

Heaven must have descended into the Westminster Abbey today as the Royal Wedding took place.

My wife dropped me in the morning by the clearance marquee for guests invited to the Royal Wedding and inside the Abbey, which is one of the oldest houses of God in the UK, the atmosphere was filled with a grandiose sense of serenity while the senses feasted on a multitude array of colour and music. It was a beautiful setting for the Royal couple whose match seems to have been made no less than in heaven itself.

Curiously the Christian marriage ceremony has some of the key hallmarks of a Hindu wedding ceremony. The father gives the bride away just as in a Hindu ceremony, albeit a bit more elaborately, the girl's Kanniya Daan is done by her parents. Then the vows are taken just as in the Hindu ceremony seven vows are taken. Of course there are a lot more Hindu ceremonies around the fire alter for God and Dharma but in a simplistic way the format seems to be the same. Even the Lesson at the end of the ceremony is exactly like the Shiksha given at the Hindu ceremony. Again just as the bride's brothers play a major role in the Hindu wedding, Kate's brother James Middleton read from Romans 12:1-2,9-18, for The Lesson, which gave a beautiful message of love, spiritual worship, perseverance, patience, humility, aspiring always to noble thoughts and a line I particularly liked, 'to outdo one another in showing honour'. But perhaps if I may be allowed to suggest that a Hindu Lesson would have just added one tiny bit extra that Kate must now treat William's parents as she does her own with the same love and care and more and of course in this modern age the same goes for William.

The Dean of Westminster Dr John Hall conducted the overall service with the Archbishop Dr Rowan Williams blessing the marriage ceremony and Bishop of London Richard Chartres gave a wonderful sermon, saying that every wedding is a Royal wedding. Indeed, as in a Hindu wedding the Groom and the Bride around the fire alter are considered to be the incarnates of Lord Vishnu the Preserver and his consort Goddess Laxmi representing beauty and all the good things in life. After the wedding the Dean Dr John Hall, Canon Jane Hedges and the Minor Canon Michael Macey gave a Champaign reception in St Catherine's Chapel Garden at the Abbey to toast the newlyweds a happy and long life.

Perhaps today the world also witnessed a soft yet noble face of the constitutional aspect of the monarchy. True every family goes through ups and downs in life but the permanency that a responsible monarchy brings in a position that is above politics, a monarchy that mingles with her people, is surely far better than any equivalent elected republican President who simply cannot give the people a softer sense of nationalism that otherwise comes with peoples natural desire to aspire for something that is more enduring, and with a human face rather than merely some republican symbol like the flag.

Hindus love Royalty, generally speaking. Our Avatars Lord Rama and Lord Krishna were born into Royalty. Even Buddha the renunciate, was born a prince. Our very best wishes are with William and Kate; it goes without saying that they are a lovely couple. May the gods and goddesses always smile at them with their grace.

Anil Bhanot 29 April 2011

Holy Incarnation Guru Govind Singh

Guru Govind Singh meditating on the 'HemKunt' range of the Himalayas, during his previous life. He narrates in his autobiography 'Bachitter Natak', (the Glorious Drama) - his discourse with the ParmAtma (God), who appoints him as His son and instructs him to be born to Guru Teg Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru in the lineage of Guru Nanak, and create the inimitable 'Khalsa (Pure) Panth (Order)'.

The valiant history of the Sikh Gurus and the martyrs who shed their blood and laid down their precious lives as a great sacrifice at the altar of Sanatan Dharma is written in golden letters in the annals of history of India.

In pursuit of dominance, when the Islamic emperors raised their swords to slash down the mighty banyan tree of Dharma, it was the brave Sikhs, who stood up to protect the Indian race. Guru Arjun Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, was tortured to death in 1606, because he stood against the Islamic fundamentalism, fanaticism and imperialism of Emperor Jehangir. Guru Arjun Dev's grandson and the ninth Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur, was cut down by the sword of the fanatic Muslim ruler, Aurangzeb, who was the grandson of Jehangir, in 1675.

Continue...

9 Indian Memorial at Neuve-Chapelle in France

An invitation was received from the Prince of Wales office to the Hindu council to send a delegation to participate in a memorial service to pay tribute to the contribution of the Indian soldiers in the First World War at the Neuve-Chapelle Indian Memorial on 19 July 2010.

The Hindu delegation was led by Major(Retired) Suryaparsad Upadhya with two other gurkha soldiers. We felt honoured to be able to stand in places where Sikh, Indian Hindus, Gurkhas and muslim soldiers had actually fought in the Great War as Indian Corps troops during period 10 to 13 March 1915. Continue...

9 Debate in the House of Lords on 7th April 2010 on Gilgit and Baltistan

Baroness Emma Nicholson of Winterbourne as the European Parliament Rapporteur of the Kashmir report 2007 ,held a meeting on 7th April in the House of Lords to debate the proposed changes to the status of Gilgit and Baltistan and the wider implications for the region and internationally .

The meeting was attended by the representatives of the various Muslim Organizations, the Hindu Council UK, the Indo-European Kashmir Forum, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the Democracy Forum, the Journalists of the Observer, the Nation, the CNN, the Times, the Press Trust of India, the Conflict Resolution Expert, Councillor Chuni Chavda, the Political Conusellor of the Indian High Commission and the Deputy High Commissioner of Pakistan.

In August 2009 the Pakistan cabinet approved the Gilgit- Baltistan, formerly the Northern Areas, Empowerment and Self Governance Order.

Krishna Bhan, President Indo-European Kashmir Forum, stated that the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir and the Pakistan controlled Gilgit-Baltistan are an integral part of India by virtue of its' accession to India in 1947.Any action taken to alter the status of any part of the territory under the Illegal occupation of Pakistan has no legal basis and is totally unacceptable. The Self Governance Order of 2009 will weaken the Kashmir issue and will distract the International Community from the real cause of dead lock in the settlement of the Kashmir issue.

Continue...

9 Doyen of Indian Freedom Movement - Satguru Ram Singh

Glowing homage was paid to the Founder of the Freedom Movement of India, Satguru Ram Singh at an event held here at the House of Lords. Chaired by Lord King, the Holy Incarnation Celebration of Satguru Ram Singh was supported by Hindu Council UK on Monday 22nd March 2010.

The speakers eulogised him for his political sagacity and dynamic personality. They recalled that Satguru Ram Singh laid the foundation of the freedom movement in 1857 upon which Gandhi based his political philosophy and in the following years came into being Indian independence and nationalist movement.

Continue...

9 Puja for the Gurkhas going to Afghanistan April 2010

The Royal Gurkha Rifles shall be departing to Afghanistan in April where they will be deployed to combat the Taliban. In total there are over 3000 Gurkhas in the British Army but 600 of them will be deployed in harsh regions like the Helmand province. Their commander Lt Col Gerald Strickland MBE, who speaks fluent Nepalese, held a puja, a prayer ceremony, for a pre-deployment blessing.

The Gurkha Pandits performed the Vedic fire ceremony under the auspices of the Commander and Major Khusiman Gurung MVO, together with the soldiers and their families.

Continue...

9 The Proceedings of the IEKF Seminar on Tuesday 12th January 2010 in the House of Commons

The Indo-European Kashmir seminar on 12th January was attended by the British Parliamentarians and the representatives of the following Organisations:-

The Hindu Council UK, the Hindu Forum of Britain, the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, the National Hindu Students Forum, the Kashmir Bhawan Centre, the IEKF, the Labour Councillors, the Nepalese Hindus UK and the Second Secretary of the Indian High Commission.

Continue...

9 IEKF Seminar on Kashmiri Hindus in the House of Commons on Tuesday 12th January, 2010

Kashmir is, historically and culturally, one of the oldest regions of the Indian sub-continent. It sustained, in many ways, the inclusive culture of the country in religious, social, aesthetic, spiritual and knowledge contexts. Kashmir's geographic spread includes not only the Valley but also Jammu, Ladakh and Gilgit that adds diversity, depth and colour to its mosaic and religious plurality. The diverse areas of Kashmir reflect the multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic India. Known for its natural beauty, its lakes, glaciers, mountains, valleys, forests and flora, Kashmir has attracted all types of people-travellers and pilgrims, discoverers and adventurers, saints, teachers and philosophers, religious zealots and crusaders, artists and litterateurs and above all conquerors and aggressors. It is an ancient name and, Aurel Stein observed, "continued name can be traced back to more than twenty three centuries." Continue....

Continue...

9 Gurkhas Injustice Continues - 11 January 2010

The judicial review brought against the Ministry of Defence by the British Gurkha Welfare Society in the High Court on 27 October 2009, has on 11 Jan 2010 announced its verdict, finding that that the Pension arrangements for Gurkhas do not breach the Human Rights Act and that even though the Ministry of Defence did not undertake an equality risk assessment before the new pensions

arrangements were introduced, there was no breach by them of the equality duty. This leaves many Gurkhas disillusioned and disappointed that discrimination will continue against veterans who served in the British Army prior to July 1997.

Continue...

9 Inspire 09 Business Entrepreneur Award goes to an Ex Gurkha

Ex Gurkha win Inspire 09 Business Entrepreneur Award It is a great honour for the Ex Gurkhas community in Rushmoor when an Ex Gurkha is given such recognition in the UK. Yogendra Bahadur Chhetri, Managing Director of YBC Cleaning Services Ltd was presented with the entrepreneur of the year award at a prestigious award ceremony held on the 17th of November at the Anvil, Basingstoke. The black tie event was attended by the local mayor, councillors and crème de la crème of the borough. The Inspire 09 Business Awards celebrate the success of regional businesses in the UK. Yogen Chhetri is the first British Gurkha Hindu to win this award in UK after the government relaxed visa rules for ex Gurkhas in October 2004.

Continue...

News & articles for the Year 2009

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26 DIVERSITY IN PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS (Make a difference – join a Public Board!)

Public bodies make important decisions that shape the quality of our lives and public services, and include organisations like the governing bodies of local hospitals, the Arts Council, advisory bodies or the Competition Commission. However some groups, particularly women, people from ethnic minorities and disabled people are under-represented on our public boards. Under new targets, so as to be more representative of society, by 2011 the Government wants to see women form 50% of new public appointees, disabled people 14%, and people from ethnic minorities 11%.

Continue...

26 Choice of herbal medicine is part of diversity

A new campaign group is announced today to ensure that all herbalists are recognised, and meet agreed standards of education and training, undertake Continuing Professional Development, adhere to a strict Code of Ethics and Standards and are properly insured. This comes as a response

to the regulation from the EU, whereby Herbal Medicines (Ayurveda, Chinese Medicine, Kampo, Traditional Tibetan Medicine, Unani Tibb and Western Herbal Medicine) may be effectively outlawed in the UK unless the UK Government introduces statutory regulation before the EU law becomes effective in April 2011.

Continue...

26 European World Ayurveda Congress EWAC2009

In the heart of Europe on 10th and 11th October 2009, the European Ayurveda Association, hosted its first significant event in Baden-Baden, Germany. Despite the rain, the event did not dampen the enthusiasm of nearly 1,200 visitors who flocked to witness exhibition and dedicated programme of lectures given by some of the best know names in the Ayurvedic world.

The two day event in the intimate and up to date conference and exhibition centre was an invitation to all those who want to experience Ayurveda for the first time or those who want to learn and experience another aspect of this ancient system of Indian medicine to come and enjoy the European World Ayurveda Congress EWAC2009.

Continue...

26 'Aim Higher' - HCUK Public Appointments Strategy

The Hindu Council UK (HCUK) Public Appointments Taskforce is the culmination of two years effort by the HCUK on improving the representation of Hindu men and women on the boards of Britain's Public Bodies. I hope that this HCUK Public Appointments Strategy sees the start of a new chapter in raising the aspirations of a great number of talented, skilled and experienced Hindus to "Step Up to the Board" and in the ongoing development of a thriving mentor network, such that those who have already made it to the top can "light the way" for the next generation. Continue...

26 Faith in Good Governance

The following link gives Charity Commission's guidance on good governance issues with the help of some case studies done recently across faiths. It is recommended reading for all Temple Trustees - Anil Bhanot. Continue...

26 Hindu Times Conference: National Hindu Students Forum (UK) To Change Politics

The Hindu Times Conference: National Hindu Students Forum (UK) To Change Politics

By Kishan Bhatt

The National Hindu Students Forum (UK) are taking a leaping initiative at their next annual conference entitled 'Hindu Times: Be The News You Wish To See' to be held on Saturday 21st

November at the City University, London. The conference is to tackle the misconceptions of the Hindu faith that are commonly assumed by the wider world and to teach the future of our community the opportunities to act.

Continue...

26 Ayurveda under threat in the UK

Response from the Hindu Council UK to the Joint Consultation on the report to Ministers from the Department of Health Steering Group on the Statutory Regulations of Acupuncture, Ayurveda and Herbal Medicines practised in the UK.

Ayurveda, (Ayu – age, life, longevity), (r – relating to), (Veda – knowledge, wisdom, science) is the most ancient complete system of health care in the world, inscribed in the spiritual Vedas, the worlds most ancient books of wisdom.

Continue...

26 Gurkha Pension - Westminster Lobby - 10th November 2009

The Judicial Review on Gurkha pensions took the whole two days allocated, while we had anticipated for the worst with two cases in the bin (2003 JR raised by GAESO and 2008 raised by three individuals but related only to post 97), the Judge could not give an immediate verdict. The Brigade Gurkhas Welfare Society legal team did extremely well considering the nature of the case and what they were up against, they have countered the MOD on various grounds with very sound arguments. While we remain optimistic we must now place full pressure on the PR front.

Continue...

26 Hindu Council's work with Schools

This week we explored the broader vision of Hinduism with over a 1000 boys at Watford Grammar School.

On Monday, for the younger age group we explored the theme of Many Ways to God. We asked the boys why should you always think of God as your father in heaven? Why not as your mother in heaven? This is what many ways to God implies.

Continue...

26 Nirankari Event at Symphony Hall Birmingham

Realisation....Lets Live in Harmony

His Holiness Nirankari Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj, inaugurated a Sant Samagam entitled Realisation....Lets live in Harmony at the Prestigious Symphony Hall, home to the CBSO on the 30th August 2009. The grand occasion was attended by over 200 VIP's from across the country including

the Honourable Bishop of Aston, Honourable Members of Parliament Rob Marris, Virendre Sharma, a cross section of Councillors, delegates from the Corporate World etc... There were attendees from across the world including Europe, North America, South East Asia and UAE.

Continue...

26 The launch of the English Translation of Lord Swaminarayan scripture and the unveiling of a new Temple project in London

Leading parliamentarians gathered with over 150 Hindu temple trustees to demonstrate their support for a Shree Muktajeevan Swamibapa Complex, an exciting community centre in north-west London on Monday 13th July 2009 organised by the Hindu Council of UK, the National Council of Hindu Temples and coordinated by Mr Abhay Lakhani to honour His Holiness Acharya Shri Purushottampriyadasji Maharaj.

Continue...

26 Yoga and Meditation for the Brigade of Gurkhas in North Yorkshire

Recently Acharya Krishan Kant Attri the Hindu Chaplain for the HM Armed Forces and Pandit Atmaram Dahal the Gurkha religious teacher had organised a Yoga and meditation session for the Brigade of Gurkhas in Catterick North Yorkshire.

You may wonder why one of the most famous and toughest regiments in the British Army would be interested in learning anything to do with the gentle art meditation or yoga in the middle of their training programme.

Continue...

26 Hinduism does not condemn gay people

Courtesy of The Guardian - Comment Belief

The British Hindu homosexual community will welcome the news that their brethren in India are now be able to enjoy the same freedoms as they do in the UK. It is indeed good news that people are not discriminated against because of God's laws of nature.

The ancient Hindu scriptures describe the homosexual condition to be a biological one, and although the scripture gives guidance to parents on how to avoid procreating a homosexual child, it does not condemn the child as unnatural.

Continue...

26 Public Appointments Reception at

Admiralty House, Whitehall on Wednesday 17th June 09

HCUK were invited to a reception by Harriet Harman on their launch of equality targets.

Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP was the key note speaker followed by Sadiq Khan MP Minister of Transport. It was good to see a number of professionals from our community who were present.

Continue...

26 The big lunch

Imagine a summer's day on which millions of us, throughout the UK, sit down to have lunch together – in the middle of our streets, around our tower blocks and on every patch of common ground. The food, entertainment and decorations we will have grown, cooked or created ourselves. This will be a day to break bread with our neighbours, to put a smile on Britain's face.

It's called The Big Lunch and this is your invitation.

The Big Lunch is inviting you and all 61 million people across the UK to simultaneously sit down to eat lunch with your neighbours, in the middle of your street on Sunday 19th July as a simple act of community.

Continue...

26 Hindu Council UK Statement on Sri Lanka

PRESS RELEASE

Tuesday 2nd June 2009

For Immediate Use

Hindu Council UK Statement on Sri Lanka

The Hindu Council UK (HCUK) this week called a meeting at the Highgate Murugan Temple in Archway Road, North London, for all those considering themselves to be 'Friends of the Tamils,' to agree a resolution calling upon the Sri Lankan Government to take immediate measures to preserve life in the region.

Continue...

26 London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games - Opportunities

for the Hindu community to engage

By Alok Mitra Chair of EMBG the lead executive for business for HCUK,

Our May event at London City Hall was a great success with over 150 businesses and VIPs attending. They came to share their experiences, network and find out how businesses can get their slice of the £9.3bn Olympic Games budget. This was a high profile important event for the Hindu Community in London and was well attended by the wider community as well.

Continue...

26 Gurkha settlement decision 'immoral'

The Hindu Council strongly feels that the Government has once again betrayed the Gurkhas.

The Home Office issued new guidance on Friday 24 April 2009 which they said was designed to make it easier for Gurkhas to qualify for settlement. But the new rules have been criticised rightly so by our Gurkha brothers. Some 200,000 Gurkhas fought for Britain in World Wars I and II and more than 45,000 died in British uniform. Around 3,500 Gurkhas currently serve in the British army, including in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Continue...

26 The Armed Forces Hindu Conference Birmingham April 2009

The President of the Geeta Bhawan Birmingham welcomed everyone.

The Hindu Chaplain Acharya Krishan K Attri (The organiser of the Conference) thanked the management committee for having provided the venue to such a conference. He said that it was the first time that a conference of this magnitude was being held in Birmingham. He thanked the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Heads, Major General Rutledge, Lord King of West Bromwich, Speakers from various parts of the country and other guests for their presence and encouragement to the delegates.

Continue...

26 Ram Navami Celebrations at the House of Commons

The birthday of Lord Rama was celebrated at the House of Commons on Monday, as the Members' Dining Room was turned into a Mandir for the afternoon. The fifth annual event of its kind, the festival was once again hosted by Tony McNulty MP and Abhay Lakhani, Parliamentary Advisor on Community Issues.

Continue...

26 Holy Incarnation Celebrations of Satguru Ram Singh at House of Lords

Many people in the West today as well as the East know who Mahatma Gandhi was and how he used the principle of Non-Violence to end the Rule of the British Raj in India. Sir Richard Attenborough made the film 'Gandhi' and the Minimalist composer Philip Glass wrote the Opera 'Satyagraha' about the life of Gandhi and his 'impulse towards truth', so the Western Arts made much in the 1980's of India's political/ spiritual leader. Thus the Ahimsa movement of Indian Independence is as much a part of Western culture now as it is Indian where there are individuals and organizations working for World Peace. The philosophy of Gandhi is in fact respected and revered the world over and all Faiths and cultures view Gandhi as a True Spirit who gave much of great value to Humanity.

Continue...

26 Belfast Celebrates Holi

ArtsEkta, Northern Ireland's multi-cultural arts organisation celebrated the Hindu Festival of Holi in St George's Market in the Centre of Belfast on the 15th March 2009.

The event was attended by almost 3000 visitors from all cultures and religions living in the area. This was the first time Holi has been celebrated publicly in Northern Ireland.

Continue...

26 The Commonwealth @ 60

The Commonwealth Day Observance service took place at Westminster Abbey on Monday 9th March 2009. Attended by Her Majesty The Queen, His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh and

Prime Minister Gordon Brown, as well as numerous diplomatic and political dignitaries from around the world, is an annual event to reaffirm the Commonwealth's commitment to justice, peace and equality of opportunity for all.

Continue...

26 Hinduism and Secularism

[A speech at the Secular Society, Leicester, the oldest in the world, by Anil Bhanot on 22nd February 2009]

While I stand before you today as the General Secretary of the Hindu Council UK, in my day job I am a chartered accountant running my own practice in West London. So you might say an "accountant with a soul" and I'm particularly delighted to be invited to speak today in front of so many of you, because what I would like to talk about is how Hinduism respects the divinity in all, not least the secularists.

Continue...

26 HCUK Policy Statement on Open Air Funeral Pyres – February 2009

There has been some demand in the UK for a full open air ceremony to be conducted on cremation of a dead body according to ancient Hindu rites. These rites stipulate that the body be cremated by means of a wood-fuelled fire in an open air facility exposed to daylight. A fuller explanation is given in a report prepared by Professor H R Sharma of Banaras Hindu University and is attached under link.....

Continue...

26 Indology XI

The Dasharajnya War : The War of Ten Kings

When asked about the ancient classics of India, most would quickly reply with The Ramayana and The Mahabharata. Although this answer is correct, there is an even more ancient story that has been forgotten by the bulk of Indians and Hindus globally. That ancient story is called the Dasharajnya or 'War of 10 Kings'. Long before the Ramayana, there lived a descendent of India's eponymous king, Bharata, named Sudas. King Sudas was the 16th generation descendant of Emperor Bharata – whom India is named after. Sudas was the grandson of the powerful king Divodas Atithigva (who had his empire in the regions of Punjab and was married to Madhavi) and he was the son of King Pijavana.

Continue...

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37 CHILDREN UNVEIL HINDU SNOWMEN AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES

Christmas is a festival anyone can share – that was the message the Hindu Council took to Westminster Abbey on Sunday afternoon, as a group of seven children from the London Sivan Kovil temple in Lewisham unveiled a Hindu snowman and snow-woman decorated with brightly coloured rangoli style rice patterns inspired by Christmas and spices in the College Garden. Dressed in traditional Indian clothing, the snowmen illustrated how the festivals of both East and West can be enjoyed by everyone in Britain, whether they hold a religious belief or not.

Continue...

