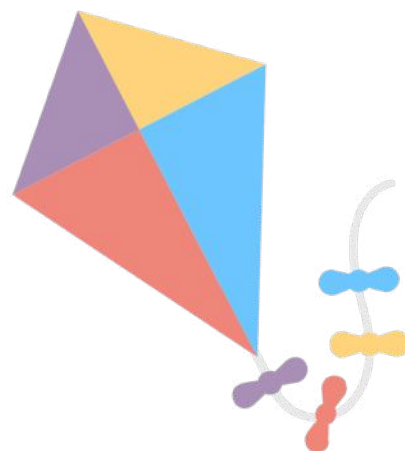


Halifax- Huddersfield

Makar Sankranti

Around 60 people including kids and people from different parts of Bharat joined in for the Makar Sankranti celebration in Halifax- Huddersfield Shankaracharya Balgokulam Shakha

The entire atmosphere was full of energy and joy in welcoming the new year. The special attraction of the day was the state wise exhibit of Sankranti celebrations in different states of Bharat. Families took part in with great enthusiasm and showcased the true diversity nicely representing their own customs/traditions in celebrating the festival thorough commentary, displaying traditional attire and the most important Sankranti special foods which everyone enjoyed.





Wellingborough

75th Republic Day Celebrations

On 28th January, HSS Wellingborough Shakha participated in the Special event organised by Wellingborough District Association (WDHA) with great enthusiasm on 75th Republic Day celebrations. After that, groups of children aged 4-16 performed classical dances followed by patriotic songs, Bharatnatyam (dances that express Bhava, Raga, and Tala.) With all groups of people around the community showing diverse culture, unity, motivation and passion to help others was the best part of the show.

Wellingborough Shakha helped in the arrangements of the events. This was a memorable event for all of us from Shakha and helped in increasing our presence and network in the community around us.

Shri Prabhuram ji Hematram Mehta

On 22 January 2024, Shri Prabhuramji Hematram Mehta, lifelong Swayamsevak's soul departed for the heavenly abode. The day also happened to be Pran Pratishtha of idol of Bhagwan Shri Ram at Ayodhya Temple.

Prabhuramji was born in Kitale, Kenya on 2nd January 1946. As a boy he attended local Shakha and went to regional and national shibirs in Nakuru, Machakos and Nairobi. Upon arrival to the UK in 1969 he settled in Newham, East London with his wife, Urmila Ji Mehta, and extended family.

Prabhuramji worked closely with other new arrivals to the UK to create a Hindu community in Newham. From the formulation of VHP activities and availability of the Upton Centre, the team worked tirelessly to ensure Hindu dharma thrived in their new homeland. He also was integral in opening Stratford Mandir, one of the first in the region. With the starting of Gujarati classes and Shakha activities through the 1970s and 1980s, Prabhuramji was a true Karyakarta and original pillar of the East London community. One of his big contributions was taking an active role in the Virat Hindu Sammelan of August 1989 and many other Sewa projects.

In 1990, Prabhuramji relocated to Swindon with his wife and six children. He once again saw a need to bring together the local community and instil dharmic foundations in the next generation. He very quickly started the Gujarati classes in Swindon and educated many, young and old through to GCSE level. He took the role as pujari for local pujas, weddings and funerals at Swindon Hindu Mandir. He also started the Swindon Shakha and Balagokulam activities, which continue to thrive today.



Prabhuramji lived his life as a Swayamsevak, serving the local community wherever he went, without any need for a reward. One of his annual highlights in later years was attending annual Jyestha Shibir and Vishwa Sangh Shibir in Bharat held every five years. Prabhuramji will be remembered through the legacy he has left in these communities and the Samskars he has imparted.

Prabhuramji was unfortunately unwell since April 2022, with throat cancer. He recovered from this, and was able to attend the Kenya Shibir in December 2022 (marking 75 years of Sangh in Kenya) and visited his birthplace Kitale for the first time since 1969. In late 2023, the side effects of his treatment took its toll and he was finally taken into hospital on 22 December 2023. He passed away peacefully one month later, surrounded by his brothers, wife and six children chanting mantras and prayers by his side.

May Parmatma give shanti and sadgati to the departed soul. On behalf of HSS(UK), we pray for eternal peace and Sadgati of the departed soul and courage to the extended Parivaar to come over this loss of a near and dear one.



Other Organisations

SAMSKRITA BHARATI UK

heartily welcomes you to attend the
SAMSKR̥TA SAMBHĀṢANA ŚIBIRAM

Easter Weekend (29th – 31st March 2023)

Beaumanor Hall, Beaumanor Dr, Woodhouse
Loughborough, LE12 8TX, United Kingdom

- Learn Sanskrit in an immersive atmosphere sans distractions
- Practise your spoken-Sanskrit skills with like-minded friends
- Listen to stories, sing songs, and play games in Saṃskṛtam
- Find some hard-to-find Sanskrit books and educational materials on sale at the venue.

All this and more in a fun-filled environment!

Please register before **23 March 2024** at
<https://www.sanskritabharatiuk.org/event/shibiram-2024/>

Sanskrit Bharati UK

Sanskrit Bharati Shibir 2024

This annual retreat will help you to learn to speak in Sanskrit through Stories, Singing Songs, and Games. Dates: Friday 29th till Sunday 31st March.