37 Mumbai Statement - 26 November 2008

The Executive of the Hindu Council UK has been shocked and horrified by the news of terror attacks on our sisters and brothers in Mumbai. We condemn these atrocities utterly; there is no place on Mother Earth for such cowardly attacks, attacks which no religion, philosophy, ideology or political system can even begin to justify. We are praying for the swift and safe release of those taken hostage and send our sympathies and condolences to all who are injured and grieving.

Continue...

37 The Archbishop of Canterbury visits Bala Ji Temple to open 'Love Thy Neighbour' Hill

It was an historic event when The Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Revd. & Rt. Hon Dr Rowan Williams visited Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) temple in Tividale, West Midlands, United Kingdom on November 15th, 2008.

His Excellency Mr. Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, High Commissioner of India, and representatives from all the major faiths in the United Kingdom were among the guests. Other dignitaries who attended the

event included Members of Parliament, Mayors, councillors and members from many local organisations.

Continue...

37 Gulf of Mannar for World Heritage Site

We would like to invite everybody to the first meeting calling for the Governments of India and Sri Lanka to take steps to have the Gulf of Mannar designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.. The meeting will be held at the historic Linnean Society of London, UK, from 25 – 26 November 2008. The theme for the meeting is "The Gulf of Mannar as a World Heritage Site and its Spiritual and Scientific Relevance to the Earth's Changing Climate".

Continue...

37 Press Release Malaysia Government Bans Minority Human Rights Organisation

The Hindu community has been suffering systemic persecution at the hand of the Muslim majority Malaysia. Laws have been passed to discriminate Hindus in jobs and other economic benefits which have been exclusively reserved for Muslims. Having silently suffered since independence for over 60 years, the community had decided to form a non political organisation in the name of Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) in order to raise a united minority voice.

Continue...

37 Please support Joanna Lumley's campaign for Gurkhas' rights

Britain has had no greater friends than the Gurkhas. They have served all across the world in the defence of our Country for nearly 200 years. Over 45,000 died in the two World Wars as part of the British Army. They are still fighting in the British Army today.

On Tuesday 30th September, the High Court ruled their treatment had been unlawful in terms of the right to live in the UK if they retired before 1997.

Continue...

37 First Karva Chauth

For many ladies who have been recently married within the last twelve months, it will be their first Karva Chauth Vrat (fast) this year which in the UK, Europe and USA should be observed on Friday 17th October 2008. As previously explained, discrepancies in the date of the fast in countries outside India's time zone sometimes occurs because most panchangs (almanacs), jantris and calendars are based on Indian time, which differs to our own. The conclusion of the Karva Chauth

fast involves the sighting and offering of sanctified water (arghya) to the moon, as it represents Shiva and Parvati.

Continue...

37 History made in Holland

First Ganesh Festival in mainland Europe

The Hague, Netherlands hosted the momentous Ganesh Chaturthi Mahotsav (festival) celebrated for the first time ever in mainland Europe. Though the appearance day of Lord Ganesh (Ganesh Chaturthi), representing that aspect of the Almighty dispelling obstacles and granting wisdom regardless of creed, colour, gender or ethnicity is a recognised anniversary in the Hindu calendar, it was Lokmanya Tilak who in 1893 defied all restrictions under British rule and made the event a public celebration in India. Beginning in the state of Maharashtra it soon dissipated throughout the nation and has become an annual occasion whereby diverse sections of the community unite in the common cause of universal fraternity.

Continue...

37 ArtsEkta Celebrates Huge success of Belfast Mela 2008

ArtsEkta are delighted that the Belfast Mela 2008 was a huge success. The 1-day event which took place on 24th August 2008 attracted crowds of more than 10,000 from across the province. The visitors were from all nationalities and religions living and visiting the province.

Continue...

37 STATEMENT FROM THE HINDU COUNCIL UK

KILLINGS IN THE INDIAN STATE OF ORISSA

The Hindu Council UK (HCUK) heard with horror news of the killing of Hindu priest Swami Laxshmananda and four of his colleagues, allegedly by Christian fundamentalists, on the evening of August 23rd, and the subsequent reprisal attacks made by local Hindus on members of the Christian community in the area, attacks which left 16 dead and many displaced from their homes.

Continue...

37 GCSE and Advanced level Hinduism results

The students who study Hinduism at GCSE as well as Advanced level have done well in recent examinations. Some GCSE candidates have managed to gain 100 percent marks.

Half the A level candidates obtained A grade (this is twice the national average) and one Advanced level candidate managed to gain 100 percent marks in the difficult synoptic module at Advanced level.

Continue...

37 Indo-European Kashmir Forum's (IEKF) and the UK Hindu Organizations' Demonstration on 14th August 2008 in London , outside the Indian High Commission

Indo-European Kashmir Forum members and the members from the various Hindu Organizations held a protest demonstration in London ,outside the Indian High Commission on Thursday 14th August,2008. The demonstration was held against the revocation of land transfer order to Shri Ammarnath Shrine and the atrocities committed on the peaceful protesters and the media in Jammu.

Continue...

37 PRESS RELEASE YOGA DEVOTEES FLOCK TO HEAR SWAMI RAMDEVJI

Sunday 10th August 2008:

His Holiness Swami Ramdevji, the worlds leading exponent of Yoga returned to the UK this summer to host another series of inspirational yoga events across the country. Following the amazing success of his visits to the UK in 2006 & 2007, when he attracted over 10,000 attendees to his unique yoga camps in London, Bolton, Glasgow and Coventry, he set about to bring his popular method of teaching to Leicester.

Continue...

37 Demonstration against religious cleansing by Kashmiri Islamists

Venue: High Commission of India, India House, Aldwych

Time: 2pm on Thursday 14th August

Kashmiri Pandits have been ethnically cleansed from their homeland by an evil ideology of Islamists and to which the Government of India has bowed out of fear for the last 60 years.

Continue...

37 Swami Ramdevji's UK Tour 2008

Swami Ramdevji Maharaj is well practised in Sanskrit Grammar, Ayurved and Vedic philosophy. His practical approach to yoga, research in the field of Ayurved and his devotion to social service has earned him widespread respect and has made him a living symbol of Indian culture. With a key

message that “a healthy lifestyle is humanity’s birthright”, Swami Ramdevji’s core aim is to promote and encourage healthy living.

Continue...

37 Developments in Hindu education

The work of the Hindu Council in the field of Education continues as under:-

Universities: This year the number of Universities we will be interacting with will go up from 12 to 20..

All these talks will be screened and broadcast on aastha which is now free and on sky 807. Aastha already hold about 20 hour of tapes of talks at Universities and Hindu Organisations round the country. Times: Sunday mornings from 10am to 11am and Saturday evenings from 9.30 to 10pm.

Continue...

37 Hindu Presentation on Living with Ethnic Diversity at the G8 Religious Leaders Summit in Osaka & Kyoto Japan

The Vedic revelations of God imparted to Humankind through the first seven Seers, Rishis, the most fundamental proclamation for Humans came to be: "Behold the Unity in Diversity". In another stanza of these ancient Vedas, God gives a purpose to the diverse Humankind to train its ego to live in this world as of one family, for it is in that training for reconciliations with diverse Humans that they may learn the true meaning of humbleness and renunciation, thus moving closer to God and finally liberation from the cycle of re-birth.

Continue...

37 Divinity of Mankind

Post graduate Hinduism at Roehampton University

This morning the undersigned did a two and a half hour session on esoteric Hinduism at Roehampton University for about 20 post-graduate students. The session was a dialogue between Hindu and Abrahamic world-views. Professor Mike Castelli the senior lecturer at Roehampton offered a Catholic perspective on the sacred text of Hinduism called the Kathopnishad. Though the dialogue was warm and good humoured at the various stages it pointed out the key differences between these two world-views.

Continue...

37 The Archbishop takes the initiative on tackling world poverty

The Archbishop Dr Rowan Williams hosted a round table meeting at Lambeth Palace on 29th May with Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist faith leaders to debate the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) with particular emphasis on world poverty.

Dr Williams set the scene by highlighting the inequities around the world which strike at the heart of all faiths and introduced his friend and key note speaker Jim Wallis who has been working on these issues in the USA.

Continue...

37 The Ramayana Exhibition at the British Library

(16 May-14 September 2008)

In ancient India sage Valmiki told the story of prince Rama in the epic Ramayana in Sanskrit, consisting of 24000 verses. Traditionally Hindus believe that Lord Rama lived in Treta Yuga, one of the four Yugas (aeons) namely Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali.

Continue...

37 Understanding Faith through sacred text- An exhibition at Oxford

As part of the Oxford Artweeks, Artist in Residence at Harris Manchester College of the University of Oxford Miranda Cresswell has launched a solo exhibition entitled 'One Room, five corners.'

Ms. Cresswell, having worked as an artist in a number of diverse locations and situations relates that the idea for the exhibition was to bring sacred texts together in order to look at them side by side. The purpose of this noble venture is not only to highlight differences and similarities between faiths, rather for the audience to understand them more fully.

Continue...

37 Sewa International UK launches the Burma Cyclone Appeal 2008

May 2008:

We are sure you will have seen the appalling pictures from Burma, where cyclone Nargis has left more than 100,000 thousand people dead and more than a million rendered homeless without food, water and shelter. The roads to the city are strewn with uprooted trees and electricity poles while roofless houses are surrounded by over spilling water.

Continue...

37 PRESS RELEASE SEWA LAUNCHES VOLUNTEERING SCHEME WITH SUPPORT OF 1.3M INDIAN DIASPORA

The UK's first structured volunteering scheme to target the Indian diaspora was launched today in North West London with the support of Cricketing hero Monty Panesar.

The 1.3 million Indian community in Britain is recognised to be charitable and supportive of causes internationally and in Britain, often repatriating huge sums of money to causes in India and elsewhere. However, this new initiative seeks to take advantage of their interest in volunteering by making it easier for them to find local groups and charities, which can make good use of their time, skills, and experiences.

Continue...

37 Report on the Meeting with All India Kashmiri Samaj in New Delhi on 1st April, 2008

During my recent visit to India I was fortunate enough to meet some of the Office Bearers of the All India Kashmiri Samaj, the apex body of many Kashmiri Pandits organisations, both in India and abroad. The meeting was hosted and attended by Mr. Maharaj Kishen Kaw, President of the AIKS, at his residence. Mr. Shibani Dudha, General-Secretary, Mr. Hira Lal Wangnoo, Vice President AIKS, Mrs. Raj Kaw and I were present at the meeting.

Continue...

37 London Mayor and Assembly Elections 2008

Engagement with Politicians – HCUK perspective

Hindu Council UK is a non-partisan faith organisation. We do not recommend or endorse any political parties, however we do work with all parties to ensure that as one of the largest faith groups, well integrated, hardworking with a sense of fairness living in London we are not forgotten. We need to have fair representation and a representative voice in running one of the best and the largest cities in the world.

Continue...

37 HCUK bulletin on forthcoming local elections – May 2008

Elections Elections Elections why it is important for you to vote.

Community Governance & electoral participation of South Asian Hindu communities in England and Wales

Despite Joseph Rowntree Foundations Findings of February 2007 that “Hindus are most likely to vote of all the religious groups common in the South Asian electorate.” there are many who don’t

Continue...

37 Mahashivratri Festival in Mauritius

Chris Gopaul the HCUK Executive representing the Mauritian Association of UK took a delegation of UK Hindus to experience the great festival of Mahashivratri in his native country Mauritius. The initial delegation included Virendra Sharma MP and consequently Hindu Council UK requested the Government of Mauritius through the kind assistance of the Mauritius High Commissioner to receive the delegation for which the Government arranged security and private transport. The Minister of Environment Shri Anil Baichoo and the Minister of Justice Shri Rama Valayden graced the occasion.

Continue...

37 Press Release

Eton College Installs First Hindu Tutor

3rd April 2008

For Immediate Use

Jay Lakhani, Head of the Hindu Academy and Education Director for the Hindu Council UK, has been appointed to the post of part time Hindu Tutor at Eton College. Mr Lakhani’s role will be to provide pastoral support and religious teaching to Hindu boys at the school, and contribute to school inter-faith activities.

Continue...

37 BRITISH GOVERNMENT WRONG TO BETRAY THE LOYALTY OF GURKHA SOLDIERS

Gurkhas have been serving Britain for over 200 years and many have sacrificed their lives in the service of the Crown. The British government's present attitude to forsake and disown the Gurkhas who were recruited before 1997 and deny them their legitimate rights of citizenship is a betrayal of their service to the defence of the country.

Continue...

37 Basant Panchmi at House of Lords

On Wednesday 27th February 2008, Lord King of West Bromwich organized a landmark programme to applaud tributes and respects to Satguru Ram Singh on His 192nd birth anniversary. The celebrations were supported by Hindu Council UK and Universal Peace Federation.

The birth place of India's independence is Sri Bhaini Sahib, in Punjab, where on Thursday 3rd February 1816, holy incarnation of Satguru Ram Singh took place during Basant Panchmi.

Continue...

37 Commonwealth Day Observance at Westminster Abbey In the presence of Her Majesty The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh

The Commonwealth Day 2008 was observed Monday 10th March at the Westminster Abbey with the underlying theme on "The Environment our future".

Dr John Hall the Dean of Westminster welcomed everyone to the abbey, a historic place where God has been worshipped daily for a thousand years, and he spoke of creating a new equilibrium as humanity's responsibility to protect the environment.

Continue...

37 HCUK supported peaceful protest of Hindu Rights Action Force of Malaysia to secure Human Rights

Once again Hindu Council UK lead the struggle for social, economic, religious, racial, cultural, educational and political justice; this time of Malaysian Hindus protesting in front of Downing Street on 1 February 2008 where the HINDRAF Chairman, Mr Waytha Moorthy, Rajah Thavalou and his wife Jeya [local Malaysian activists] and hundreds others including both Tamil and Sikh British Malaysians and students currently studying in Britain were joined by Anil Bhanot, General Secretary, HCUK and myself on a cold crisp sunny morning.

Continue...

37 Esoteric Hinduism thrills students at Kent Grammar school

Esoteric Hinduism thrills students at Kent Grammar school Last week the undersigned did sessions for about 500 students at Princethorpe College, Coventry and Weald of Kent Grammar School, Tonbridge. The Hindu input on the issue of global warming was quite unusual. Instead of repeating the rhetoric of using energy efficient bulbs or improving insulation, Hinduism offered a lateral suggestion. It said, 'Encourage extended family tradition because then we can drastically cut the number of homes we need to heat and maintain.

Continue...

37 PRESS RELEASE

Caste Discrimination: Hindu Council UK Puts the Record Straight

The Hindu Council UK (HCUK) has today released a revealing report on varnashram or the caste system, a subject HCUK says is much misunderstood by the British media, politicians and the public. "Caste has been the subject of ill-informed comment for too long," says HCUK General Secretary Anil Bhanot. "Today, we are putting the record straight. We are also naming and shaming those who spread misinformation about Hinduism and its relationship to caste in an ill-disguised attempt to vilify the Hindu people and cause division within our community."

Continue...

37 New bus shelter and plaque to commemorate Andrew Jagroop

Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, today confirmed his commitment to installing a plaque in memory of Andrew Hargovind Jagroop, a young man knocked down and killed by an uninsured and unlicensed driver while waiting at a Croydon bus stop.

Andrew Jagroop, who was 21 at the time of his death, was a Law graduate who had won a place at Harvard University to continue his studies. He was killed when a car driver lost control the vehicle and mounted the pavement. The driver was later

Continue...

37 PRESS STATEMENT HCUK Offers Cautious Welcome to University Terror Guidelines

Tuesday 22nd January 2008

For Immediate Use

The Hindu Council UK (HCUK) has today offered a cautious welcome to the Higher Education Minister Bill Rammell's suggestions as to how University vice-chancellors should take steps to tackle violent extremism on their campuses. Mr Rammell has issued new guidance to universities, suggesting they ban some guest speakers from making presentations and train Muslim Chaplains to support those who may be being groomed or harassed by violent extremists. His guidance also says that setting up multi-faith chaplaincies would be a better way to monitor extremism and promote integration than allowing separate prayer rooms for different faiths.

Continue...

37 Gangotri Euthanasia a callous act by RSPCA

On Thursday, 13 December 2007, the Bhaktivedanta Manor, Watford issued a press release: Hindu community betrayed by RSPCA. The statement from ISKCON stated: The cow Gangotri was sick but had no disease. She was being cared for by temple residents and visiting worshipers, and was being

administered pain relief. The temple runs 'The Cow Protection Project' and allows old cows and bulls to die naturally. Head Farm Manager and former Royal Marine Stuart Coyle [Shyamsundar Das] explained: "Gangotri was unable to walk, but due to her condition there was some tolerable discomfort".

Continue...

News & articles for the Year 2007

[Click here for Current News and Articles](#)

49 PRESS RELEASE ISLAMIC MALAYSIA PERSECUTES HINDU MINORITY COMMUNITY

Since independence from the British, Malaysia, a Muslim majority country, has been systematically persecuting the minority Hindu community. Laws were made to deny this community jobs and any economic benefits which were exclusively reserved for Muslims.

Malaysia had formerly been under the Hindu rule of the Sri Vijay Empire until the 14th century, when the rule of the Muslim Mughals took over, only to be subsequently conquered by the British.

Continue...

49 World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims

“Remember and reflect, Remember and respond”

18 November 2007

RoadPeace dedicated to supporting road crash victims organised the above event with the following brief for reflection. The organisation run by Brigitte Chaudhry can be contacted at the following address:

PO Box 2579

London NW10 3PW

t 020 8838 5102

f 020 8838 5103

info@roadpeace.org

www.roadpeace.org

helpline 0845 4500 355

Continue...

49 SEWA International Saves Lives by Raising £35,000* for UK Causes

London, UK, 12th November 2007

Leading charity - Sewa International pledged £35,000* to Macmillan Cancer Support & Refuge. 35 volunteers participated in a charity skydive to raise funds for these two causes.

Anup Ganguly spokesperson of the Sewa SkyDive said: "We are delighted to have raised such a large amount of money for these two causes. We are grateful to the 35 participants for their fundraising efforts and hope that the two beneficiaries are able to maintain the high level of services that they are associated with."

Continue...

49 CELEBRATION OF BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF INDIA'S MUCH LOVED NATIONAL LEADER and DIWALI – Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

Sardar Patel Memorial Society (UK), Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's birth anniversary and took the opportunity of the festive season to celebrate Diwali at Kadwa Patidar Centre at Harrow on Wednesday 31 October 2007. The event was combined with Diwali Celebration.

The event was very successful with over 450 people who attended enjoying the cultural dances presented by Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan and national songs by Shraddhashram. The event commenced with invited guests and dignitaries paying floral tributes to Sardar and lighting Dips. Shree Gurupsad Swami of Shree Devine Society gave his blessing at the commencement of the programme. Kalaben Patel, Secretary of SPMS commenced the proceedings.

Continue...

49 Late Rev Handa Shonin sama's [post-demise] 49th day ceremony Sunday 07 Oct 2007

Sunday 07 October 07, quite co-incidentally was [7x7] 49th day of Late Rev Handa Shonin sama having relinquished this mortal abode. That too, quite co-incidentally, happened immediately after the HCUK having played a leading role in organising a coach through Crisis Action enabling the austere Buddhist Monks and devotees of the Nipponzan Myohoji Japanese Buddhist Temple, Milton Keynes, to join HCUK in the Dharma Walk for Free and non-violent democratic Burma on 6 Oct 2007 in London.

Continue...

49 Encounters at the Muslim College

Every year we present Hindu teachings to the postgraduate students at the Muslim college in London. These encounters are very interesting because they reflect the mood of Muslim youngsters and the way they view Hinduism. Over the past many years these sessions have produced very warm response from the Muslim students. Today, while we were presenting Hindu teachings at one of these sessions; every now and then, two young Muslim men, continued to raise objections and in the guise of 'trying to

Continue...

49 Inheritance Tax is immoral and should be scrapped

The recent debacle over the raising of the Inheritance tax threshold has obscured the crucial point; it is an immoral tax that should in fact be scrapped totally.

It is nothing more than a stealth tax on a person who does not exist any more in this world; a stealth tax on one who has no voice to complain about or fight any unfairness.

We all have a duty to pay our taxes while we are alive, but to continue to be obligated to the State after our death (except for any taxes we owed at the time of our death) simply does not make sense.

Continue...

49 DHARMA WALK FOR FREE & NON-VIOLENT DEMOCRATIC BURMA - SATURDAY 6 OCT 2007- LONDON

We, Mrs Khanna Vyas and I, the HCUK Representatives, with Buddhist Monks and devotees from Nipponzan Myohoji Japanese Buddhist Temple, Milton Keynes, arrived at the Tate Britain in London at 10.00a.m.

We were joined by Dipti Patel, Vishal Sharma, Radha Vyas and Rakhee Parmar and by a South American lady from Columbia who was know to Glenn O'Halloran, the Flag bearer from the Nipponzan Myohoji Japanese Buddhist Temple, Milton Keynes and two more female friends of Dipti whose names escape me. The HCUK Team had the longest, purple,

Continue...

49 HCUK THANKED FOR HELPING REINSTATE HEATHROW 'NOSE STUD' WORKER

Amrit Lalji, the Hindu woman sacked from her job for wearing a tiny nose stud, has thanked the Hindu Council UK (HCUK) for helping her get her job back. HCUK has also received a letter of thanks from Ian Griffiths, the London Region Branch Secretary for the GMB union who supported her in her campaign to be reinstated.

Continue...

49 Multi Faith session at Kingsmead School, Enfield

The session had representatives from the Jewish Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and Humanist backgrounds. The day consisted of interactive sessions with 250 students from year 11.

The youngsters had prepared some very pointed questions for the faith representatives. Questions like: If God is powerful and compassionate then how do you explain suffering? The Jewish representative claimed that it was

Continue...

49 Buddhist Peace Champions from Milton Keynes to Myanmar [Burma]

On 21 August 2007 we witnessed the demise of The Reverend Gyosei Handa - the chief Monk and Peace Champion at Japanese Buddhist Temple in Milton Keynes.

The Milton Keynes Hindu community has been involved with the Japanese Buddhist Temple ever since its foundations were laid in 1980s. When its copper roof was complete over the building carcass, its opening ceremony included my daughters performing Bharat Natyam [with others as pupils of MK Hindu Association] as a part of multi-cultural and multi-faith invitations.

Continue...

49 "Faith Leaders Must End Religious Intolerance and Division" says British Hindu Leader

Anil Bhanot, the general secretary of the Hindu Council UK (HCUK), has written to the main leaders of all faiths in Britain to express his growing concern at divisive elements between religions, urging them to root out and stand against intolerance and religious dogma. He also calls for an end to what he calls "predatory" missionary activity where followers of one faith seek to convert those of another, and has written separately to The Secretary of State for Community and Local Government, Hazel Blears MP, asking her to consider introducing legislation against "underhand conversion techniques."

Continue...

49 Press Release Maninagar Shree Swaminarayan Gadi Sansthan

Spectacular display of Indian culture, dance and music was held on Friday 24 August 2007, at London's Trafalgar Square, with the support of the Mayor of London, in the presence of His Divine Holiness Acharya Swamishree Purushottampriyadasji Maharaj.

Amongst the specially invited guest were, Mr S Jagadeesan – Economic Minister at the Indian High Commission, Mr R Bagchi – Coordination Minister at the Indian High Commission, Mr Mariano Marcigaglia - The Buddhist Society, Bishop John Arnold – Roman Catholic Church, Mr Harshadbhai Patel - Mayor of Brent, Mr Tony McNulty – Home Office Minister, Amarjeet-singh Bhamra Executive

Continue...

49 Ganesh Visarjan at Southend on Sea 16 September 2007

Today one of the largest gathering for Ganesh Visarjan participated in Ganesh Puja and then finally the immersing of the Deity in the ocean waters. C J Raberu, from the Shree Jalaram Mandir at Greenford worked tirelessly for the past 9 months for all the arrangements. The Hindu Association of Southend arranged the Shoeburyness seafront and Hindu Forum arranged some of the media. Hindu Council UK encouraged all the temples to participate and also helped with some of the media. It was indeed a stupendous event for the Hindu community.

Continue...

49 A Radio Debate on the Recent Yoga Ban by Two Churches

The debate will be aired on Christian Premier Radio [MW1312 or 1340]at 2pm this Saturday the 15th.

Amarjeet Bhamra, the HCUK Executive for Yoga and Ayurveda, made the following points:

1. On the whole Yoga is not practised at every Hindu temple, if it was mandatory in worship then every Hindu would be practising it at his local temple.

Continue...

49 'Faith in the System' Launch

On 10th of September, The Rt. Hon. Ed Balls MP, the Secretary of State for the Department for Children, Schools and Families launched 'Faith in the System,' a document outlining the contribution to society made by faith schools and the Government's vision for their future.

HCUK contributed to the report, which emphasises the important role faith schools have in fostering understanding between different religions and promoting integration and community cohesion. The document also promises to “remove unnecessary barriers to the creation of new faith schools” and “encourage independent schools to enter the maintained sector.”

Continue...

49 STATEMENT ON 'FAITH IN THE SYSTEM'

FROM HINDU COUNCIL UK

The Department for Children, Schools and Families has this morning unveiled its 'Faith in the System' vision for faith schools in the UK. The Hindu Council UK (HCUK) has been consulted throughout the process and welcomes the document as it highlights the important role faith schools play in fostering understanding between religions. It also outlines the duty of all schools to encourage pupils to respect their own and other faiths and beliefs in ways that promote tolerance and harmony, important issues raised by HCUK throughout the consultation process.

Continue...

49 Press Release

Church Yoga Ban May Be Illegal Says Hindu Council UK

The Hindu Council UK (HCUK) is considering whether a ban on yoga classes at St James' Church and the Silver Street Baptist Church in Taunton, Somerset, may breach the Equality Act 2006. Lawyers for HCUK are exploring whether comments made by both The Reverend Tim Jones, Vicar of St James' and The Reverend Simon Farrar of the Silver Street Baptist Church that yoga is a “sham,” a “false philosophy” and “unchristian” may indicate they have acted contrary to the 'Religion and Belief' section of the Act, specifically those parts relating to discrimination in providing goods, facilities and services.

Continue...

49 Stolen Childhoods

For many of us who visit India on a regular basis, scenes of children labouring are passed off as an inevitable consequence of poverty. We return to our homes and put images of children polishing shoes, selling chai and vending petty goods to the back of our minds. The Child in Need Institute (CINI) is running a campaign to raise awareness of what non-resident Indians (NRIs) can do to help get child labourers back into full time education.

To mark the charity's first Child Labour Awareness Week (20-26 August), Dr Chaudhuri, the founder of CINI, says: “It would be wonderful if NRIs could help persuade their friends and relatives back home that there are better ways to help the poor than taking in their children as domestic servants.

Continue...

49 Message on freedom from the HCUK General Secretary

Freedom Is Everyone's Birth Right

As Is God's Gift Of Free Choice

For Freedom Verily Is Free Choice!

Wear It With Pride!

India's 60th Independence Day 15th August 2007

Continue...

49 PRESS RELEASE BANGLADESH AUTHORITIES DEMOLISH HINDU TEMPLE AND GAG MINORITIES' HUMAN RIGHTS

The interim Military administration in Bangladesh was established to uphold the rule of law and punish the corrupt practices by the previous administrations, but the local administration of this military junta is acting against the rule of law and continuing with the persecution of minorities.

Continue...

49 Celebrations Mark 150 Years Since First Call for Home Rule in India

On Monday 23rd July 2007, Lord King of West Bromwich assisted by the Hindu Culture and Heritage Society UK, Ramgarhia-Sikh Heritage Trust and the Hindu Council UK organized a landmark programme to pay tributes and respects to Satguru Ram Singh on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of first call for Home Rule in India.

Three Lords and a Baroness, along with politicians and other leaders of Indian organizations in the United Kingdom

Continue...

49 Chatham Grammar School (23rd July 2007)

"Issues facing the world today and the possible solutions"

Chatham Grammar School is one of the top schools in the UK. Every year they arrange a series of interactive presentations by people of different religions (and no-religion) to their sixth form youngsters on interesting issues. This year the topic under discussion was 'Issues facing the world today and the possible solutions'.

The first hour covered presentation by Jonathan Shaw the local MP. He tackled issues like: world poverty, terrorism, global warming and the role politics can play in addressing

Continue...

49 Welsh Assembly's bulldozing action is tantamount to Temple desecration

[UPDATE: The Welsh Assembly and the Police showed respect at the Temple in removing Shambo on 27th July and their actions did not amount to Temple Desecration.]

Today 25th July 2007 at 4pm the Scandavale Monks heard from the Welsh Assembly that following the Appeal Court's decision to allow the cull of Shambo the Bull, who is under the temple's sanctuary and the Monks' care and attention but had tested TB positive under a somewhat inconclusive skin test, will be slaughtered tomorrow.

The Monks have been informed that the cull will take place tomorrow 26th July at 8am.

Continue...

49 Celebrations Mark 150 Years Since

First Call for India's Independence

On the eve of the festival of Baisakhi, 12th April 1857, Satguru Ram Singh hoisted the white, triangular flag of the Kuka or Indian Independence Movement at Sri Bhaini Sahib, in the Indian Punjab. It was a single act of defiance that, combined with the first ever recorded use of the political tool of the boycott, heralded the beginning of a 90-year movement of non-violent civil disobedience that ended with the British Raj leaving India in 1947.

150 years later, his call will be remembered on 23rd July when Lord King of West Bromwich will host a celebration of this momentous event at the House of Lords.

Continue...

49 Inspirational Yoga Master, Swami Ramdev comes to the Midlands

Swami Ramdev, the worlds leading exponent of Pranayam Yoga returns to the UK this summer, and as part of this UK tour, will host an inspirational yoga camp at Coventry's RICOH Arena in August 2007.

Swami Ramdev has sparked off an amazing health revolution through the teachings of his unique yoga practices and is admired and followed by millions across the world. Swami Ramdev has not only given a new birth to yoga by bringing it to the public but also highlighting and re-educating people that yoga knows no boundaries and crosses religion, class and socio-economics.

Continue...

49 Press Release: Hindu Council UK Backs

Mayor of London on Fire Authority Nominations

The Hindu Council UK (HCUK) is backing the stance taken by Mayor of London Ken Livingstone regarding recent appointments to the London Fire Authority. The Mayor used his mandate of promoting equality to attempt to block nine appointments on the grounds they 'failed to tackle the under-representation of women and black, Asian and ethnic minority Londoners.'

Continue...

49 CLIMATE CHANGE BILL

DRAFT HCUK RESPONSES – FOR WIDER CONSULTATION WITH HCUK MEMBERSHIP

Introduction

The following is an extract from the Department of Food Rural Affairs (DEFRA) website. It explains the purpose of the consultation paper on the Draft Climate Change Bill:

Continue...

49 United Nations Freedom of Religion and Belief Conference:

Hindu Council UK response

The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief held a meeting of religious leaders on 6 June 2007 at the House of Lords, hosted by Lord Daniel Brennan QC, in order to ascertain the difficulties faced by the various religions in implementation of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This states that “every one has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion which included the freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion and belief in teaching, practice, worship or observance.”

Continue...

49 World Religious Leaders Deliver Challenge to G8 on Poverty

Religious leaders from the Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and Shinto faith traditions have delivered a joint statement to the G8 summit calling on Heads of State to take collective responsibility in alleviating global poverty. Representing all G8 countries, the religious leaders met in Cologne yesterday, on the eve of the G8 summit, to agree the statement which tells G8 leaders that “the degree of extreme poverty in our world is a scandal” that must be addressed.

Continue...

49 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ACCEPTS KASHMIR REPORT

Hindu Council UK in association with the Indo-European Kashmir Forum has achieved a tremendous success in helping to get the Baroness Nicholson report on Kashmir accepted by a huge majority in the European parliament at Strasbourg.

Suraj Sehgal, Director of Hindu Council UK, had examined the over 40 paragraphs of the draft report and had produced about 20 vital suggestions to be incorporated into the report.

Continue...

49 Faith in the City: Mayor of London Recognises

Hindu Contribution to British Economy

Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, held a reception at City Hall last week to recognise how much young Hindu professionals contribute to London and the wider British community. The event was the first ever held by the Mayor for the British Hindu community and was organised in partnership with the City Hindus Network and supported by the Hindu Council UK.

The Mayor paid tribute to the hard work on the London Hindu community and the strong ties that exist between the UK and India. "The Hindu Community is one of the most highly skilled and high achieving communities and it has helped shape London into the dynamic, diverse and thriving city it is today," he said. "I am proud that a large proportion of the UK's Hindu Community has chosen London as their home."

Continue...

49 The State of London Debate

Every year, the State of London Debate brings Londoners together to discuss key issues affecting them; the 2007 conference took place on Saturday 12 May and was attended by nearly two thousand people. The topic for debate: London – The World's Most Successful City?

Continue...

49 Report on State of London Debate

Mayor of London's

State of London Debate

12 May 2007

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, Westminster, London

I was one of the 6 members of the panel at the morning session slotted for 11:35-12:50am on the topic:

"Multiculturalism: a key to London's Success"

Continue...

49 Caste & Conversion

Compounding one atrocity committed in the name of religion (Caste) with another atrocity still being committed in the name of religion (Conversion).

Yesterday the undersigned was invited by Premier Christian Radio to participate in a debate with Sam Paul senior member of the All India Christian Council on the issue of caste and conversion. This is a very topical issue. Recently a couple of mainstream TV programmes have also focused on the issue of the outcastes or dalits in India.

Continue...

49 2007 Templeton Prize

Wednesday 2nd May - Professor Charles Taylor was presented with the 2007 Templeton Prize by HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, at Buckingham Palace. Later in the day he joined leading British religious figures, among them HCUK's Anil Bhanot, at a press conference exploring how spirituality can be used positively to tackle bigotry and violence.

Continue...

49 Can We Count on You?

People from south Asian communities living in the UK are thirteen times more likely to develop kidney failure than the rest of the population and have a greater chance of needing a kidney transplant. This is mostly due to diet and lifestyle factors, as well as an increased susceptibility to diabetes and high blood pressure.

Right now, over 1,170 Asian people in the UK need a transplant and their chances of success are greater if they can be matched with a donor from the same ethnic background. But with Asian people accounting for fewer than 2% of deceased donors, transplant patients from this community typically wait twice as long as others for a suitable donor to become available. Some will die waiting

Continue...

49 HCUK at Mayor's Reception to mark the end of International Women's month

Hindu Council UK (HCUK) was represented by Harsha Pandya at the Mayor's Reception to mark the end of International Women's month on Tuesday March 27 2007.

The event started with Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, welcoming all the ladies to the event. He gave a brief outline of what has been achieved over the last year in order to improve equality for women and address the issues that women face at work, at home and just out and about. The 'Gender Equality Scheme' which commenced in 2003 will continue from 2007 to 2010.

Continue...

49 Religious Leaders' Conference to be held in Germany for the G8 Summit

The Evangelic Church in Germany (EKD), a federation of 23 Protestant Church groups, invited some religious leaders from the G8 countries to start preparing a statement on world issues concerning all

faiths. The statement will be prepared over the next two months and then it will be presented to the political leaders at the G8 summit in June 2007. The conference will run in parallel to this year's Kirchentag festival in Cologne.

Continue...

49 Commonwealth Day Service at Westminster Abbey

Hindu Council UK was invited to the Commonwealth Day 2007 observance at the Westminster Abbey and The Dean of Westminster, The Very Reverend John Hall gave a warm welcoming speech with a message from the Bible, "To follow the way of Jesus Christ is to reach out to others, to break down the barriers of prejudice and to work for mutual understanding."

Continue...

49 Hindu Council UK's engagement meeting with the Rt Hon Jack Straw MP

HCUK delegation met with Rt Hon Jack Straw MP, Leader of House Commons. Anil Bhanot gave an introduction to the set up and the work of HCUK since 1994 and Dilip Joshi discussed the Hindu representation inequalities and Alok Mitra pointed out that a different approach is required from the business angle. The meeting was to sensitise Jack Straw on issues affecting the Hindu Community:

Continue...

49 British Hindus deliver a petition at No.10 Downing Street in favour of the Draft Nicholson Report on Kashmir

London – 26 February 2006 – The Indo European Kashmir Forum (IEKF) supported by the Hindu Council UK (HCUK), delivered a petition to the Prime Minister's office on Friday 16th February to show the UK Hindu community's support for Baroness Nicholson's report on Kashmir as being truthful, objective and fair.

The petition was delivered after a silent demonstration opposite No.10 Downing Street against any proposed changes to the report sought by the Labour's Foreign Affairs spokesperson in the European Parliament, Mr Richard Howitt, MEP.

Continue...

49 HCUK meeting with Chief of Staff – Lord Mayor of London

Mansion House 1st February 07

As part of our engagement process with the City of London a delegation from HCUK met the representatives from the Lord Mayor's Office led by his Chief of Staff Kay Brock together with her HR and London Borough Engagement colleagues.

Subjects covered were:

Continue...

49 Holocaust Memorial Day

Hindu Council UK attended the GLA's commemoration of the Holocaust Memorial Day at City Hall, to remember those who suffered as a result of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution.

The event was attended by Mayors of London's various boroughs as well as other dignitaries, representatives from the Jewish community and holocaust survivors. Trude Levi, a Holocaust survivor, gave a testimony drawing on her experiences at the Auschwitz-Birkenau and Hessesich-Lichtenau concentration camps. The audience sat in silence as she recounted events during her life.

Continue...

49 GLA conference on "A World Civilisation or A Clash of Civilisations" at the QEII Hall Westminster

Is Britain becoming more segregated?

My personal and instinctive view is that we are not. However I have some ambivalent views about the issue, so this has to be noted in the context of what I am about to say.

In any cycle of immigration to a country, people experience economic, social and cultural segregation as they initially tend to gravitate to cities and areas where they can find people from their own groups for support, information and eventually employment.

Continue...

49 Reality TV brings back Racial Bullying in the UK

Press Release : London – 18 January 2007 – The Reality Programme Big Brother last night showed the ugly face of bullying that plagues our society where a group from the host community single out one individual, Shilpa Shetty, an Indian, to shower abuse to the limits of vulgarity. The seed of racism was sown when one housemate refused to pronounce Shilpa's name with respect at the very start of the show.

Continue...

49 European Union Sponsored Draft Report on Kashmir

Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne a British MEP and vice Chairman of the foreign Relations committee have produced a draft report on present situation and future prospects of Kashmir issue.

Hindu Council UK, together with the Indo European Kashmir Forum under the presidency of Mrs Krishna Bhan, met Baroness Nicholson to discuss the report and their Executive having considered the report in detail has sanctioned their full support in favor of the report. The report has been found to be unbiased, impartial, truthful and factual and for a politician, for the first time, courageous enough.

Continue...

49 Labour Assembly members meet HCUK and affiliate organisations 23/11/06 at City Hall

London Assembly's Labour leader Len Duvall OBE and colleagues hosted an event at City Hall as part of the Labour group's continuing dialogue with London communities. Len welcomed the community organisations present and explained the workings of City Hall administration and the role played by the assembly members in scrutinising executive powers of the mayor.

[Click here for HCUK presentation](#)

Continue...

49 KUMBH MELA-A DROP OF HEAVEN, ON EARTH

Kumbh Mela witnesses the largest gathering of humanity on the planet as the Hindu faith shines like a jewel in the crown. The full moon (Paush Purnima) on 3 January 2007 heralded the start of the six-week festival of the sacred urn, Ardha Kumbh Mela. The festival marks the halfway point between the twelve-yearly Maha Kumbh Mela and is in progress in the Northern Indian city of Allahabad. The Mughal Emperor Akbar gave the name to the city in 1583. The "Allah" in the name does not come from Allah as God's name in Islam but from the Din-Ilahi, which was the religion founded by Akbar. In Indian alphabets it is spelt "Ilāhābād": "ilāh" is Arabic for "a God" (but in this context from Din-Ilahi), and "-ābād" is Persian for "place of".

Continue...

News & articles for the Year 2006

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28 Hinduism Awards Ceremony at Brent Town Hall

For over ten years now the Vivekananda Centre, as the education arm of Hindu Council UK has been running classes teaching GCSE and Advanced level Hinduism. The centre runs classes in a large number of temples and community halls all round the country. These classes are run free of charge and attract candidates from many differing backgrounds and ages. Candidates are drawn from Gujarati, Sindhi, Tamil, Punjabi or Caribbean communities. The age range of the candidates vary from 8 to 72!

Continue...

28 Human Rights Day Service

It was a cold damp winter evening in the heart of London that a multi-faith service of thanksgiving was held. Sunday 10th December was Human Rights Day, which marks the day in 1948 when Member States of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Rights and Humanity who organised the service was also celebrating its twentieth anniversary. It is an international organisation promoting awareness of human rights and responsibilities. International patrons include his holiness the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and other eminent leaders.

Continue...

28 Chairman's Meetings Report for November 2006

It has been a busy month. The following meetings and events are reportworthy:

November 1, AHIMSA DAY AT THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

This year Ahimsa Day concentrated on environment. It was organised by the Institute of Jainology and was very well attended and speakers included many MPs led by Stephen Pound and Lord Navneet Dholakia. The environment theme was chosen as Lord Mahavir, the last Jain teacher of this era (599 - 527 BCE) was the first environmentalist of this era.

His precepts of Ahimsa (non-violence), Anekantvad (Pluralism), and Aparigraha (non-possessive attitude) address the environment from both angles- social as well as ecological.

Continue...

28 Hinduism at Post Graduate Level

We continue to conduct courses on Hinduism for Post Graduate students at about a dozen Universities in the UK. In some cases we travel to the universities, in some cases the students come to us. This week 22 students from University of Exeter visited us to study Hinduism. These sessions which are more philosophically oriented generate visible excitement. After this session the course leader, Mark Brimicombe emailed us, "On the way back in the coach, two young men spent 2hrs and 10 minutes discussing the nature of God in the light of your pluralist ideas. I think that says it all."

Continue...

28 Chairman's Meetings Report for October 2006

Religion and Belief - CEHR

This is a regular monthly meeting attended by representatives of all faiths and non-faiths such as Secularists, Humanists, Spiritualists and other atheist and agnostic groups. This group came into existence nearly two years ago. It is chaired by Barney Leith of Bahai Community of the United Kingdom. I have been attending these meetings since October last year. My point of view is generally supported by Mrs Kamaljit Kaur from network of Sikh organisations, Dr. Nathubhai Shah of Jain Samaj, Bryan Appleyard and Yan Lovelock of Buddhist faith, and wherever necessary we share a common stand especially if faced by Abrahamic faiths. Brian Pearce of Interfaith Network is regular attendee and has been active since the very beginning of the group.

Continue...

28 Some of the ongoing activities of the Hindu Council UK

Documentary on the Swastika

We have been helping a London Film School produce a documentary on the Swastika. In the documentary we had to comment on the issue of the European parliament debating banning the Swastika in Europe (UK would have been obliged to ban the Swastika too). We asked, 'If your son goes out to play and someone throws mud at him, would you discard the boy or tidy him up?' The image of Swastika has to be tidied up, not banned!

Continue...

28 HCUK steps up its engagement with the Mayor and his top team

In a recent meeting with the Mayor and his team, the Hindu Council UK (HCUK) made their case for greater participation and representation for our community within the GLA and its umbrella organisation for the benefit of all Londoners. The Mayor recognised the very real and valuable contribution the Indian community is making to the economy of London and said that he would welcome further participation from us. In this regard he has promised to remove the unnecessary barriers that impede our progress to the top positions within the GLA group and help us to bring together different communities within London to build a more vibrant and profitable business community.

Continue...

28 Diwali on the Square

Diwali In London at Trafalgar Square was celebrated Sunday 15th October by 20000 people, every year the number increases by 5000, the event was organised by the Mayor of London and DIL (Diwali in London Committee chaired by Nitin Palan).

Programme included:

Music - performances by Raghav, Hunterz and Kalakaar

Continue...

28 Ganesh Festival in Southall

Journey from Mumbai to London's River Thames

Hindu Culture and Heritage Society (HCHS), in association with Hindu Council UK and London Fire Brigade, celebrated the Ganesh Chaturthi Festival for the second successive year out side India with stunning success on Sunday the 8th of October 2006 in Southall West London.

The festival was celebrated in two phases. In the first phase, we installed the statue of Lord Ganapati, on Wednesday the 5th of October 2006 with full rituals and religious tradition followed by Kirtan, Arti and Prasadum.

Continue...

28 Hindu Council UK Submission to the Discrimination Law Review

The Hindu Council UK welcomes this opportunity to highlight issues of our concern in the forthcoming Discrimination Law Review consultation.

We understand that this consultation process will in due course lead to and be reflected in a Single Equality Act (the Green paper is due later this year and from that it is expected a Single Equality Bill). Continue...