Please register at:

<https://www.sanskritabharatiuk.org/event/shibiram-2024/>

Hindu Funeral Rites Free Guidebook

We have great pleasure in making available for all Mandirs a new guide book "**Hindu Funeral Rites**".

The proper performance of Hindu funeral rites is of paramount importance to the Hindu Community and it plays a significant role in providing solace and closure to grieving families. This comprehensive handbook covers a wide range of topics related to Hindu funeral rites, including the rituals, customs, and practices that are observed during the cremation process. The book is intended to serve as a guide for those involved in organizing or participating in these ceremonies. It includes background information, explanation of rituals, prayers and additional resources to assist in the planning and execution of Hindu cremation ceremonies carried out in the UK.

Please see the attached letter from VHP UK Board of Trustees which provides more details of the publication and how to obtain it.

The book can be freely distributed to our congregation.

If you have any queries please contact VHP UK using the email given in the letter.

Thanks to the sponsorship we have received from the Puri Foundation, we are able to offer free copies to you. All we ask for is to let us know the number of copies and the delivery address. In return, we just expect some feedback from you and your members. Request for free copies of the publication can be made to your local contact/branch of the VHP(UK) or by email to manchesterbranch@vhp.org.uk.

SAVE
THE
DATE

Conference: Mandir Funding, Pujaris from Bharat, 8th June 2024

We provide an early notice for you to mark the date of **8th June 2024** for a special conference being organised in London. The conference will be of special interest to Mandir Executives as it will include topics such as Funding for Mandirs, Pujaris from Bharat, involving younger people in Mandir Management as well as other topics that affect the Hindu community in the UK.



Vishwa Hindu Parishad (U.K.)

World Council of Hindus
Registered Charity No. 262684

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www.vhp.org.uk

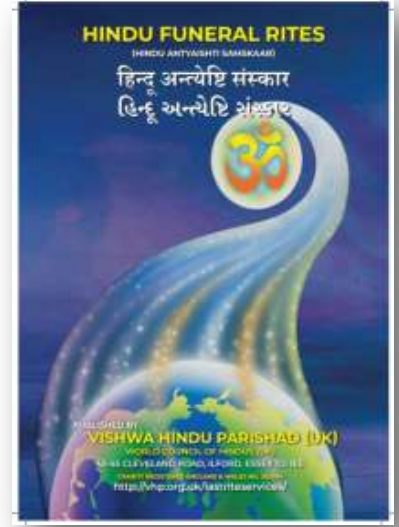
email: secretary@vhp.org.uk

February 2024

Free Distribution of 'Hindu Funeral Rites' Guide book by the VHP(UK)

Dear Bandhu/Bhagini,

I am writing on behalf of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Council of Hindus) to offer your organisation and members complimentary copies of our publication, "**Hindu Funeral Rites**" which is a comprehensive guidance on Hindu cremation ceremonies. Based on the lessons learnt during the Covid pandemic, this book has been written to provide guidance on Hindu funeral rites and cremation ceremonies keeping in mind the current laws and regulations.



The proper performance of Hindu funeral rites is of paramount importance to the Hindu community, and it plays a significant role in providing solace and closure to grieving families. This comprehensive handbook covers a wide range of topics related to Hindu funeral rites, including the rituals, customs, and practices that are observed during the cremation process. The publication is intended to serve as a guide for those involved in organizing or participating in these ceremonies. It includes background information, explanation of rituals, prayers and additional resources to assist in the planning and execution of Hindu cremation ceremonies carried out in the UK.

We believe that having access to this resource will be of great benefit to your organisation and its members.

Thanks to the sponsorship we have received from the Puri Foundation, we are able to offer free copies to you. All we ask for is to let us know the number of copies and the delivery address. In return, we just expect some feedback from you and your members.

Request for free copies of the publication can be made to your local contact/branch of the VHP(UK) or by email to manchesterbranch@vhp.org.uk.

Jai Shri Ram!

Board of Trustees, VHP(UK)

Branches also at:

Birmingham, Bolton, Bradford, Croydon, Hayes, Hounslow, Ilford, Leicester, Newham, Northampton, Nottingham, Southampton and Wembley



Essential Reads




Photo by
Alejandro Cartagena
on Unsplash

Photo by Markus Winkler on Unsplash

ESSENTIAL READ

INSIGHT UK Produces a Report: Spotlight on the BBC

The analysis is based on text mining and observations into some of the narratives of the BBC coverage of Hindus, Indians, and India.



With over 380 reference points, this report by INSIGHT UK is a deep-dive analysis of BBC's reporting. The report intends to supplement the findings from INSIGHT UK's recent national media survey.

Key Findings:

- A lack of balanced reporting on a range of topics, such as Hindu persecution, Hindu festivals, Kashmir, Indian women's rights, and cow smuggling.
- Hindus are frequently portrayed inaccurately as villains, perpetuating false stereotypes.
- News stories highlighting Hindus as victims often receive inadequate coverage. There were numerous cases found of selective coverage, using solely opinion. Facts build stories but views shape the stories and narrative. Selective views can risk creating selective outrage.
- News articles often reference dubious, unreliable, or controversial sources.
- There is an urgent need for improved, balanced, and accurate reporting.
- Fair representation of programmes related to BHI communities is crucial.
- There is an imbalanced focus on ideology, religion, and "caste".

Read the introduction and download the report here:

<https://insightuk.org/spotlight-on-the-bbc>



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

Send all articles to sanghmail@hssuk.org

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