28 HH Swami Ramdevji at Slough Mandir

On an Indian summer evening at 8pm Monday 21st August 2006, over one thousand devotees assembled at the auspicious Hindu Temple at Slough to welcome HH Swami Ramdevji.

Public's exuberance was a sight worth witnessing, when initially Swamiji was welcomed in the temple with hundreds of ladies performing arti, and members of different communities and the Mayor of Slough welcoming Swamiji by offering flower garlands. After performing arti at the deity darshan, Swamiji aptly took to his discourse with thrilling examples of various Yoga asanas and bhajans.

Continue...

28 A discourse by Anil Bhanot in a youth conference in Reading to discuss post-effects of the 7/7 bombings

The Whole World is One Family

"Vasudevya Kutumbkam"

Shankracharya Divyanandji from the North India monastery came to the UK in June this year and he said at a short discourse at the Home Office, "we are now creating a global village but what is required is a global family for the former will create a market with a competitive buying and selling scenarios but the latter will create an environment of compassion and care. Shankracharya ji, being a spiritual master would like to see in this world everyone living as if in a one family environment and indeed our Vedas proclaim that the

Continue...

28 CAB Partnership with HCUK

David Harker, the Chief Executive of Citizen Advice Bureau invited Anil Bhanot, the General Secretary of Hindu Council UK at an annual reception at the House of Lords hosted by the CAB bringing together their key partners.

David Harker and Anil Bhanot who had met earlier and the two organizations have been working together for a considerable period of time sealed their partnership at the event where Mr Harker spoke at length about their work with the communities across the UK. Continue...

28 INTERFAITH VIGIL

For victims of the Mumbai Massacre of 11 July 2006

In a world torn by conflict and turmoil and while we continue our efforts to achieve harmony and concord there could have been no better words for reflection than the silence of prayer. All major faiths were represented at the Vigil for the families of victims of the Mumbai massacre held at the London Interfaith Centre on 16 July 2006. In total, ten faiths participated by reading of scriptures, reciting prayers or in silent meditation. Continue...

28 First Anniversary of 7/7 Bombing

An open-air commemorative event was held at London's Queen Mary's Gardens in Regents Park at 6pm on Friday 7th July. Although organized by the Department for Culture, Media and Sports it brought together the bereaved families, many of those who were injured and Londoners in remembrance. Tessa Jowell MP Minister for the Department Continue...

28 Terrorists strike Mumbai 11/7

Seven simultaneous bombs devastated the Mumbai city rush hour as more than 170 people were massacred in an organised terrorist plot. This is a cowardly and brutal act designed to kill and maim innocent people travelling on railway network of the city. The attack was designed to kill as many people as possible, like New York, Bali, Madrid, London. Continue...

28 The work of Hindu Council (UK) in the fields of Religious Education and Interfaith continues to flourish

Work with Schools:

In the last couple of weeks we have participated in some assemblies as well as many class-room sessions on Hinduism.

The schools visited were:

- St Philip Howard School in Hatfield Hertfordshire
- Herbert Morrison School in Vauxhall London

Continue...

28 HINDU CULTURE AND HERITAGE SOCIETY (U.K.) Art Competition

First of all we congratulate the England Team on winning the opening round matches of the FIFA World Cup 2006 and our Hindu Prayers are with them to bring the World Cup home.

We shall be promoting our children and youth to take up sports and cultural activities and we held an Art Competition in which around one hundred children between the age group of 7-11 took part in an "On the Spot" art competition organised on Saturday, 10th June Continue...

28 Hindu Council United Kingdom (HCUK) Response to the Consultation Questions on Sexual Orientation Equality

Hinduism only recognizes heterosexuality but does not discriminate against any other sexual orientation.

Q1 Do you agree that the new Sexual Orientation regulations should apply to goods, facilities and services?

An Yes

Continue...

28 OM DAY programme

Many thanks for coming to the OM DAY programme, an effort to bring our communities together. we do appreciate the time you took at short notice to come. Following is a report about it.

Continue...

28 'MAJOR INCIDENT' MULTI-FAITH PLAN FOR THE METROPOLITAN POLICE

A launch of the 'Major Incident' multi-faith plan was made at New Scotland Yard on 8 May 2006. Suraj Sehgal represented Hindu Council UK. The Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Police launched the plan and welcomed all the Community leaders. Continue...

28 A lecture by Anil Bhanot at the Gaudia Mission UK's centenary celebrations at Friends House Euston on the scriptural guidance in the context of modern day policy.

Gita's "Unity in Diversity"

v/s

Religious Exclusivism

5000 years ago Lord Krishna says:

Gita Chapter10/Verse6:

Continue...

28 CEHR (Commission for Equality & Human Rights) Religious and Belief Consultation Group meeting held on 26th march 2006 at Christian aid head quarter London SE1.

Following the Stakeholders day held at DTI on 26th January, it was felt that RBCG should bid for some funding to take its work forward. An outline budget for £34,000 for the transitional period was discussed. Apart from meeting the cost of hiring meeting rooms Continue...

28 A short talk on Britishness given by Anil Bhanot in a debate organised by BOPIO, led by Lord Bhiku Parekh, at the House of Commons 16 March 2006.

Britishness through Multiculture

Identity of any sort is essentially a grouping of some common values and these groupings are multi tiered, several identities at different levels, family, culture, faith, nationality, and so on. The Hindus, the Sikhs, the Muslims, the Chinese do all have their strong cultures, even let us say, different values – we needn't be afraid to say so if that is the case – what is important is to acknowledge these layers but in a pyramid fashion leading up to the top national layer of Britishness. Continue...

28 Recommendations from the Hindu Council (UK) at the Conference on National framework of Religious Education & Hinduism in Schools

FOREWORD

The United Kingdom is perhaps the only country in the world where the government is actively promoting 'multi-religious' education in its publicly funded education system. The process no doubt throws up serious challenges such as how to reconcile the varying worldviews of a vast number of religions and also how to incorporate non-religious worldviews under the same umbrella. For the process to succeed the education and faith bodies need to invoke innovative and radical ideas. In this document we have taken the liberty of presenting some ideas from the Hindu tradition that may facilitate this process Continue...

28 A lecture at Home office delivered by Anil Bhanot on 3rd February 2006.

A Hindu or Indogenic Faith perspective

on

“Improving opportunity and strengthening society”

“In the beginning was Sound” is the title of the Reith lecture delivered in London by the Music Maestro Daniel Barenboim, and it will be aired on BBC Radio 4 in April. The maestro illustrates through music, how sound and silence are inter-connected, how the uplifting experience of music has a transcendental power that it reaches a point where it is almost metaphysical. The ancient

scriptures would support that view and according to the earliest revelations Man has known, it was in fact sound that preceded light. The Continue...

28 Republic Day of India

[Courtesy: Press trust of India - 29th January Release / London]

Britain keen to prevent reverse brain drain to India – McNulty London, Jan 29 (PTI) Britain is keen to prevent the reverse brain drain of British Indians returning to India to set up shop, the Immigration Minister Tony McNulty has said.

Speaking at a Republic Day reception hosted by the Hindu Council of Britain at Malabar Junction at Tottennam Court Road here last night, which started off with the Indian National anthem "Jan Gan man..", Continue...

28 Engagement with key GLA London Opinion Formers – 8/12/05

On 8/12/05 Anil Bhanot, Umesh Sharma, Kishore Vora, and Dilip Joshi met with Len Duvall leader of the Labour Group, Robert Neill Leader of the Conservative Group and Redmond O' Neill (Director Public Affairs and Transport) from GLA. The other party leaders were not available due to other commitments although Jenny Jones of the green party has agreed to a meeting in the New Year.

HCUK welcomed this opportunity to discuss issues that have an impact on Hindus who live in London.

Background:

Continue...

News & articles for the Year 2005

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51 ARMED FORCES BUDDHIST, HINDU, MUSLIM AND SIKH CHAPLAINS

London – 01 November 2005 – Today the Diwali lamp was lit at St. Pauls Cathedral as the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, spoke of the Hindu festival of lights in a remembrance service to commemorate the victims of 7/7 bombings in London. Continue...

51 Dfid Secretary of State addresses Hindu leaders

The Rt. Hon. Hilary Benn MP, Secretary of State for the Department of International Development (Dfid), was hosted by the Hindu community in Leicester on 27 July 2005 at the Shree Geeta Bhawan Temple. Mahesh Prashar, the Temple President, welcomed the Secretary of State with a garland. Continue...

51 Diwali lights the lamp of hope at St. Pauls Cathedral

London – 01 November 2005 – Today the Diwali lamp was lit at St. Pauls Cathedral as the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, spoke of the Hindu festival of lights in a remembrance service to commemorate the victims of 7/7 bombings in London. Continue...

51 Diwali Festival in London attracts thousands

London - 17 October 2005 - Trafalgar Square was yesterday packed with thousands of Londoners from all backgrounds and faiths who had come together to enjoy the annual Hindu celebrations of the Festival of Diwali.

Continue...

51 Hindu Council UK Calls for Community Support for Quake Victims

The Hindu Council UK (HCUK) today requested all Hindu temples and organisations in the country to reach out to the victims of the South Asian earthquake to help alleviate their suffering. Dr. Jagdish Sharma, Chairman of the HCUK trust, urged the community to follow the lead of the Hindu humanitarian organisation Sewa International which has experience in the relief, rehabilitation and long-term development of disaster victims and disaster-affected areas in Asia. "We extend our heartfelt sympathy to the families of those who have lost their loved ones in this terrible catastrophe", said Dr. Sharma. Continue...

51 A tribute to Gandhiji

Every year in October, many Indian organisations pay their respects to Mahatma Gandhi by holding prayers and lectures about his life and thoughts. Worldwide there are many non-Indian institutions and individuals who would also be paying their respect to the Mahatma who Continue...

51 New anti-terror measures

Ms. Hazel Blears Minister of State Home Office had held a meeting on 8th August to ascertain the views of Community leaders on the Consultative Document on new anti-terror measures Continue...

51 The Road to Equality

The Equality Bill is proposing a new clause that for the first time may put even some respected religious activists in the dock. Take the case of a Charity for the homeless that is ultimately run Continue...

51 Ministers and VIPs celebrate Krishna's birthday in UK's newest Hindu temple

London - 6 September 2005 - Immigration Minister, Tony McNulty MP, was among several dignitaries invited to celebrate the religious festival of Krishna Janmashthami on Sunday September 4th at the Continue...

51 Beating the drum of Hindu unity at London festival

London – 25 August 2005 – Amplified Indian devotional music blared through the streets of Southall in West London last Sunday, as hundreds of members of the Hindu community Continue...

51 GCSE Results in Hinduism

London – 25 August 2005 - The Vivekananda Centre entered about 300 candidates who sat for various examinations in Hinduism at GCSE (short or full courses) as well as Continue...

51 THE CONCEPT IN HINDUISM OF "JUST WAR" - Surya P. Subedil.

Introduction - The purpose of this article is to examine the concept in Hinduism of "just war" as derived from ancient Hindu religious texts, including the Vedas, Puranas, Smritis and the great epics such as the Mahabharata Continue...

51 Kill Terrorism-A Practicable Thought

Terrorism can be killed by a Trident of Truthfulness, Tolerance and Transparency. Truthfulness in the Faith leaders, Tolerance in the communities and the Transparency in the Faith Institutions can achieve the presently required harmony and peace in the world

To erode the culturally rooted mistrust that sets faith against faith, an exchange programme is needed. Objectives and aims will be to propagate the philosophy and the core teachings of all faiths that claim and declare that they believe in tolerance and peace. We talk a lot through inter-faith seminars, multicultural events & inter-festival celebrations only what the host and guests & audience and the speaker would like to accept in a civilised society. We never disclose what is talked inside doors of the faith teaching or faith preaching places. Open the windows and give the

opportunity to observe each other's faith and cultural institutions irrespective of whether they are housed in exclusive faith schools or in the religious places of worship or in a privately run charity hall. Exchange views and embark on joint ventures of core - peace objectives of importance to general welfare of the world's inhabitants.

Sudarshan Bhatia

Faith & Culture Executive, Hindu Council UK Continue...

51 London Mosque hears Hindu prayers

London – 12 August 2005 – In what may be the first signs of real inter-faith healing, last week a Hindu teacher was invited to recite Hindu prayers at a London Mosque. Jay Dilip Lakhani of the Hindu Council UK, along with many other faith representatives, was invited to the Al Khoi Shia Mosque in London for a prayer meeting for the victims of the London bombings Continue...

51 MICHAEL HOWARD M.P. REJECTS ANY SUPPORT FOR KASHMIRI FREEDOM FIGHTERS/TERRORISTS

London - 10 August 2005 - Mr. Michael Howard, leader of the Conservative party, disagreed with comments made in a BBC programme on 20/07/2005 by Ms. Sayeeda Warsi, vice-chairman of the party, stating that new anti-terror laws following the 7/7 attacks in London Continue...

51 Trying to understand the problem.....

The Home Secretary called an urgent meeting Wednesday 20th July to start a round-table discussion on the London Terror Bombs. The group consisted mainly of Muslim Community Continue...

51 Urgent Action Called For: HRCBM representatives are attacked on return after "Ahmadiyya" investigation

August 10, 2005 Bangladesh: Attack on Human Rights Defender Advocate Rabindra Ghosh and Professor Ashok Taru Saha, HRCBM-Dhaka, Bangladesh. Ensure Safety & Security: Bring the Criminals to Justice Continue...

51 Hinduism - Values, Beliefs and Reasons for believing

Core Values

Being good and doing Good is the way Hindus promote values in individual, in families and in society. The idea of goodness is invoked either through a theistic Continue...

51 Hindu American Foundation releases first - ever annual survey of Hindu Human Rights

DATE: July 13, 2005 TAMPA, FL: The Hindu American Foundation (HAF) released today its first annual report on the status of Hindu human rights in Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. Entitled Continue...

51 Sewa International UK London Bomb Relief Appeal

Please click below for details of an Appeal launched by Sewa International UK for the victims of the recent terrorist bombings in London.

Relief Appeal

Sanjay M Jagatia Public Relations Coordinator - Sewa International UK Representative- Hindu Council UK Continue...

51 Media Misrepresentation on Hinduism

It is shocking to read Jon carrel's comments regarding rape in relation to Hinduism in which he states that Hinduism believes rape as retribution as revenge Continue...

51 R.S.S. Activities rush for rescue Operation

02 July, 2005 : Barring north Gujarat incessant rains for several days have turned out to the worst days for the entire Gujarat. As usual RSS activist have Continue...

51 Stephen Pound MP accuses Sayeeda Warsi on her Kashmir statement

Tory vice-chairwoman was tonight condemned for suggesting new anti-terror laws should not stop support for "freedom fighters" in Kashmir. Continue...

51 London hears Hindu mantra for protection

Friday 15th July 2005 - London - Yesterday's vigil at Trafalgar Square in London, marked by a two-minute silence at noon in honour of those who died in the terrorist bomb attacks last Continue...

51 Hindu Council UK joins Met Police to develop London strategy

The Hindu Council UK (HCUK), the nation's main body representing Britain's half-a-million Hindus, was invited by the Metropolitan Police Authority to a strategy Continue...

51 Hindu Council UK shares grief with the London Mayor and faith leaders

London -- July 11th, 2005 -- The Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, today launched a book of condolences for the victims of the terrorist bombing atrocities in London. All the major faith communities were represented to show their solidarity Continue...

51 Terror strike is an attack on all Hindus, says Hindu Council UK

6 July 2005 -- London - Yesterday's terrorist attack in the holy city of Ayodhya in Northern India is an attack on Hindus and Hinduism generally Continue...

51 The Pujaari Issue

The Immigration Minister, Tony McNulty MP invited on 30th June 2005, Anil Bhanot, HCUK General Secretary, and Dr. Narayan Rao, HCUK Director and Vice Chair of the Interfaith Network Continue...

51 Hindu Council UK Debate on Bangladesh Human Rights Violations at House of Commons, 16th June 2005.

Dr J C Sharma, chair of the HCUK trust, opened the meeting with a vedic prayer. Steve Pound MP, our host, gave a welcome address to everyone stating that Continue...

51 Rally against misrepresentation of Hinduism and Hindu identity, well supported by the majority of sections of British Hindu community.

Hindus congregated with One Voice at Knightsbridge (London) on 12th June, outside the French Embassy, at a Rally organised by Hindu Human Rights (HHR) to protest the manufacture and sales of shoes with the image of Lord Rama printed on them. A French manufacturer Minnelli produced the shoes. A Minnelli executive was abrupt and dismissive when HHR first called them about this matter a month ago. Since then, Minnelli staff have refused to take calls or answer messages in the face of a growing "e-mail and telephone bombardment" after HHR published their e-mail address and telephone number on its website. Several Hindu groups joined the protest outside the French embassy in London called by HHR. The protest increasingly was being directed at the French government too, for failing to pressure the company to withdraw the shoes. At least thousand Hindus, congregated on the streets included representatives from all sections of Hindu society and were of all ages. The energy and enthusiasm of the young speakers, was equally rivalled by the older generation who spoke or sang with the same pride and devotion for their philosophy. The serious and disheartening recounts of Hindu misrepresentation and atrocities against Hindus across the globe, were soothed by recital of bhajans and chanting praises of Rama Chandra ji. The young supporters of the Rally kept the crowds well watered and fed with a commendable humility and sense of purpose. With the commitment and dedication of this next generation of devout Hindus, our Dharma has a very long and bright future ahead. At one stage in the afternoon, the orderly and energetic crowd enthusiastically moved across the road, to reach the steps of the French embassy. The Metropolitan Police were very helpful and understanding in their management of the crowd and traffic, when the traffic came to a stand still for a short while. The banging of dhole and sound of symbols filled the air and the crowds sang, cheered and waved their banners, to ensure that those in the Embassy and those at Minnelli in France heard the unified Hindu voice demanding respect and an apology for the offence they have caused Hindus across the globe. The gathering at this rally marks a significant development in the Identity of Hindus, because it brought together people from different theological sections, languages and ethnic backgrounds, from within the Hindu community. They all came together, unified by the one common thread of this shared unique philosophy, which is rooted in the Vedic and Vedantic traditions. This tradition requires all to follow the Path of Dharma (path of truth and righteousness), which Lord Rama embodied and that epitomises the core values of Hindu culture and righteous living. Minnelli Ltd have withdrawn the sale of these shoes but have not yet issued a written apology to Hindus. Anuja Prashar Hindu Council UK Executive. Continue...

51 PRESS RELEASE

Hindu Council UK fully supports the peaceful rally organised by Hindu Human Rights on 12th June, to protest against the inappropriate use of images of Lord Rama, on shoes manufactured and sold by a French company Minelli from the French fashion group Vivarte, who have now withdrawn the product but the Hindu community has decided to go ahead with the protest to make the point that religious intolerance of this kind will not be tolerated. Continue...

51 Religious Freedom and NRMs in Europe

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion are basic human rights and form one of the main pillars of a democratic society. But how free are Europe's citizens to choose and practice their own beliefs? In this article Merudevi Dasi examines the history and implications of policies towards new religious movements (NRMs) in Europe, specifically France. Currently the French government is considering controversial new legislation that many fear will severely curtail the rights of religious minorities. Does this law challenge the European Union's commitment to religious freedom? Will other European countries follow the French model or will France become isolated on this issue? Continue...

51 BARNET TSUNAMI MEMORIAL

The Mayor of Barnet held a civic reception in respect of tsunami memorial on 16th January 2005. The Barnet multi-faith forum was asked to lead the reception. Hindu religion was represented by Suraj Sehgal who has been a member of the above forum. Every religion was asked to speak for 10 minutes on the occasion. The audience was 98 per cent white. The input for the Hindu religion was given as follows: NAMASTE: This is the Hindu salutation which means that I bow to the soul within you as creation of the Supreme God. This is suitable for all occasions and to all ages. It was stated that it was essential to give an outline of Hindu religion so that people can understand what we think about the tragedy of tsunami. The original name of Hinduism is SANATAN DHARAMA, which means an eternal religion. It comprehends all other religions. For example the 10 Commandments are part UPNASHID a Hindu Scripture. DEFINITION OF HINDUISM: All are born as Hindus unless they are given another religion or Faith. Lord Krishna propounded in the GITA (Hindu holy Book) that those who serve and love all living beings would be blessed and loved by HIM. Hindus see others as fellow human beings and not by their faith or religion. To this reason all other faiths have been allowed to infiltrate and without any opposition into India and no Hindu has ever been aggressive to any of those religions except defense. Hinduism is a progressive religion because it has been changing with the change of civilization and human values. Various social practices when became outdated were abundant. Hindu religion is a complete religion because it covers all aspects of life. It gives directions in Vedas for a life to be enjoyable. For instance RIG VEDA explains the State Economics which is true to present day, Yoga Shastra which gives physical directions to a healthy life. Likewise various volumes of Hindu literature cover all aspects of life. These were written thousands years ago but are true to this day. Hinduism teaches to abandon five basic Vices which are Greed, Anger, Jealousy, Haughtiness, Affliction. If anybody can overcome these Vices , will have blissful life. STATUS OF WOMEN: Hinduism gives not only equal but higher status to women. No religious worship is performed unless the wife sits besides the husband to participate into it. There are Goddesses who are worshiped by Hindus. This status has been accorded because Women gives life to all of us. The west has recognized it in 19 century whereas Hinduism had given equal status to women in thousands years ago. DEATH; Hinduism recognizes that death is inevitable to all living beings but

Soul is immortal which only changes bodies as destined as we change our shirts. Those who accept this truth would never fear from death. It can come to us in a road accident or at the hospital or in a tsunami. The Arch Bishop of Canterbury had thrown doubt on the existence of God ,but HE does exists as He was there to save the lives of those two infants who were seen floating on a piece of carpet and another women who came out alive even if she was sounded by sharks and there were some fishermen who were found floating in a dingy miles away from their homes in Indian coasts. At this stage some Sanskrit scriptures were read with a translation in English giving the meaning as follows; O Lord give happiness to all and may no one be unhappy. May all be healthy and possess of all good things of life. May all see goodness everywhere. May we follow the path of virtue and righteousness. May all your creations be happy and none be miserable. O God lead us from untruth to truthfulness, from darkness to light and from death to immortality. Finally; Peace prayer for universe; OM SHANTI, SHANTI, SHANTI ,HARI OM. Suraj Sehgal Chair Defense Relations Executive Chair Defense Relations Executive Continue...

51 Locating Hinduism in the Transnational Space in the 21st Century

Hindu Council UK (HCUK) convened an unprecedented landmark event, 15th May 2005, for Hindu leaders Temples, Samajs & Societies to come together to discuss, "Locating Hinduism in the transnational space of the 21st Century". Anuja Prashar, Hindu Council UK Executive, opened the event by suggesting that "Today the Hindu identity is being defined for Hindus through various mediums, but not defined by Hindus themselves" , when she paid tribute to the Hindu leaders who have been the drivers & role models for Hinduism. The list of strong Hindu role models included, Mr.O.P.Sharma,Dr.V.P.N.Rao, Dr. J.C.Sharma, Professor Bharadwaj, Dr. G.Bhan, Dr.Shastryji, Dr.Dilip Lakhani & Dr.I.Patel. Anuja asked leaders to cooperate & form a collective Hindu voice to empower the future generations of Hindus. Dr. P.Kumar from Oxford Hindu centre, urged the audience to remain mindful of their role & postion within British society, which would remain separate from their relationships with India, as they collectively moved forward to establish an identity for the future. Visiting President of the American Hindu Foundation, made the audience aware of the human Rights atrocities against Hindus, which have been documented by his organisation. Dr. Mihir Meghani went on to describe the American approach fro promoting Hinduism a pluralistic philosophy. Dr.V.Rao, an HCUK trustee and executive of the Inter-faith network, recommended that Interfaith dialogue needs to be rejuvenated and structured to take account of the emerging assertion of non abrahamic philosophies. The audience participation session in the afternoon revealed many benefits and some risks to creating a collective Hindu voice. However, it was agreed that there is an increasing need to establish a collective Hindu voice for future effective socio-political engagement. Hindu Council UK has been mandated to form a Think Tank with an emphasis on the benefit of promoting the pluralistic philosophy of Hinduism. Proposals and strategies for developing the Hindu Think Tank and the HCUK four point strategy plan will be discussed at the annual executive meeting in June. Hindu Council UK Hindu Council UK Continue...

51 Inter faith dialogue faces up to religious and cultural challenges, in the Information age of the 21st Century.

Student members of Hindu Human Rights and the Hindu Students Society of the London School of Economics hosted the first ever student inter-faith dialogue in early 2005. The debate was Titled : What does Jesus mean to Hindus. The names of guest speakers were Suneel (IT software trainer &

consultant) and Rishi (Student S. Asian & Punjab studies). Executives of the Hindu Council UK, and South Asian Concern (Affiliates of the Evangelical Alliance) were also present. Examination of the methods used for converting Hindus to Christianity, by Evangelical Christians, through direct debate gives us many insights to the underpinning principles governing inter-faith dialogue today. I suggest within this article that the main Evangelical Christian focus of conversion practises to Christianity, from Hinduism, is based upon principles of exclusion reflecting polar class and ethnic positioning, and a dualistic ideology. This article also examines how the class & ethnic relations of Hindus and their own sense of self and awareness of others, within the non dualistic Hindu philosophical framework, impacts upon the Inter-faith dialogue today. Juxta-positioning these two separate paradigms or world views to respond to the same question, illustrates the tensions and gaps that would need to be accounted for, if Inter-faith dialogue is to indeed be effective in engendering greater understanding between Abrahamic and Eastern philosophies in the future. Conversion, in the UK, may only succeed with the vulnerable members of Hindu society, who are disenfranchised sections of the community and that conversion to Christianity is a means to gain social status in a predominantly White Christian society. The presenter, Suneel who converted to Christianity 20 years ago, was advocating conversion to Christianity in a subtle and personal fashion, using terminology and paradigms suggestive of the exclusion and oppression experienced in a 70s & 80s Britain, through a British Hindu identity. It can be suggested therefore, that his own conversion may have been a symptom of a vulnerability seeking a sense of belonging. The appeal to the students, through the Evangelical Christian perspective suggests that rather than pursue the difficult and rigorous path of self realization within Hinduism, there is an easier option offered through Jesus Christ. Suneel later even suggested that, no one would choose to go through millions of births, lives and deaths when they could live this one difficult life and then be granted a place in heaven by seeking forgiveness. This methodology for conversion was directly focused on the person as a victim, and this would appeal to anyone who felt vulnerable as a victim of the racial 1980s British society. It is an appeal for salvation from the struggle of life, in which people are seen to be weak and unable to cope with their social environments. The presentation of the Hindu perspective, by Rishi, indicates an emerging process of Hindu class and cultural agency amongst the youth, which enables claims to legitimacy for a non linear and non polar ideology. The main Hindu focus of the debate brings into light the understanding and interpretation of the principle of self realisation within Hinduism, as the basis upon which pluralism exists. This approach also marks the Hindus search for identity, along non linear and temporal planes, with a distinct supple expression. The Hindu perspective of non duality differs from that of Abrahamic religions of today, which are based upon duality and therefore tend to establish identities in oppositional hierarchical constructions. Rishi has made a significant break from the Evangelical Christian perspective of scriptures as the embodiment of the word of God. The scientific academic requirements of validation and historical evidence to establish the valence of any document, provided Rishi with the tools to challenge the authenticity and validity of the Bible as a complete and original document. Exposing the Evangelical Christian doctrine to the Vedantic measures and epistemology, also provided a valid method for understanding first how the Christian paradigm of duality has dominated the Inter-Faith dialogue thus far. Secondly how effectively a shift in this paradigm would open the way for a constructive and inclusive faith discourse in the future. The shift of emphasis from emotional engagement with philosophy, as Suneel presented it, to a scientific approach of philosophical textual analysis suggests an active use of cultural capital. Pierre Bourdieu , a French sociologist suggests, that culture is the field in which class relations operate. The cultural understanding and depth of research into the Christian doctrine, demonstrates that Rishi

was not open to emotional conversion practises. Rishis examination of the History of Christianity enabled the debate to be framed within an objective scientific mould that reflected Rishis western educational influence, which was then combined with the use of measuring the evangelical philosophy against the Hindu paradigm of non duality. The synergy of these two processes is congruent with the flexible non linear and temporal cultural expression of the principles of the Vedanta and which underpins Hindu cultural practises. Rishi suggested in his detailed analysis of biblical passages, that if the Bible is read without the literal translation, many parts of the Bible reflect the wisdom that is the essence of the philosophy of self realisation, that the Veda and Upanishads espouse. Thus, the Cristos principle (as opposed to Christ the man) is within all of mankind and thus mankind is not separated from the eternal. Hindus do not perceive any duality. The detailed presentation & questioning from the young Hindu presenter Rishi & Hindu students in the audience, illustrated that Hindu Youth today were well informed about both Hindu & Christian philosophy and were not easily persuaded by the evangelical Christian perspective. The presentation of Hinduism suggests an inclusive plural principle and is therefore relevant for the future multi-cultural and inter-faith dialogues in the global era. The inclusion of this pluralistic paradigm in future inter-faith discourse is pivotal for the Hindu identity and offers an expansive alternative worldview, in todays diverse and global society. The comments from the audience reveal a marked difference between Hindu youth who understood the social and ideological implications of both Christianity and Hinduism in its Vedantic format and the Christian youth who had very little knowledge of Hinduism. The difference of knowledge and shared meanings between the two groups has stark implications for Inter-Faith dialogue in the future. ANUJA PRASHAR HCUK Executive ANUJA PRASHAR HCUK Executive Continue...

51 Guidance on Hinduism for Public Authorities in Prisons, Hospitals, Armed Forces and the Home Office

A. HINDUISM : THEOLOGY Its origin and the name : Hinduism is the name given to a set of religious traditions which originated in India. They are ever growing, over a few millennia. The current name is the one given to their whole pattern of life and culture by outsiders who spotted them on the banks of the river Indus. Hindus do not call their religion by any name. To say what they practice as their mythological as well as spiritual tradition, they use the term "Sanatana Dharma" which means "perennial righteous conduct". At the outset, its emphasis has been threefold - purity of life, devotion to the Almighty and a yearning for the spiritual salvation. Continue...

51 Conference for National Coalition of Black led Organisations (NCBLO).

Hindu Council UK were invited to attend the conference and speak on the Faith seminar within the conference agenda. NCBLO is a new coalition of Black professional associations formed to secure a stake in the social , economic & political wealth of the UK commensurate with the Minority Ethnic contribution to the common wealth. The use of the term Black, adopted by the Coalition, to refer to communities of African, Afro Caribbean & Asian decent, has been debated by the NCBLO Board and there remain concerns across the various organisations for seeking a more inclusive word. These concerns are shared by several HCUK Executives and this matter is being discussed at various levels with the Government and on several platforms with various organisations. The conference opened with speeches from Baroness Scotland of Asthal, Parliamentary under Secretary (Homeoffice) & Mark Carroll, Director of Diversity & Faith Unit at the Homeoffice, who spoke to the conference

audience about the Government's Race Relations and Community Cohesion strategy which was launched in January 2005. Peter Herbet (QC) urged the leaders of the organisations to proactively seek to engage with each other in partnerships and collectively challenge Government initiatives, which were counterproductive or left the diminished conditions of some of the community unchanged. The conference seminar sessions were designed to address the implications of this strategy for Race Relations and all marginalised issues of the community, such as Gender, Disability, Age, Sexuality and Faith. The discussions will be collated and fed back to the government as suggested options for a way forward from a minority perspective. The conference was also designed to consider SMART recommendations to achieve success within specific occupations through the development of effective partnerships. At the Faith Seminar in the afternoon, Reverend Arlington shared his anxieties at the manner in which Issues of Race Relations were being submerged under the Diversity agenda of the government and that the role of Faith within the communities which should potentially be elevated, was possibly going to have to compete with various sections of the community. Anuja Prashar mapped out the similarities between the oppressive social processes of the prevailing Race discourse and the emerging Faith discourse of today, and warned against the dangers of not consciously controlling the compounded fractures within communities, that the merging of these two discourses would inevitably produce. The establishment of polar positions of black and white, which constitute the processes through which the Race discourse emerges, when transplanted upon the Faith discourse, diminishes the ability of Faith discourse to be expressed along ideological paradigms and reimposes the insider and outsider social construction on Faith inter-relations. Anuja also suggested that the only way forward for ethnic minority communities to have a meaningful and productive Race and Inter Faith dialogue, would have to take into account these fractures and work in partnership to dissipate their effect. The fractures that would occur within the Faith discourse, would fragment communities bound together by traditional ethnic roots but split along signifying practices of faith. Close partnership working and a vigilant adherence to the Hindu principles of pluralism and tolerance, would enable diverse communities to come together for the benefit of all. The Q & A session from the Faith seminar raised two main concerns from the audience. The first, that the younger generation would like to turn to their faith organisations in adversity, but feel that these institutions have not evolved or changed sufficiently with the times, to help address their needs in the 21st Century. The second concern was formed around overcoming the difficulties in partnership working, by identifying common goals, between different faiths in order to empower collective ethnic minority communities. Anuja Prashar. Projects Finance Executive Projects Finance Executive Continue...

51 The Arts and Humanities Research Board Diaspora, Migration & Identities Launch Event

Dr Natubhai Shah, the Jain Associate Director at Hindu Council UK and Mr Anil Bhanot, the General Secretary, in place of Dr Shiv Pande the Hindu Heritage Executive at HCUK, attended the reception of The Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) on the evening of 21st April 2005 to launch the Diasporas, Migration and Identities programme. The event took place at the Museum of Immigration and Diversity, 19 Princelet Street, Spitalfields, London E1 and was attended by 70 guests, mostly academics and leaders of the Faith communities. The Arts and Humanities Research Council funds high-quality research and Postgraduate training in huge range of subjects from history and English literature to design and dance. It has set up a 5 year trans-disciplinary programme from the beginning of 2005 to the end of 2009 for the Diasporas, Migration and Identities research. The AHRB's new strategic programme, Diasporas, Migration and Identities will investigate the

contemporary and historical context of wide range of related issue including language, religion, culture and creativity. The programme explores the ways in which different identities and cultural practices emerge and to penetrate public consciousness with an understanding of these issues as they relate to the UK and the wider world. By applying the unique perspective of Arts and humanities subjects, new insights and new methods will be developed for approaching the important issues related to diasporas and migration. The Museum of Immigration and Diversity at 19 Princelet Street, is an extraordinary testament to many generations of immigrant families that goes right to the heart of who we are now. Programme Objectives: Ø To stimulate high quality research on diasporas, migration and identities Ø To make distinctive contribution to the theoretical, conceptual, practice-led and empirical study of diasporas, migration and identities by focusing on cultural, historical and linguistic perspectives and creative practice. Ø To facilitate connection, communication and exchange and research and its outcomes, including those in the cultural sector, media, government, public and voluntary bodies and to contribute to the development of public policy. Ø To contribute to public awareness Ø To generate research findings and outcomes of international significance and to develop networks of researchers in and beyond UK Ø To enable a comparative analysis of diasporas, migration and their associated identities. Programme Priorities: Research that interrogates, Research that explores, Research that develops, Research that understood, Research that takes current UK-based issues, Projects, workshops and networks that promote interdisciplinary as an out come of their activities Research Themes: Migration, Settlements and Diaspora: modes, stages and forms; representation, performance and discourse; languages and linguistic change; subjectivity, emotion and identity; objects, practices and places; beliefs, values and laws. Dr Natubhai Shah Associate Director Hindu Council UK Associate Director Hindu Council UK Continue...

51 Press Release from INDO-EUROPEAN KASHMIR FORUM

In an unprecedented show of unity UK Hindu organisations joined hands to voice concern over the plight of Kashmir Hindus. In a joint statement UK Hindu organisations condemned the government of J & K state for failing to protect human-right, heritage and homeland of Kashmiri Hindus. Declaring Kashmir as the fountainhead of Hindu religion, UK Hindu organisations launched a joint "Kashmir Task force" to pursue rights of Hindus in Jammu & Kashmir state and resolved 1.To initiate awareness campaign on plight of Kashmiri Hindus 2.To reclaim and develop Hindu heritage sites in Kashmir and declare them as World Hindu Heritage sites. 3.To fight for human-rights of Kashmiri Hindus 4.To demand equal rights, opportunities and justice for all people in the state of Jammu & Kashmir based upon merit and reservation for assistance on basis of economic bracket rather than caste or religion. 5.Initiate a Worldwide signature campaign in support of a Safe-Haven for Kashmiri Hindus in Kashmir valley with guarantee of a plot of land to all Kashmir Hindus and a ready home to all Kashmiri Hindu refugees. The UK Hindu Kashmir task force will meet every twelve weeks to monitor and pursue its objectives. More that 15 mainstream UK Hindu organisations participated in a conference hosted by Indo-European Kashmir Forum and Brent Hindu Council. Sunil Bakshi President - IEKF Human Rights Executive - HCUK Continue...

51 The key role of every Hindu body should be promoting education in Hinduism, and that is what we are engaged in

In these two weeks we will be interacting with over 2000 English youngsters (11 to 18 year age group). We manage to displace many serious misconceptions parading as Hinduism in the education system with the correct dynamic teachings of Hinduism that have a serious contribution to make for reviving and refreshing the message of spirituality in the modern world. Last week we did four sessions at Watford Grammar School and talked to over 1200 boys. These sessions were received with great enthusiasm. The headmaster said that he was taken aback with the response these sessions were creating. Sometimes the boys would start applauding in the middle of a presentation as what they heard took them by surprise. We did sessions at John Lyon School as well as Heathland School in Hounslow. Next week we talk to 200 sixth formers at the London Academy. What surprises us is to see how comfortable the non-Hindu youngsters feel with Hinduism and take to it so easily. Our talks focus on themes like: Religion and rationality or Hinduism and the findings of Modern Science; Pluralism or Reverence for life. One surprising thing we can report is that the applause from Non-Hindu youngsters is far greater than from Hindu youngsters! It signals to us in no uncertain terms that Hinduism is meant for this nation and is destined to find its natural home in this country. Jay Dilip Lakhani Chair - Education Executive Chair - Education Executive Continue...

51 British Parliament celebrated RAMNOMI at the House Of Commons, with the Hindu Council UK (HCUK) and it's member faith organisations.

This historic event, was hosted graciously by the Minister of State, Tony McNulty (MP) and marked the significant working partnership relationship of the British government with the Hindu faith organisations within the UK, and was attended by 270 guests. Anuja Prashar (HCUK Executive) welcomed all the distinguished guests and community leaders, which included the Indian High Commissioner and the visiting Indian Minister of West Bengal. Anuja said it was apt, that this first celebration, of the birth of Shri Ram ji, at the House of Commons coincides in 2005 with the awakening of the British Hindu community to its own need to engage pro-actively with the machinery of Government and Policy making. Anuja elaborated that the coincidence is remarkable and more significant because Shri Ram was the embodiment of the qualities that all Hindus aspire to as individuals and therefore the qualities that underpin the culture of our communities. Lord Ram demonstrated these qualities throughout his life. The qualities of : .Respect for the Law of the Land, by obeying his father the King and going into exile in the forest. .The pursuit of knowledge of his environment, to create harmony & prosperity through good relationships with other forest dwellers regardless of their station or background. .Courage, self discipline and commitment to purpose to fight back, when his peace & prosperity, his Laxmi, his wife Sita was snatched away from him. .Valuing the strength of diversity, by respecting partnerships and working together with Hanumanji and other forest communities to overcome adversity. .Upholding the principle of SEVA, by gaining mastery over personal needs to serve the greater good of the community, when subjecting his Sita to Aagni Pariksha in order to retain community cohesion The Maharaj from Maha Laxmi Mandir - Lewisham, Bankim Gossaiji enthralled the room full of Parliamentarians and Hindu leaders with a recital of the Ramayan, while Shri Ramesh ji lead the prayer ceremony. There followed speeches from several dignitaries. Kamlesh Sharma, Indian High Commissioner congratulated UKs Hindu Community on the dignity and strength they displayed, through the celebration of their own cultural values and suggested that the spiritual aridity of our times required more of the same. The Rt. Hon. Hilary Benn (MP), Secretary of State for Culture, spoke of the increased developing partnership work between the Indian & British governments, on various projects and welcomed the opportunities for forging greater understanding between the Hindu & British cultures. Dominic Grieve (MP), Shadow

Attorney General, recognised the contribution that the Hindu community has made to British society and encouraged community leaders to take up the challenge of greater partnership working in the future development of a Multi-cultural Britain. The visiting Minister from West Bengal congratulated the Hindu Council UK and the Hindu community of the UK for its exemplary ability to develop harmonious and effective relationships within a multi-cultural environment. Two classical dances, Kathak and Bharat Natyam, were performed by students of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, introduced with explanation by Dr. Shastry ji (HCUK Executive). The audience made up of several Hindu community leaders, Presidents of various Faith organisations and a significant number of Ministers of Parliament, who are involved with Faith and Hindu Community, such as Home Office Minister, Fiona Mactaggart (MP), Adrian Bailey (MP), Lord Dholakia (LibDem) and others, applauded as the three young women performed to the recital of the Ramayan. Jay Lakhani (HCUK Executive) congratulated the British Government on its fore sight and affirmation of the value of the Hindu community in the UK, by inviting Hindus to celebrate a significant religious festival at the Houses of Parliament, and reminded the audience that this was not possible in the Indian Houses of Parliament. Abhay Lakhani (HCUK Executive) paid special tribute to Tony McNulty(MP) and his support of the Hindu community and added that he hoped the British government would see fit to extend this support to effective resolution of international issues, that challenge the Identity and heritage of Hindus all over the world. Abhay jis reminder that Gandhi ji, at Independence, wished India to have a system of Ram Raj, was met with a roar of applause from the audience of 270 guests. Abhay ji went on to encourage community leaders to support the Hindu Council UK, as the collective voice of Hindus, because our future generations are depending upon us to ensure that we are recognised and valued as true strong Hindus. Anil Bhanot (HCUK General Secretary) concluded by calling for a greater focus on Inter-Faith dialogue and explained the Hindu pluralistic approach. He suggested that Religion is not a fixed phenomenon, it is a movement. It may appear fixed but it does change inevitably, with the passage of time and that is because it is not just a belief system, it is also a code for moral conduct. It is this moral conduct which is the living part of the religion that is continually placing new challenges, new pressures, on the inanimate belief part of the religion. Whilst belief is based on a result, a revelation, conduct is an evolutionary process. Belief on its own can sometimes be irrational, but it is then the conduct part, the living part, that stretches belief to its limits of reason, that religion finally begins to change or evolve. Of course beyond reason there can only be belief that can take us to God but up to that fine point, we owe it to God to use all our intellectual faculties of which reason is the highest. · If God is omnipresent then we cant have a hell that is devoid of him. · If God is omnipotent then we cant have a devil upon whom God has no control. · If God is infinite then we cant limit him to a certain set of names. The British Government has wisely opened doors to faith and acknowledged it, to influence policy & legislation. Anil ji commended the Home Office Faith Unit under, Fiona Mactaggart(MP) for always trying their best and urged religious leaders to begin to move from an already established culture of tolerance, thanks to the work of Inter Faith Network, to developing a culture of genuine respect for each others religions. Anil ji continued that all religions agree on the very basic fundamental concept that there is only one God who created this universe with million of galaxies, perhaps millions of solar systems and perhaps millions of intelligent forms and perhaps millions of religions. When Lord Ram was asked to describe the nature of divinity he was silent. The devotee asked again, and Ram said that he was speechless, that there were no words which could describe it, that it is beyond everything that is in nature, that is the Absolute. If that principle remains central to our Inter faith dialogue we will then surely achieve our inter faith ideal. Stephen Pound (MP), who chairs the Labour Friends of India

at the parliament, reminded us of the ideals set by Lord Ram and how important it is for us not to forget those. Stephen confirmed that Hinduism has a lot to teach the world and he ended by greeting everyone with "Namaste". Tony McNulty (MP) reaffirmed that he was delighted at the celebrations especially, with the dignity and depth of the explanations that Maharaj, Bankim Gossai ji provided, from the readings of the Ramayan. The values of the Hindu code of conduct was evident in the joyous and gracious manner of the celebrations and Tony declared, to the rapturous delight of all guests, that Ramnami and Janamashtmi would be celebrated every year at the British House of Parliament. Durga Sweets of Ilford, donated 300 food packages for the guests, and Hindu Council UK thanked them for their generosity, on behalf of UKs Hindu organisations. Finally, Raj Chopra (Finchley Hindu Society) extended a vote of thanks to our host Tony McNulty, Abhay Lakhani (HCUK Executive) and Hindu Council UK. Anuja Prashar Projects Finance Executive Anuja Prashar Projects Finance Executive Anuja Prashar Projects Finance Executive Continue...

51 Restorative Justice Seminar

Hindu Council UK was invited to a seminar on a new initiative the Home Office is exploring under the Minister of State, Baroness Scotland of Asthal PC QC. Restorative Justice, RJ, is a problem solving approach to crime, which involves the parties involved themselves, and the community generally, in an active relationship with statutory agencies. Its objectives are: a) to attend fully to the victims needs – material, financial, social and emotional b) to prevent re-offending by reintegrating offender into the community. It is somewhat based on the motto “prevention is better than cure” and requires a long term strategy rather than the “short sharp” treatment alone. It is centrally concerned with restoration, restoration of the victim, restoration of the offender and restoration of the damage done to the community. Guy Mansfield QC, Chairman of the Bar Council, explained the need for RJ. It is rethinking crime and punishment. The problems with the Criminal Justice System, CJS, are that as people perceive crime going up it leads to higher sentencing and then some categories of offenders can get disproportionate treatment and furthermore the CJS does not tackle the underlying problems which the RJ will attempt to do. Dr Heather Strang, who works in this area, showed films and presentations of how it is working in pilot studies across the world and their study findings. A DVD of a face to face meeting showing an interaction between the victim and the offender, where their families or friends were present also, resulted in the offender apologising to the victim, with a promise of reparations. Dr Strang recommended that a new agency would be required to deal with RJ, which is independent of the police. Some of the studies showed that with RJ, both property and violent crime reduced but others showed that drink driving or shop lifting remained unchanged. Canon Dr Nicholas Sagovsky of Westminster Abbey, where the seminar was hosted, spoke on the imbalance between two people where the Judge is the equaliser and that we always need to correct the balance by a continuous reparation exercise. Baroness Scotland then spoke and said that there is already a growth in mediation, particularly in family law, and that RJ appeals to the human condition and addresses questions like, why me?, apology from the offender?, etc. RJ is part of a reform of the CJS, not separate, community punishment may be increased. She said that 78% of the offenders admitted that it helped them keep out of trouble. There is a community Justice centre in Liverpool and agencies in CJS will need to develop RJ as a “service”. Responding to some questions from the audience the Baroness clarified that a) a lack of literacy had high correlation with re-offending b) RJ is probably not suited to domestic violence c) RJ to tackle bullying in schools from early ages. Dr Natubhai Shah made the point that “families” of offenders also need help from financial to emotional and that they can have a greater impact on the offender

but they themselves lack resources. Anil Bhanot General Secretary Hindu Council UK Anil Bhanot General Secretary Hindu Council UK Continue...

51 Inter Faith Representatives at Westminster Cathedral

The Cardinal Cormac Murphy - OConnor, Archbishop of Westminster welcomed the Prince of Wales, the Prime Minister, Leaders of the Political Parties, the Archbishop of Canterbury and other religious leaders and Interfaith representatives to the Solemn Vespers Service in honour of Pope John Paul II. The Cardinal spoke briefly about the work and some adventures of the Pope and said that John Paul once said that religion must not be divisive and that all Gods people should unite under a common cause. Of course he was a devout Christian and his message to our world was one of joy, of hope, of peace and of freedom in the truth. Continue...

51 Vivekananda Centre London as the educational arm of Hindu Council UK celebrated an award ceremony for students together with its launch of a textbook on Hinduism.

The event took place at Brent Town Hall on the evening of 25th February. The chief guests at the event were: Ian Rowberry the head of Religious Education at Edexcel Board and Keith Faulkner the managing director of Working Links and Chair of Skills Council at London Chamber of Commerce. The event combined two aspects 1. Issuing certificates to the successful candidates who sat for and obtained high grades in GCSE and Advanced level examinations in Hinduism. A whole string of candidates obtained a perfect 100 percent marks in Hinduism Modules at Advanced Subsidiary Level as well as at Advanced level. This is unheard of! Gaining 100 percent marks in essay type examinations is a very high achievement indeed. 2. Vivekananda Centre in association with Hindu Council UK have begun the process of launching its own resources in Hinduism. The event launched its textbook called Hinduism for Schools. This textbook will alter the way Hinduism is taught and viewed in the West. The next series of textbooks yet to be launched are Advanced Hinduism and Primary Hinduism for under 11s. The event was very successful and generated a lot of praise from all academics and parents who had packed the venue to capacity. Though this book is primarily written for use by schools teaching Hinduism, it can also be used by lay readers looking for a structured understanding of this subject. Each chapter is divided into the 'main text', 'breadth of vision' and a 'memory guide'. The 'breadth of vision' incorporates material that offers deeper insights into Hinduism. The two most serious challenges faced by world religions today are: First, in a world that has become a global village, to find a way that religious communities can coexist peacefully and with full dignity. Secondly, to make religions relevant in a modern, secular society. Hinduism has important contributions to offer in both these areas. In response to the first of these challenges, this book develops the theme of 'religious pluralism' in detail. The second challenge faced by the world religions is the struggle, taking place at a deeper level. It is the struggle between religious and non-religious worldviews. What "9/11" revealed is not a conflict between two world religions but a conflict between religious and non-religious worldviews in the guise of a 'hard-line' religion fighting a 'materialistic Western world'. The way to resolve this challenge is to subject all religious teachings to the acid test of rationality. Why religions are not expected to abide by the standard of reason, no one knows. The new discoveries at the cutting edge of modern science are very exciting and are beginning to reveal a spiritual dimension to hard sciences. Some of these discoveries are like the distant echoes of the Hindu philosophy. Werner Heisenberg, the founding father of modern physics, has commented that: One cannot always distinguish between the statements made by Eastern

metaphysics and the pronouncements of modern physics. This book (and the next one in the series Advanced Hinduism) explores these links. The source of our authority and inspiration for presenting Hinduism comes from Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). The late Professor Ninian Smart paid tribute to Vivekananda by saying that it is with Vivekananda that Hinduism as an 'all-India religion' came into being. The most comprehensive and comprehensible face of Hinduism becomes visible through the lectures delivered by him. A unique feature of Hinduism is that it places equal, if not greater, emphasis on contemporary exponents of Hinduism, like Vivekananda. Most texts on Hinduism continue to present the historic rather than the contemporary expression of religion. The fixation some Western authors have on the teachings of Manu for example, reflect their own idiosyncratic approach. Hinduism prides itself as being a 'living religion', constantly evolving and refreshing the message of spirituality through contemporary spiritual giants. This book is a contemporary version of Hinduism in contrast to what have now become the antiquated forms. So far, the portrayal of Hinduism in the West has been extremely poor. The special features of Hinduism, such as the 'divinity of man', 'pluralism', 'rationality and religion', or the 'links between science and religion', rarely get a mention. Most books portray Hinduism as a cultural phenomenon: 'just a way of life' incorporating hereditary caste, many gods and goddesses, idolatry, sati, Kali, etc. This book is a robust attempt to dispel such poor portrayals of Hinduism, a religion that has a crucial role to play in reviving and refreshing the message of spirituality throughout the modern world. The books can be purchased at Hinduism for Schools at <http://www.hinduism.fsnet.co.uk> Jay Lakhani Chair - Education Executive Hindu Council UK & Vivekananda Centre London Continue...

51 Advisory Strategy meeting on the Commission for Equality and Human Rights

The DTI hosted the latest in a series of strategy meetings with leaders of the various faith communities on Monday 21st February 2005 to discuss the CEHR initiative. There are three pillars driving this single body called the Commission for Equality and Human Rights- Equality and Social Diversity/Promotion of Human Rights/Good Relations. It will provide institutional support against discrimination in relation to religious beliefs. It will promote the Human Rights of all citizens. CEHR will not litigate but will promote good practice regarding Human rights amongst Public bodies. A new development will be arrangements based on the regions in order to create relationships at that level. Themes for consultation The government launched a White Paper in May 2004. 150 organizations gave a detailed and rich response. The major concern emerged as to the need for specific expertise as well as the resources to make that expertise available. This is an attempt to harmonise legislation. There is provision for equality in terms of employment rights but not in terms of facilities and services. Part of the challenge will be looking at the long-term barriers to equality in society. Timing The CEHR body should be up by 2007. The CRE will not be joining that body until 2009. There will be an interim gap regarding support for religious beliefs and arrangement will have to be made to fill that gap. Government Response to the issue of Equality ·A wider look at Equality legislation ·Stronger enforcement powers-considerable powers in relation to Enquiries ·Monitoring resulting in a State of the Nation Report by CEHR-possible inclusion of a National Equality Map-by identifying benchmarks and performance indicators to measure the progress. To initiate debate. ·Good relations –clarifying roles, prejudice, hate crimes ·Existence of Steering Group to oversee the transition and setting up of the CEHR. Objectives of CEHR -Clear vision of society -Peoples capacity to achieve should not be limited by prejudice/discrimination -Respect of and Protection for each individuals Human Rights -Respect for dignity and worth of each individual -Equal opportunity to participate in society -Mutual respect for each community, understanding and valuing diversity.

Translated into Legislation -A fundamental duty -Monitoring indicators on religion and belief in society Comments How will the government recognize the need for strand specific expertise? What will the expertise comprise of? How will general public be involved in the debate eg. religious institutions? Will the CEHR be able to facilitate the diversity of opinions and expression regarding infringement of Human Rights? Comments from a Hindu perspective ·Hinduism values and welcomes challenge, debate, scrutiny and discourse. How will CEHR assist in mitigating the Incitement to Religious Hatred curtailment of such views? ·Discussion reveals a potentially divisive and exclusivist and conversion-oriented stance vis-a-vis other faith communities. Exclusivists religions are fundamentally divisive and pose a threat to the very concept of equality and human rights.How will CEHR ensure the Hindu approach of tolerance and inclusivity is accorded appropriate consideration? Sheila Maharaj Human Rights Executive Hindu Council UK Hindu Council UK Hindu Council UK Sheila Maharaj Human Rights Executive Hindu Council UK Continue...

51 THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY DR ROWAN WILLIAMS VISITED BAPS SHRI SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR, NEASDEN ON SATURDAY 29 JANUARY 2005

Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury visited The BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Neasden, the largest traditional Hindu Mandir outside India, on Saturday 29 January 2005. Dr Williams arrived at the Mandir at 6.30pm where Mr A P Patel, Trustee of the Mandir, Sarah Teather MP, Brent East, Kamlesh Sharma, The High Commissioner for India, The Mayor of Brent, Cllr. Ahmed Shahzad and Cllr. Ann John, Leader of Brent Council, welcomed him. As The Archbishop entered the Haveli he was welcomed in the traditional Hindu manner by Sadhu Atmaswarupdas, Head of the Mandir. Dr Williams was then led to the Mandir where he was introduced to the deities of Shri Akshar Purushottam Maharaj and the other deities. Sadhu Atmaswarupdas explained the spirit of volunteerism that had gone into the building of the Mandir and the significance of the intricate carvings that adorn the Mandir. He next visited the exhibition, "Understanding Hinduism", that details the origins, beliefs, values and contribution of Hinduism. Dr Williams was then given a tour of the Haveli complex meeting volunteers along the way who had been involved during the construction phase of the complex. He was fascinated to see a sports hall adjoining the prayer hall. Dr Williams was formally garlanded in the main prayer hall in the presence of 2000 worshippers. Sadhu Atmaswarupdas in his address spoke of the proud Hindu tradition of welcoming visitors from all faiths. He went on to say that the message of Hinduism is that the entire world is but one human family. He added "Let us teach our followers that religion does not grow by quantity of numbers, but by quality of spirituality. We want to stress the unity in diversity, that there are more things that unite us than divide". His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, inspirer of the Mandir sent a special message. He said "we are deeply pleased by your visit and welcome you on behalf of the Hindu community. He said that your visit shall provide new energy to the spirit of friendship and understanding. He prayed that may God grace you with good health, and may the people of all cultures and communities, of all races and religions grow together through spiritual harmony". The High Commissioner for India, His Excellency, Mr Kamlesh Sharma spoke of the welcoming nature of the host community and of the obligation of Hindus to work for the welfare of the country and make a contribution. He went on to say that he was glad that "this is in fact what is happening". In his address, The Archbishop of Canterbury said, "I have looked for a long time for the possibility of such a visit but as one of the stories in our scriptures says, the half of it was not told to me. He went on to say that he found the need to promote dialogue and understanding between great faiths of the world and we have learned and are still learning how to welcome one another into our hearts and

homes..... I have felt this evening welcomed by you in spirit. He continued, I have been of course struck by the beauty of this place, but the beauty of craftsmanship and art devoted to God is only a small thing compared with the beauty of spirit. But I have seen here also that beauty in great evidence. Dr Williams then spoke of the example set by His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj in his efforts for reconciliation in India and throughout the world. He went on I see it in his refusal to speak in retaliation in the universality of spirit which allows him to be a welcomer of others and that is the beauty of spirit (referring to the Terrorist attack on Akshardham in Gandhinagar, India). He hoped that as we learn the spirit of welcome and sacrifice, so that others may be drawn by the beauty of God to walk in that same way. He added that part of that beauty also, expressed once again in the teachings of the Inspirer, Pramukh Swami Maharaj, is the conviction that our joy and peace are to be found in the joy and peace of the other. In concluding he said I pray that we may learn from one another and together see that beauty which is from God, which alone will change and save our world". P. Atmaswarup Swami and Dr Williams exchanged mementos to mark the visit to the Mandir. For further information please contact: Tarun Patel Press & Publicity Department – Mobile No: 07930 306 206 Continue...

51 Newsweek article, yet again, spreads the old imperialists misconceptions about Hinduism in the global 21st century and this time using the Tsunami as a platform

The Hindu American Foundation is protesting the article, "Countless Souls Cry Out to God" by Kenneth L. Woodward, religion editor for Newsweek <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/6777635/site/newsweek/>. They are concerned that the "Hindu" view of the disaster, given by a non-Hindu Western academic, does not reflect the actual views of Hindus. They are concerned that the "Hindu" view of the disaster, given by a non-Hindu Western academic, does not reflect the actual views of Hindus. Quote from a letter by HAF to the Editor of Newsweek: "Mr. Woodward dismissed Hindu victims as "untutored" animists who viewed the disaster as the hapless consequence of "capricious deities" and compounded the error by referring to Hindu perception of God by the lower case "g." In so doing, Mr. Woodward perpetuated the most obsolete misconceptions of Hinduism. Followers of pane-theistic monotheism, Hindus believe that there is one God who is omnipotent and omnipresent throughout the universe and worshipped by people in different forms according to their individual perceptions." There are several principles at play in this scenario, that the representatives of the Hindu community should be aware of. The article printed in the Newsweek is a classic example of the emerging discourse which is beginning to replace that of race, ethnicity and culture! The processes of construction are very similar (creating positions of binary opposition and hierarchies in reductionist mode) and the methods of validation are also familiar (Non-western authoritative and academic references based upon 'scientific' analysis). This brings up the second dynamic at play here (which is also not unique) and that is the unique individual experience of signifying practises which forms the identification with a particular religion. Thus identity is imposed upon the subject (Hinduism) and object (Hindu reader) on a subjective platform which is framed by objective semantic structures. Therefore, the individual or representative organisation experiences a conflicting sense of reality. The third and very subtle rhetorical expression of Christianity which requires no authoritative validation, and the use of descriptive words with associated metaphors is a media trick that is used by anyone who is intent upon creating or influencing a certain perspective. In this case, the superiority of the Biblical experience. The commercialism and materialism of the Media and the religious practitioners (temple priests and or visitors) is a huge subject of discussion which has its obvious markers in capitalism and

consumerism. Some Hindu's feel obliged therefore to defend practises which they would not be involved in themselves and this potentially generates a divisive environment within the Hindu community. However, the reason why this discourse and debate is distinguished from the race and ethnic discourses of the past is the next dynamic which is prevalent. The degree of philosophical understanding and the associated ambivalence of the use of words and concepts are so varied within and without each religion and those who practise it, that the debate is never on an even playing field! This is why there is such a very real danger here - and a danger that we cannot risk avoiding any longer! Your question to the Punj Hindus is exactly illustrative of how powerless we are within the ambiguity which is part and parcel of the Hindu philosophy. The danger therefore is that absolute positions are sought and established which contradict the very essence of the philosophy and we get sucked into a spiral of validation and denial that is unhelpful at best and very dangerous at worst. As I understand Karma it is not a negative or positive balance sheet and therefore even the words used in English (and even Englishness) are problematic. There is cause and effect and that is the law of karma. The wiping clean of any balances supposes a beginning and end with the necessary separate measurable units - this would contradict the Vedic concepts of 'One' creation and all being contained within this endless whole. How does one come to terms with a tragedy of the scale in S.Asia or the devastation of an individuals lifetimes relationships? Cause and effect are certainly a method that helps me ... only, there is no beginning and no end in sight and for me THAT is the challenge - accepting the uninterrupted continuum as it is. Our Hindu philosophy is a complex and ancient one which has to take account of it's own teleology and at the same time acknowledge the changing environment in which it operates. In the global 21st Century this will require a proactive thoughtful and strategic organisational and process lead management of our own identity and pride of our own heritage. Anuja Prashar Project Finance Executive Hindu Council UK. Continue...

51 Whose Swastika is it anyway?

Sky News live interview on Swastika at 7.45am Sunday 23rd January with Anil Bhanot of Hindu Council UK. Following a short report on the current Swastika controversy Mr Bhanot explained its importance to the Hindus in answers to these questions put forward by the Newscaster. These answers are slightly edited for completeness in this email. Continue...

51 Over 4000 people gather to hear the message of love on the Tsunami Appeal by His Holiness Guru Hardev Ji, Nirankari

The New Year heralded the opening ceremony of the newly constructed Sant Nirankari Satsang Bhawan, which was undertaken by His Holiness The Nirankari Baba in Wednesbury, West Midlands. Over 4,000 people were gathered representing all sections of the community including Neena Gill MEP, Adrian Bailey M.P. The Mayor of Sandwell, The Deputy Lord Lieutenant Mr Jagjit Singh Tonque and a host of other distinguished guests. This was a remarkable occasion illustrating the principles of Unity in Diversity, which is a fundamental teaching of the Sant Nirankari Mission today. All arriving Devotees were welcomed by a Steel Band who played tunes throughout the afternoon bearing the high winds and bringing much joy to everyone. As His Holiness arrived at around 3pm he cut the red ribbon and unveiled the plaque bearing a commemorative inscription formally opening the Bhawan. He was warmly welcomed and garlanded by members of the Executive Body of the Sant Nirankari Mission (U.K) in accordance with Indian tradition. Before the formal prayers and discourse took

place within the Congregation, there was a bagpipe player who joined the celebrations, as did two young Irish dancers and a team of Dandia and Bhangra Dancers. Upon the conclusion thereof, His Holiness released a net packed with balloons bearing messages of Peace and Brotherhood for the New Year. The Discourse During the congregation His Holiness spoke of how everyone had assembled on the first day of the New Year and were praying to God Almighty that, " May God bestow peace on all humankind and that all hearts engage a feeling of goodwill among the people of all nations and all man made barriers are taken apart so there is no hatred but just love." He spoke of how the newly built Satsang Bhawan was a result of a great deal of hard work and that so many people were in attendance from various organisations and agencies as they all subscribed to the belief that there should be a sense of brotherhood between all communities. His Holiness made mention of the Tsunami Disaster and advised that the Mission was assisting in the relief work in the Andaman Islands and Tamil Nadu, were a Satsang Bhawan in Port Blair was housing 500 people. The local authorities had engaged the Mission knowing that they would meet any task with devotion and dedication. Baba Ji went on to speak of how the Mission was actively involved in diverse charitable and social work all over the globe commenting that in India it was the largest contributor of Blood Units were over 100 camps were organised every year. Incidentally, The Mission has also been instrumental in launching a campaign for Blood Donor recruitment in conjunction with the National Blood Service on the 9th January 2005 from the New Centre in Wednesbury. The Mission had enrolled over 1,100 people and the Regional Director of the NBS was presented with the completed information details, which was considered by him as being a phenomenal achievement and worthy of praise. His Holiness went on to talk about how there are so many barriers all around which were proving very harmful for all mankind. He said, "Man should build bridges and not walls as they are more important in order for exchange to take place and draw people closer to each other. It takes more energy to build walls, which will create greater distance between mankind causing only division." Baba ji said that we see more walls today and Devotees must always work to make bridges and he prayed that all may have the wisdom for this to be achieved irrespective of ones background, culture or the nation they belonged to. He hoped that the Bhawan would be a place were all communities could sit together and strengthen their love, humility and human value which would prove the centre to be a valuable asset. Vasudev Katumbkum Speaking on the principles of Vasudev Katumbkum (The One World Family) His Holiness said, there should be only love in all hearts as there is one God and we are all his children. We can only be one with God and this whole world when we have known the truth. This will bring man closer to fellow man. There are differences in man on the grounds of status, religion, wealth etc.. which should not be so if the knowledge of truth has become a part of our minds. Love His Holiness talked of the work of the Great Masters saying that they all spoke of love, and Devotees today are also trying to remind the world of the chapters of love previously taught, revising those principles. He said, "We must remember the sacred chapters of love. The True Devotee is he who expresses love towards all of humanity not only he who reads about loving all of Gods creation but does not practice the same. It is great to read about love but it must also be practiced." "Love is very important as it allows humanity and life to flourish, but hatred has ruined the world. If you Love you are living, but if you cease to love you are not living." Baba Ji concluded by saying we should expand love and not hatred. If there is no love in any heart we must sow love in that same heart and bring about the awareness of humanity, love and the truth. A Relief Fund was established on the 9th January 2005 for the Tsunami disaster and raised over 5,000 on the giving of the announcement and no doubt this total will rise. The Mission is concentrating assisting those affected in the Andaman/Nikobar islands and Tamil Nadu having already substantially

contributed to Presidents Relief Fund in India. All branches over the world have been informed to commence fund raising activities in order to support the relief operations taking place. H S Bhatia Upashak ji Chair – Narankari Mission UK Hindu Council UK Representative In attendance: Dr Rao - Bala Ji Temple – Tividale O P Sharma – President National Council of Hindu Temples K.R Chaddha - Krishna Temple - Wolverhampton K.L Sharma - Durga Bhavan Smethwick Chandu Patel - Krishna Temple Hill Top Baba Tarlochan Singh - Ek Niwas Wolverhampton Baba Bhupinder Singh Sach Khand Nanak Dham Balmik Sabha Ravidass Sabha Vad Bhag Singh Dera Anil Bhanot – General Secretary Hindu Council UK Neena Gill MEP Adrain Bailey MP Mayor of Sandwell Councillor Taylor Chair of West Midlands Fire Service - Mr Jinks West Midlands Deputy Chief Fire Officer - Mr Randami Police Superintendant - Bruce Gilbert and Bob Spencer Bob Badam - Chair of Planning Sandwell Councillor Geoff Taylor Councillor Brenda Taylor Councillor Geoff Taylor Councillor Brenda Taylor Bob Badam - Chair of Planning Sandwell Councillor Geoff Taylor Councillor Brenda Taylor Continue...

51 Shankaracharya's Incarceration..... a complete analysis to date by Dr. G. Bhan, President VHP (UK)

His Holiness Shankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam was arrested at midnight of 11th November 2004, on the eve of the holy Diwali, charged with having ordered the murder of an individual. In the way he was arrested and incarcerated, he was treated as a common criminal. Appeals to the courts, for his release on bail, were rejected on the grounds that he had committed an 'unbailable offence'. Yesterday, on 10th January 2005, the Supreme Court of India (SCI) overturned the decision of the Tamilnadu courts. Allowing an appeal on behalf of the Shankaracharya, the SCI ordered his release from custody, directing that he remain on bail while the case is tried in courts. Looking at the evidence submitted by the prosecution to the SCI, it is clear that the case is based on 'evidence' that has now been judged to be, in legal terms, weak and inadmissible. That the Shankaracharya was treated worse than the worst possible criminal, on evidence, which is based on allegations and hearsay, strengthens our belief that this ignominious episode in the history of modern India was politically motivated. One hopes that in time justice will be done to one who continues to be a victim of justice. But what about the media, which actively and gleefully colluded in branding him a criminal even before he had been tried, and has continued to do so ever since. I wonder whether these journalists,, editors and the media barons will have the decency and honesty to apologise to the Shankaracharya, and now shut up and let the courts come to a decision based on real evidence. And what about the Government of Tamilnadu? Its action, vindictive and irresponsible bordering on criminal, brought about for reasons that hopefully will come to light in the course of time, will prove to be an indelible stain on the integrity of that State Government, and on the Indian Government that has remained at best a mute spectator to this ghastly saga. Dr.Girdhari Lal Bhan President VHP (UK) PS: And there is more! "...the Tamilnadu Police entered the Kanchi Math (on 11th January 2005)-- a sacred place of worship, with their dirty shoes on and disturbed its proceedings. Sri Vijayendra Saraswati was in the midst of a Pooja when the police entered the Math and told him he was under arrest. He was forced to discontinue his pooja. The police had barged into the Math without the permission of the Acharya. It was something unprecedented. At the time of arrest no warrant was served." It seems the law in India, ridden by petty corrupt politicians, is really an ass. -----

Shankaracharya - Bail Application Judgement CASE NO.: Appeal (crl.) 44 of 2005 PETITIONER: Jayendra Saraswathi Swamigal RESPONDENT: State of Tamilnadu DATE OF JUDGMENT: 10/01/2005 BENCH: CJI R. C. Lahoti, G. P. Mathur & P.P. Naolekar JUDGMENT: J U D G M E N T (Arising out of

SLP(Crl.) No. 6192 OF 2004) G.P. MATHUR, J. 1. Leave granted. 2. This appeal, by special leave, has been preferred against the order dated 8.12.2004 of Madras High Court, by which the petition for bail filed by the petitioner under Section 439 Cr.P.C. was rejected. 3 An F.I.R was lodged at 7.00 p.m. on 3.9.2004 at Police Station B-2, Vishnu Kanchi by Shri N. S. Ganesan. It was stated therein that at about 5.45 p.m. on 3.9.2004 while he was in the office of Devarajaswamy Devasthanam, two persons armed with aruval came there and caused multiple injuries to Sanakararaman, In-charge Administrative Manager, who was sitting on a chair. Three persons were waiting outside and the assailants escaped on their motor cycles. After the case was registered, necessary investigation followed and several persons have been arrested. According to the case of the prosecution, the actual assault upon the deceased was made by A-6 and A-7, while four persons, namely, A-5, A-8, A-9 and A-10 were standing outside. 4. The petitioner, Shri Jayendra Saraswathi Swamigal, who is the Shankaracharya of Kanchi Mutt, Kanchipuram, was arrested on 11.11.2004 from Mehboob Nagar in Andhra Pradesh. He moved a bail petition before the High Court of Madras, which was rejected on 20.11.2004 and the second bail petition was also rejected by the impugned order dated 8.12.2004. 5. According to the case of the prosecution, the petitioner had entered into a conspiracy with some other co-accused for getting Sankararaman murdered. The motive for the commission of the crime is said to be various complaints alleged to have been made by the deceased levelling serious allegations, both against the personal character of the petitioner and also his style of functioning as Shankaracharya of the Mutt. In the reply statement filed on behalf of State of Tamilnadu, it is averred that the deceased had filed a complaint before the Commissioner HR&CE not to allow the petitioner to visit China. He filed a writ petition in the Madras High Court claiming the same relief which was later on dismissed as a statement was made by the petitioner that he had no intention of going to the said country. The deceased sent several letters alleging that the petitioner was selling properties of the Mutt; was indulging in corruption and misappropriation of funds. He also made complaint before Special Commissioner, HR&CE that the petitioner was not observing the rules of Sanyasa Asrama Dharma; was leading a luxurious life enjoying mundane comforts; not performing the Pooja and promoting commercial ventures. It is also the case of the prosecution that the deceased sent a letter under the name of Somasekara Ganapadigal alleging that the petitioner was indulging in immoral activities and was having relationship with women and finally a letter was sent by him on 30.8.2004 to the petitioner as "last warning" wherein it was said that when the petitioner went to Thalakeverj, Kaveri river dried; when he went to the only Hindu Kingdom of Nepal, the entire royal family was wiped out; and when he went to Kumbakonam, there was a fire tragedy and many innocent lives were lost. Shri K.T.S. Tulsi, learned senior counsel for the State, has submitted that after receipt of this letter dated 30.8.2004 described as "last warning", the petitioner called accused A-2, A-3 and A-4 and a conspiracy was hatched for eliminating the deceased. 6. In order to establish the aforesaid motive for commission of crime, the prosecution relies upon copies of 39 letters which were allegedly recovered from the house of the deceased himself. What the prosecution claims is that the deceased used to keep copies of all the letters and complaints which he made against the petitioner and it is these copies which have been recovered from the house of the deceased. The prosecution claims that of these 39 letters or complaints 5 complaints were found in the office of HR&CE, Chennai which relate to the period 14.8.2001 to 23.1.2002, one in the residence of A-4 and 2 in the residence of the petitioner. In our opinion, the recovery of these letters from the house of the deceased himself is not a proof of the fact that they were actually received by the petitioner or were brought to his notice. The deceased was not an employee of the Mutt but was working as In-charge Administrative Manager of another Dharamsthanam which has nothing to

do with Kanchi Mutt and at least since 1998 he had no connection with the said Mutt. Though according to the case of the prosecution, the deceased had started making complaints against the petitioner since August 2001, there is absolutely no evidence collected in investigation that the petitioner made any kind of protest or took any kind of action against the deceased. Even otherwise, many letters or complaints etc. are addressed to people holding high office or position and it is not necessary that they read every such letter or complaint or take them seriously. There is absolutely no evidence or material collected so far in investigation which may indicate that the petitioner had ever shown any resentment against the deceased for having made allegations against either his personal character or the discharge of his duties as Shankaracharya of the Mutt. The petitioner having kept absolutely quiet for over three years, it does not appeal to reason that he suddenly decided to have Sankararaman murdered and entered into a conspiracy for the said purpose. 7. Shri F.S. Nariman, learned senior counsel for the petitioner, has submitted that the specific case of the prosecution at the time of the hearing of the first bail application before the High Court was that a huge sum of money amounting to Rs.50 lakhs was withdrawn from an account of the Mutt maintained in ICICI Bank, Kanchipuram for being paid to the hirelings. The same stand was taken by the prosecution when the second bail application was heard by the High Court. In the two orders passed by the High Court by which the bail petitions were rejected, the plea of the State that the money was withdrawn from the account of the Mutt in ICICI Bank, Kanchipuram for payment to the hirelings is clearly mentioned. When the special leave petition was heard for admission on 17.12.2004, a detailed order was passed by this Court, wherein the State was directed to give particulars of the bank account wherefrom money is alleged to have been withdrawn by the petitioner for payment to the assailants and also to produce the copy of the account and the passbook, if any, seized by the investigating agency. However, in the statement in reply which has been filed in this Court by the State on 6.1.2005, a different stand is taken that an agreement had been entered into for sale of 50 acres of land belonging to Kanchi Janakalyan Trust to Bhargava Federation Pvt. Ltd. for Rs.5 crores, wherein an advance of Rs.50 lakhs in cash was received on 30.4.2004 and an endorsement regarding receipt of the said amount was made on the reverse side of the first page of the agreement. It was this money which was retained in cash by the petitioner all along from which payment was made to the hirelings after the conspiracy was hatched soon after the receipt of the alleged letter dated 30.8.2004 sent by the deceased which was described as "last warning". No documents of the account in ICICI bank have been produced in support of the plea which was twice taken by the prosecution before the High Court while opposing the prayer for bail made by the petitioner. 8. N. Sundaresan (A-23) who is Manager of the Mutt was arrested on 24.12.2004 and was produced before the Judicial Magistrate, Kanchipuram at 1.45 p.m. on 25.12.2004. He stated before the Magistrate that he had received Rs.50 lakhs in cash on 30.4.2004 and the said amount was deposited in Indian Bank, Sankara Mutt Branch on 7.5.2004. Learned counsel for the petitioner has placed before the Court copies of two accounts bearing nos.124 and 125 which the Kanchi Kamakothi Peetham Shri Sankaracharya Swam has in the Indian Bank at No.1, Salai Street, Kanchipuram. This statement of account shows that on 7.5.2004 an amount of Rs.28,24,225/- was deposited in cash in account no.124 and an amount of Rs.21,85,478/- was deposited in cash in account no.125. Thus the total amount which was deposited in cash comes to Rs.50,09,703/-. Learned counsel has explained that in addition to Rs.50 lakhs which received in cash an extra amount of Rs.9,703/- was deposited in order to liquidate the overdraft over which penal interest was being charged by the bank. The statement of account clearly shows that after deposit of the aforesaid amount the entire overdraft was cleared. This clearly shows that the entire amount of

Rs.50 lakhs which was received in cash on 30.4.2004 was deposited in Bank on 7.5.2004. This belies the prosecution case, which was developed subsequently after the order had been passed by this Court on 17.12.2004 directing the State to produce copy of the ICICI Bank account, that the cash money was retained by the Petitioner from which substantial amount was paid to the hirelings. 9. The prosecution also relies upon confessional statement of Kathiravan (A-4) recorded under Section 164 Cr.P.C. on 19.11.2004, wherein he stated that he went to the Kanchi Mutt on 1.9.2004 and in the presence of Ravi Subramaniam and Sundaresan, the petitioner said that Sankararaman had written letters and had filed cases and it was not possible for him to bear the torture any longer and, therefore, he should be killed on the same day. It is important to mention here that A-4 retracted his confession on 24.11.2004 when his statement was again recorded under Section 164 Cr.P.C. The prosecution also relies upon confession of Ravi Subramaniam (A-2) which was recorded on 30.12.2004 wherein he made a similar statement that the petitioner offered him Rs.50 lakhs on 1.9.2004 for getting rid of Sankararaman. 10. Shri Nariman has submitted that in view of Section 30 of the Evidence Act confession of a co-accused is a very weak type of evidence which can at best be taken into consideration to lend assurance to the prosecution case. He has referred to the decision of the Privy Council in *Bhuboni Sahu v. The King* AIR 1949 PC 257, wherein it was observed that confession of a co-accused is obviously evidence of a very weak type and it does not come within the definition of evidence contained in Section 3 as it is not required to be given on oath, nor in the presence of the accused and it cannot be tested by cross-examination. Learned counsel has also referred to *Kashmira Singh v. State of M.P.* AIR 1952 SC 159 where it was held that the confession of an accused person is not evidence in the ordinary sense of the term as defined in Section 3 and it cannot be made the foundation of a conviction and can only be used in support of other evidence. It was further observed that the proper way is, first to marshal the evidence against the accused excluding the confession altogether from consideration and see whether, if it is believed a conviction could safely be based on it. If it is capable of belief independently of the confession, then of course it is not necessary to call the confession in aid. But cases may arise where the Judge is not prepared to act on the other evidence as it stands even though, if believed, it would be sufficient to sustain a conviction. In such an event the Judge may call in aid the confession and use it to lend assurance to the other evidence and thus fortify himself in believing such evidence which without the aid of the confession he would not be prepared to rely on for basing a finding of guilty. Reliance has also been placed upon the Constitution Bench decision in *Haricharan Kurmi v. State of Bihar* AIR 1964 SC 1184, where it was held that the Court cannot start with the confession of a co-accused person; it must begin with other evidence adduced by the prosecution and after it has formed its opinion with regard to the quality and effect of the said evidence, then it is permissible to turn to the confession in order to receive assurance to the conclusion of guilt which the judicial mind is about to reach on the said other evidence. It was further observed that the confession of a co-accused person cannot be treated as substantive evidence and can be pressed into service only when the Court is inclined to accept other evidence and feels the necessity of seeking for an assurance in support of its conclusion deducible from the said evidence. It has thus been urged that the confession of A-4 which was retracted by him subsequently and also that of A-2 have very little evidentiary value in order to sustain the charge against the petitioner. 11. Shri K.T.S. Tuls, learned senior counsel, has, on the other hand, placed strong reliance on Section 10 of the Evidence Act and has submitted that this being a specific provision dealing with a case of conspiracy to commit an offence, the principle laid down in the authorities cited by Shri Nariman would not apply and anything said, done or written by any one of the accused is a relevant fact as against each of the person conspiring to commit a crime.

In this connection he has referred to State of U.P. v. Buta Singh 1979 (1) SCC 31, State of Maharashtra v. Damu 2000 (6) SCC 269, Firozuddin Basheeruddin & Ors. V. State of Kerala 2001 (7) SCC 596, Prakash Dhawal Khairnar v. State of Maharashtra 2002 (2) SCC 35 and State of H.P. v. Satya Dev Sharma & Ors. 2002 (10) SCC 601. 12. The opening words in Section 10 are “where there is reasonable ground to believe that two or more persons have conspired together to commit an offence”. If prima facie evidence of the existence of a conspiracy is given and accepted, the evidence of acts and statements made by anyone of the conspirators in furtherance of the common object is admissible against all. Therefore, there should first be a prima facie evidence that the person was a party to the conspiracy before his acts or statements can be used against his co-conspirators. No worthwhile prima facie evidence apart from the alleged confessions have been brought to our notice to show that the petitioner along with A-2 and A-4 was party to a conspiracy. The involvement of the petitioner and A-2 and A-4 in the alleged conspiracy is sought to be established by the confessions themselves. The correct import of Section 10 was explained by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in Mirza Akbar v. King Emperor AIR 1940 PC 176 as under: “The words of S.10 are not capable of being widely construed so as to include a statement made by one conspirator in the absence of the other with reference to past acts done in the actual course of carrying out the conspiracy, after it has been completed. The words “common intention” signify a common intention existing at the time when the thing was said, done or written by one of them. Things said, done or written while the conspiracy was on foot are relevant as evidence of the common intention, once reasonable ground has been shown to believe in its existence. But it would be a very different matter to hold that any narrative or statement or confession made to a third party after the common intention or conspiracy was no longer operating and had ceased to exist is admissible against the other party. There is then no common intention of the conspirators to which the statement can have reference.” Here, the confessions of A-2 and A-4 were recorded long after the murder when the conspiracy had culminated and, therefore, Section 10 of the Evidence Act cannot be pressed into service. However, we do not feel the necessity of expressing a concluded opinion on this question in the present case as the matter relates to grant of bail only and the question may be examined more deeply at the appropriate stage. 13. Shri Tulsī has also submitted that there is also evidence of dying- declaration in order to fasten the liability upon the petitioner and for this reliance is placed upon the statement of S. Vaidyanathan, which was recorded under Section 164 Cr.P.C. on 28.12.2004. This witness has merely stated that he knew deceased Sankararaman and used to talk to him and further that at 1.30 p.m. on 3.9.2004 Sankararaman contacted him over phone and told him that his petition presented to HR&CE Department was numbered and if any danger came to him, Jayendra alone will be responsible for the same. Since the telephonic conversation which the Sankararaman had with this witness, did not relate to the cause of his death or as to any of the circumstances of the transaction which resulted in his death, the same does not come within the purview of Section 32(1) of the Evidence Act and is not admissible in evidence. 14. Shri Tulsī, learned senior counsel for the respondent, has also referred to certain other pieces of evidence which, according to him, showed the complicity of the petitioner with the crime in question. He has submitted that the petitioner had talked on phone to some of the co-accused. The material placed before us does not indicate that the talk was with A-6 and A-7 who are alleged to have assaulted the deceased or with A-5, A-8, A-9 and A-10, who are alleged to have been standing outside. Learned counsel has also submitted that there are two other witnesses who have heard the petitioner telling some of the co-accused to eliminate the deceased. The names and identity of these witnesses have not been disclosed on the ground that the interrogation is still in progress. However, these persons

are not employees of the Mutt and are strangers. It looks highly improbable that the petitioner would talk about the commission of murder at such a time and place where his talks could be heard by total strangers. 15. Shri Tulsi has lastly submitted that the prohibition contained in Section 437(1)(i) Cr.P.C. that the class of persons mentioned therein shall not be released on bail, if there appears to be a reasonable ground for believing that such person is guilty of an offence punishable with death or imprisonment for life, is also applicable to the Courts entertaining a bail petition under Section 439 Cr.P.C. In support of this submission, strong reliance has been placed on a recent decision of this Court in *Kalyan Chandra Sarkar v. Rajesh Ranjan @ Pappu Yadav & Anr.* 2004 (7) SCC 528. The considerations which normally weigh with the Court in granting bail in non-bailable offences have been explained by this Court in *State v. Capt. Jagjit Singh* AIR 1962 SC 253 and *Gurcharan Singh v. State (Delhi Admn.)* AIR 1978 SC 179 and basically they are - the nature and seriousness of the offence; the character of the evidence; circumstances which are peculiar to the accused; a reasonable possibility of the presence of the accused not being secured at the trial; reasonable apprehension of witnesses being tampered with; the larger interest of the public or the State and other similar factors which may be relevant in the facts and circumstances of the case. The case of *Kalyan Chandra Sarkar* (supra) was decided on its own peculiar facts where the accused had made 7 applications for bail before the High Court, all of which were rejected except the 5th one which order was also set aside in appeal before this Court. The 8th bail application of the accused was granted by the High Court which order was subject matter of challenge before this Court. The observations made therein cannot have general application so as to apply in every case including the present one wherein the Court is hearing the matter for the first time. 16. For the reasons discussed above, we are of the opinion that prima facie a strong case has been made out for grant of bail to the petitioner. The appeal is accordingly allowed and the impugned order of the High Court is set aside. The petitioner shall be released on bail on his furnishing a personal bond and two sureties to the satisfaction of the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Chengleput. Shri Nariman has made a very fair statement that till the investigation is under progress, the petitioner shall not visit the Mutt premises. We accordingly direct that till the submission of the charge sheet in Court, the petitioner shall not visit the Mutt premises. He shall also surrender his passport before the CJM. 17. Before parting, we would like to place it on record by way of abundant caution that whatever has been stated hereinabove in this order has been so said only for the purpose of disposing of the prayer for bail made by the petitioner. Nothing contained in this order shall be construed as expression of a final opinion on any of the issues of fact or law arising for decision in the case which shall naturally have to be done by the trial court seized of the trial. We have only formed a prima facie opinion and placed the same on record in fairness to the learned senior counsel for the State who raised those pleas and vehemently urged the same by citing various provisions of law and the authorities. Continue...

51 Sarah Teather MP raises an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons to highlight the unfair immigration legislation for Hindu priests.

"That this House notes with concern the implications for Hindu temples of the new Home Office immigration rules affecting ministers of religion, effective from 31st August 2004, which require all such ministers to demonstrate fluency in the English language to level 4; notes that this hampers the recruitment of Poojaries, in particular, whose roles are highly specialised and who are trained in India; further notes that the role of a Poojari is to perform the daily rites for the Hindu gods in the temple and Arti, which involve caring for the gods on a daily basis with prayers and meditation;

further notes that these daily rites are central to the Hindu religion; further notes that the role of a Poojari does not involve preaching to the congregation and that this role is generally performed by Swarmis, Sadhus or Hindu preachers, who have knowledge of English; further notes that the Poojari's job required knowledge of Hindu texts written in Sanskrit and knowledge of Gujarati and Hindi for sung worship, but not English; regrets that the Home Office would appear to have introduced regulations based on a Judao-Christian model of worship without considering the implications for other faiths; and calls upon the Home Office to amend its regulations to provide an exception to Poojaris because they do not preach." Sarah Teather MP Continue...

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48 Hindu Council of Great Britain backs UNICEF's call for aid to tsunami-struck countries

Anil Bhanot, General Secretary of the Hindu Council UK is urging Hindus across the UK to support UNICEF's Emergency Appeal for tsunami-struck countries. "Hundreds of thousands of people need our help to survive. I urge Hindus across the UK to do whatever they can to aid the UNICEF relief effort." UNICEF is rushing relief assistance to the countries hardest hit by massive ocean flooding following Sunday's earthquake, working to meet the urgent needs of hundreds of thousands of people who survived the tsunamis but now need shelter, water, medical supplies and other urgent assistance. UNICEF warned today that without immediate, wide-scale action to provide safe water in the communities hit by Sunday's massive ocean flooding, millions of people will be at grave risk of water-borne disease. Children, who make up at least one-third of the overall population in the worst-affected countries, are particularly vulnerable to water-borne diseases. In Sri Lanka, UNICEF has already responded to government request for shelter supplies, providing more than 30,000 blankets and sleeping mats as well as t-shirts and other articles of clothing from local emergency stocks. A relief flight from Copenhagen has already carried 45 tonnes of supplies - oral rehydration salts for sick children, medical supplies sufficient to serve 150,000 people for three months, shelter equipment such as tents and blankets, and other urgent relief items. UNICEF Sri Lanka expects to issue an appeal for some \$6 million to help meet urgent needs for Sri Lanka's children. Half of Sri Lanka's 25 districts were directly affected by the tsunamis. In India, UNICEF is supporting relief efforts led by the state and local authorities as well as the national government. In the southern state of Tamil Nadu, UNICEF is providing hundreds of thousands of water purification tablets, 1600 community water tanks (500 litres each), 200,000 sachets of oral rehydration salts, medical supplies sufficient to serve 30 health centers, and 30,000 blankets. In Thailand, UNICEF is assessing both immediate and long-term needs in the affected areas, which in addition to the tourist spots Phuket and Krabi also include fishing communities along other areas of the coast which were completely destroyed. UNICEF is focusing on providing water, sanitation facilities and food for those in the affected areas, especially children, as well as addressing the longer-term needs for education,

psychological support and replacing lost livelihood of entire communities. In Indonesia, UNICEF staff are part of a larger UN assessment team that has headed into Aceh province to identify urgent needs. Some 500,000 people in the province have been directly affected, particularly in the provincial capital of Banda Aceh, where houses have been destroyed and water, power and telecommunications disrupted. All but two of Banda Acehs ambulances were destroyed. UNICEF is sending emergency health kits to supply 200,000 people for two weeks by plane from Copenhagen. "Hundreds of thousands of people fought to survive the tsunamis on Sunday. Now we need to help them survive the aftermath," said UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy. To donate to the Appeal please send a cheque to Hindu Council/UNICEF Children of Asia Appeal, FREEPOST, Billericay, CM12 0BR. * * * * Ends UNICEF UK has continually updated information by country online at:www.unicef.org.uk Continue...

48 Shankaracharya's Arrest

This Diwali, as always should have been a festive joyous occasion but the news coming through from Bharat were disturbing. His Holiness the Kanchi Shankaracharya, Swami Jayendra Saraswati was arrested on charges of murder. Were Hindus across the world taking heed to the news or were they too busy celebrating? The events of that day are bound to have long lasting repercussions but it remains to be seen whether they will be positive or negative outcomes and that lies in the hands of Hindus worldwide. The divisions within the Hindus are already evident. Some taking a stand of neutrality, biding their time, not showing support either way, for or against, lest they choose wrongly! Some are voicing their concern that how could someone in authority take such actions? Yet, most are aghast and voice support for the seer and that what he stands for. The timing and manner of the arrest and the subsequent so called confessions acquired by the prosecution reeks of sensationalism and political propaganda and nothing less. Hindu sentiment has been derided and mocked to such a level that Bharat is only a democracy on paper but in practice the major Hindu population is discriminated against by the growing misplaced fad of secularism. A minority religious leader would not be subjected to this sort of treatment in Bharat. Hindus are the first to respect the laws of the land. This is self-evident globally wherever Hindus have settled. By and large they integrate with the hosts, upholding dharma being the peace loving citizens that they are. With this incident in Tamil Nadu too, the law of the land has to prevail or else one stoops to anarchy and adharma. However, there is one major distinction between the seat, held at the Kanchi Mutt, which goes with the title of Shankaracharya and the person occupying the seat. That person has achieved the exalted position by virtue of past actions and hence it becomes more difficult for one to accept the present allegations. Therefore the necessity to emphasise "innocent until proven guilty" and to be treated with respect and dignity that such a person deserves. Bharat and her people are caught in a downward spiral that puts politicians and celebrities above the law but ridicules spiritual giants, well at least Hindu seers. Celebrities walk away from hit-and-run situations with ease and the Indian cabinet boasts of unscrupulous individuals, facing criminal charges within its membership! Are these cabinet members or celebrities not in a position to temper with evidence when granted bail? Why then is no such luxury extended to a man who lives a simple life and only eats what he cooks? Surely keeping him under house arrest is not outreach of those who stormed into a neighbouring state to dramatically capture the seer during a ceremony? If one is a practising Hindu in Bharat, know that you are not in a land of Hindus anymore. You are in a land of secularists, politicians and celebrities, where the minorities have more powers. Hindus are always calling for unity, Hindu leaders time and again cry out for unity. Where are they now? Why is there not one united voice crying for justice for

the Shankaracharya? Shall we just hide behind sectarian issues or stand on a high moral ground and disassociate ourselves from all these lest we pick the wrong side? As Shankaracharya himself has said, "They have destroyed in one hour what took me 50 years to build." For the reputation of one of the highest spiritual seats in Hinduism is at stake, do not for one second underestimate it, the damage will take years to mend. Unless Hindus act now! Alas the political and secular jungle in Bharat is a minefield. In this modern age of information or mis-information, as the case may be, there is an increasing case to add the word transparency alongside truth as a virtue. Transparency is a virtue. Have the events surrounding the arrest of the seer of the Kanchi Mutt, His Holiness Sankracharya Jayendra Saraswati been transparent? How then can we judge fairness, how then can we assess the truth for ourselves? If we cannot then we must stand to protect dharma; it is as simple as that. Jaimin Patel Public Relations Executive Jaimin Patel Public Relations Executive Continue...

48 Greater London Authority (GLA) hosts the 2004 European Social Forum

The Hindu Council was invited to attend the welcome event of the European Social Forum (ESF) at Southwark Cathedral on 14 October this year. The ESF forms part of a dialogue that started at the time of the WTO meetings in Seattle in the early 90s, and was conceived as a counter pole to the annual corporate meetings in Davos, Switzerland. This meeting in London consisted of various socialist groups from Europe and was a platform for co-operation between these groups. The welcome event, hosted by Mayor Ken Livingstone, featured speakers from all over the world, most prominently Meena Menon, India; Gerry Adams MP; Thenjiwe Mtintso, South Africa; Aleida Guevara, daughter of Che Guevara, Cuba. They talked passionately about workers right, equality, peace and their opposition to the neo-liberal agenda. The event left me reflecting on the nature of the world and politics – how we react to excesses in one area and create movements or philosophies to counteract them. It seems that nature seeks balance. When we overdo or overstep the balance, we create or warrant a counter reaction – the Marxist philosophy was on one level created as a reaction to the excesses of the Industrial Revolution. I must confess that I did not go to the lectures at the ESF but one side-debate caught my attention: God and Mammon – a debate between the Church & the City of London. I was curious to see if they could find a balance between God and wealth, and what they thought that could look like. The first debater was Lord Griffiths, Forest Ffach, vice-chairman of Goldman Sachs. His main point was that poverty was an indicator of human welfare and that globalisation had supported the eradication of poverty. Financial corporations are also governed by values, do good in the world, and can be governed by Christian principles. The second debater was Professor Timothy Gorringer, theologian from Exeter University that had lived and taught in Tamil Nadu. In his talk, he pointed out the large inequalities of power and riches in the world. Although large corporations consist of good and well-meaning people, they do not work for the common good and their effects are destructive for majority of people. The debate was interesting and ended with a lively Q&A session. I find such talks very stimulating and as my reflections about balance, politics and wealth continued, I naturally came the purusharthas. These four goals of human life; dharma, artha, kama and moksha, are in a sense a natural balance. It accepts that humans need some wealth and enjoyment, but also that we need a social and religious ethic, i.e. a framework to work within; and also that we are spiritual beings with spiritual needs and aspiration. If we reflect on these four goals, we see a possibility of balance. The problem with western civilisation is that artha and kama has been disconnected from dharma and moksha, and thus it has no framework or goal. It can be hard not to be swept away by its attractions, but it is by necessity violent. A proper goal in mind (moksha) puts our worldly aspirations (artha and kama) into

perspective and helps us to act for the common good of society (dharma). Then we can live in peace with ourselves, and the world. Merudevi Dasi European Relations Executive Continue...

48 Faith Leaders Meeting with the Mayor of London on Nov. 30, 2004

Sudarshan Bhatia, Faith & Culture Coordinator of Hindu Council UK, raises again Religious freedom for Hindus living in the countries disallowing practice Hinduism. In a Faith Leaders meeting with the Mayor Ken Livingstone who has been writing to the French Govt. to lift the ban on Hijab and religious symbols in France, Mr. Bhatia asked the Mayor to write as well to the Govts. of the Countries who disallow practising Hinduism and breach the basic law of religious Freedom on the similar grounds. Following the attacks on America 9/11, a comprehensive review of Londons resilience and its ability to respond to and recover from, a major or catastrophic attack was carried out, involving all key organisations. At the meeting it considered possible streams of work the Faith Sector could usefully undertake. The Mayor seemed concerned about the recent wave of intolerance in Netherlands and asked the faith leaders to work actively to build a strong London Resilience Team. The Christian & Jain Faith leaders were of the opinion that unemployed and poor young people fall prey of these groups who spread the violence leading to barbaric murders. The Hindu Council UKs point of view is clear on this issue. It is largely the poor and poorly educated young people become victim of these brainwashing terror campaign. More is to be done to inculcate values. It is dishonesty in not acknowledging that peace is under threat. We have witnessed an American presidential Election in which moral issues " Christian Values " were at the top of voters concerns outweighing the economic, terror and War in Iraq. In a laudable end-comment of the meeting Mr. Bhatia asked Ken that he as a follow up of waiving the Congestion Charges during Christmas period could also waive these on Dewali & Eid day when these celebrations fall on the weekdays. Central Mosques for the Eid-Prayers and DEWALI CELEBRATIONS in Trafalgar Square take place before 18 hrs. and both locations are within congestion zones. Muslim Council supported this goodwill gesture of the HCUKs interfaithing. Sudarshan Bhatia Chair, Faith and Culture Executive Continue...

48 Metropolitan Police Authority Diwali Event 10 November 2004

The Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) Social Club celebrated the Diwali (the festival of lights) on 10 November and had invited the Hindu Council UK Education Executive to give a short lecture for the event. The Senior Management of the Metropolitan Police Service, all members of the Metropolitan Police Authority, Metropolitan Police Hindu & Sikh associations and colleagues from the Comets and DOIT team attended the function. The programme commenced with Keith Luck lighting the lamps as Diwali greetings and a message of goodwill to all present. Janany Harrichandiran, who is a Bharatnatyam professional dancer, gave the first performance. The dance item was a Patham on Lord Krishna. This item describes a heroine (nayika) in spiritual love with the Lord. When she sees the peacock dancing in the Brindavan the heroine is reminded of Krishna's dancing on the serpent Kalinga. She goes on to describe how the entire world stood still totally mesmerised by the enchanting music of his flute. Lost in the memory of his dance and music she sings the glory of her beloved Krishna. Janany has completed the Bharata Natyam arangetram this year. Janany is currently a student of The Henrietta Barnett School in year 11. Bharatanatyam is an exquisite form of ancient dance, and is a dance of mind and soul. It is extremely traditional and known for its grace, purity, tenderness, and sculptural poses. Seeta Lakhani played two classical

tunes on Flute. The first one was a short piece in raag durga, which honours God as the mother goddess. The second was a devotional bhajan by meerabai, the first line of the bhajan translates as: 'i have acquired the treasure of the name of Ram'. Manuela Benini presented her first item in the Kathak style of South Asian classical dance based on a gazal. A gazal is an expressional piece that interprets a poem about love set to music. In this particular gazal the nayika (heroine) describes the beauty of the scene – the flowers, the fragrant breeze and expresses how she has lit lamps at every step and how every moment is filled with the memory of the beloved. “Tonight” she says “ feels like a journey of fragrance”. In her second item, Manuela performed a tarana. Using syllables of Farsi a tarana embodies a harmonious blend of melody and rhythm. It is usually the final item in a kathak repertoire and is danced in a fast tempo. Arrangements for Manuela’s presentation were made through Artistic Director and classical dance teacher Shushma Mehta. Manuela has been studying Kathak for the past 8 years from Sushma Mehta who teaches Kathak in the dance dept of Morley College. Manuela has won a scholarship to go to India to train further. Dilip Jay Lakhani gave a talk on Diwali with a brief background to Hinduism. Jay is a Physicist by qualification but gives lectures at many schools, colleges and universities on topics such as Science and Spirituality. He is also a speaker for BBC worldservice on religious issues. He talked about the universal festival of Diwali and its significance with a background to Hinduism and his message on celebrating “Victory of good over evil”, diversity and sharing the richness of the Indian culture. The unique feature of Hinduism called pluralism has to be invoked in our times to remove the danger of friction in the name of religion. He strongly promoted the language of 'acceptance' in contrast to language of 'tolerance' of other religions. He concluded by saying that “We Hindus have come to these shores to 'steal'. Unlike the earlier visitors to these shores like the Romans or the Anglo Saxons or the Vikings. We have not come to 'steal' your possessions. We have come here to steal your hearts”. Talk given by Dilip Jay Lakhani during the MPA Diwali event on 10 November 2004: “Hinduism though places greater emphasis on spiritual principles than spiritual personalities it also recognises the role of personalities who make these principles alive. One such personality in the Hindu tradition is Sri Rama. Diwali celebrates his return from exile. The reason why he went into exile is because he lived for principles and not for possessions. In the history of mankind it is difficult to find such a grand personality who gave away his kingdom and went into exile for the sake of a principle. Most kings – even in modern times do not live up to such ideals – most of them chase material things! The second feature that comes across in the life of Sri Rama is the unique teaching he promoted of integrating different civilisations. The war that took place in his time was the war between the Northern and Southern Hindu empires. When Rama won a victory he did not overrun and destroy the southern civilisation but promoted the idea of integration between civilisations. Not conquering and destroying others we come across but learning to live with others was the message of Sri Rama. The message is still very relevant today as we fight in the name of religion. The unique feature of Hinduism called pluralism has to be invoked in our times to remove the danger of friction in the name of religion. In a recent programme on BBC2 with Jeremy Vine, I suggested that the problem is not necessarily in the Middle East, it is closer at home, until the Christian leaders here start using the language of 'acceptance' in contrast to language of 'tolerance' of other religions, the problem will not go away. Pluralism in practise means saying: "My religion is best" but then adding two little words at the end of it. "My religion is best for me" once this is understood the sharp edges dividing religions disappear. The youngsters we come across in schools are quite happy to accept this distinction but the theologians of the Abrahamic religions continue to have great difficulty! We Hindus have come to these shores to 'steal'. Unlike the earlier visitors to these shores like the Romans or the Anglo

Saxons or the Vikings. We have not come to 'steal' your possessions. We have come here to steal your hearts. The gentle and noble teachings of Hinduism has to power to revive and refresh the message of spirituality in the West and that is what we intend to do". The MPA social club thanked Mr Lakhani for the excellent talk on Diwali, Hinduism touching on human values, pluralism, acceptance and respect. Words cannot describe his commitment and the help in making our programme a big success. The feedback has been "brilliant" and "excellent". Satya Minhas Special Projects Executive Special Projects Executive Satya Minhas Special Projects Executive Continue...

48 Hindu Council UK celebrates Diwali with Thames 21 and Clean Ganges Campaign Group.

The cultural and faith co-ordinator Mr. Sudarshan Bhatia of the HCUK joined in the Diwali celebrations on Saturday 20th November 2004 hosted by the Thames 21 – the Organisation working with Communities to create clean, safe and sustainable waterside environment. Thames 21, which removes 750 tonnes of litter from the tidal Thames each year has been working with clean the Ganges project in India. The Ganges River in size is only a little more than half the Mississippi. About 300 million almost one of 14 people in the world live on the banks of Ganges River in India. There are 29 Cities, 17 Towns and thousands of villages along the Ganges Banks. The River is taking a descending path towards destruction with pollution beyond normal levels. Ex Mayor of Ealing Mr. Umesh Chandra who now runs the King Street Southall Hindu Temple, as a Chairman of the Hindu Temple Trust has been actively involved in improving, maintaining and educating the community in achieving the objectives of the Thames 21 project. The Ganges by far the most important river in India has an important part in practicing Hindu life where they perform the last ritual of scattering the ashes into the holy river, of their cremated relatives, said Mr. Bhatia who was talking to the Boat party on the importance of the rivers in the Hindu religion. Speaking further Mr. Bhatia told that pollution concerns which prevented UK rivers being used legally for the spreading of ashes before may be overcome with the proposed fast water at Apperley bridge on the River Aire in Bradford soon will become Ganges of the UK allowing the Hindus to perform last rituals of ceremonial scattering of ashes. A neon lighted Dragon profiled with the canal-weeds knitted & erected on the Generator Deck led the Diwali Boat on a 45 minutes trip through the boat houses and pubs on the either side of the canal. The lead campaigner of friends of clean Ganges UK, Mr. Roger Choate from Sweden commended the enthusiasm of the volunteer canal keepers and thanked the Hindu Council UK for the support and participation. Mr. Sudarshan Bhatia acclaimed the work of Mr. Theo Thomas who had made available the information about Thames 21 printed in Hindi. The Hindi translation of the English Leaflets was done very attractively by professional translators. Sudarshan Bhatia Chair – Faith and Education Executive Continue...

48 SEWA International's Diwali Week of Serving the Community

SEWA International's new initiative of 'For the community, by the community' took off with enthusiasm this year. With the support of up to twenty five organisations, SEWA International appealed to the Hindu community to reach out by doing some sewa this diwali. They had organised various events that one could volunteer for viz. blood donation, tree planting, fruit distribution to in-patients at a hospital and a careers fayre. Hindus consider it a duty to do sewa as one must produce, and give back to society, more than one consumes. It should be one's duty to serve society, nature and also to gain knowledge for the progression of society. The selfless service to the infirmed came in the way of giving blood to save someone's life and to bring a smile to in-patients at Northwick

Park Hospital in Harrow by visiting them with a small gift of fruits. At the hospital just under 600 boxes of cut fruit were prepared by the volunteers who came from a wide cross section of the Hindu community and distributed to every in-patient. "This is one expression that I rarely see in my daily work and is a joy to be able to bring it to a patient just by a few kind words and a token gift of fruit" remarked a consultant surgeon who was amongst the volunteers, and felt that it was an amazing experience to approach a patient from outside the medical system and make them smile. Duty towards nature saw volunteers congregate at the Harrow Weald Recreation Ground and plant trees and bulbs. The appreciation and respect for nature is cultivated by tending gardens where others can derive pleasure. The careers fayre made avail the services of up to forty professionals to advice students and parents alike. It was stressed that parents should look at the wide array of professions that are available for their children and that this was important if we were to integrate further into the mainstream life in UK. Education advice with pointers from Sh. Barry Gadinier MP for Brent North, Cllr Sh. Navin Shah leader of Harrow Council, Cllr Sh. Sanjay Dighe deputy leader of Harrow Council and Sh Dilip Lakhani Education Executive HCUK was offered to parents while the students were given tips on how to do better in their studies by those who had done exceptionally well in the recent GCSE/A-level examinations. Parents were reminded by Sh Dilipbhai Lakhani that it was the Hindu way of life that brought with it a certain discipline which was reflected in the success of Hindu students and it was imperative that the tenets of Hinduism were preserved. All in all a successful SEWA Week, for the community, by the community. Congratulations to all the volunteers and organisations who supported SEWA International in this new initiative. Jaimin Patel Public Relations Executive Continue...

48 Happy Diwali

Deepavali, literally means "a row of lamps". But the festival is based on legends that occurred all through the Indian history and it is celebrated over five days, with the third being the main Diwali event. Continue...

48 Women & Equality in the Hindu Religion

Following some discussions on the role of Hindu women priests with the Women & Equality Unit at the DTI, Hindu Council UK with Hindu Human Rights arranged a short talk by a visiting female Swami, Swamini Geetha Atmaprakashnanda ji to the Department of Trade and Industry's Women and Equality Unit. The topic of the discourse that Swamini ji expounded on was on the Male-Female principle underpinning the Cosmic Reality of the Universe. Swamini began her talk by chanting some Sanskrit shlokams in a most melodious manner which created an atmosphere that facilitated the receptivity and understanding of the listeners. In the entire Creation human beings are the most sophisticated of earthly creatures endowed with consciousness. Although animals also have a type of consciousness they are not driven to develop complexes such as the human is prone to do as a result of Self Awareness. This self awareness of the human being can and does give rise to complexes of superiority and inferiority. Until he/she is free from such complexes there is no fulfilment in life. The practice of Hinduism helps the individual to free the self from such complexes and to totally accept the self for what it is. In fact it is a real achievement for the person to become able to understand and to accept the self for what it is. Hinduism, therefore is a way of life based on a given vision-and this is a fact and not a contention. If we say that the Universe is a manifestation of the reality of God as established in our sacred Shastras-this is not a contention but a fact since it

does not differ from person to person. If I do not accept this as fact it means that I do not understand the nature of this fact and that is a verifiable fact. However this fact does require some understanding. The whole being is the Lord. If one understands this-that the whole of one's being is the Lord then one becomes free from isolating the self from the whole and so becomes free from problems. In order, however, to come to this understanding that the self is the Lord then the understanding of this fact requires some preparedness. The whole of life is designed for the preparation of this understanding. Any undertaking which advances this preparedness is called Yoga- asanas, pranayama, in fact any learning which disciplines and prepares the mind for this knowledge is called Yoga. Marriage can also be called a form of Yoga. It is not just a social institution but beautifully designed for emotional and spiritual growth. This too is a preparation whereby two individuals first learn to give up their ego for each other. Nothing can come out of nothing. Every thing comes out of a pre-existing condition. Anything in existence now has come from something existing before. The whole of the Cosmos is part of a whole-an emergence of something –the Absolute Reality and the Ultimate Truth. One has to understand what the Reality is. The whole of the Cosmos demonstrates that understanding –it is a subtle fact. The discovery of this is the highest discovery that the mind can make-this is what our Shastras say. Unless one discovers this fact then the thirst for knowledge continues and never gets quenched. The whole of life is designed to prepare oneself for this greatest realisation. Any human knowledge is learned methodically and yet our thirst and seeking is quenched only when this great fact is acknowledged and understood. The only Reality is manifested as the Whole. Innumerable causes are manifested as innumerable countless effects. There are however two main causes. A wooden table is a creation of a product. At first glance we are aware that it has been created but not by whom. It has been manufactured and very beautifully designed. The wood is manifested as the table. It is the material cause and inseparable from the table. However for the wood to become the table it has to be touched by the intelligent hand of the carpenter. We say, therefore that the wood is the material cause and the carpenter's knowledge and skill is the efficient cause. The car is a product of many things put together in an intelligent way. If one cannot put the parts together intelligently the car cannot be put together as a car. The two causes are inseparable –the entire vast Cosmos is a result of many things intelligently put together. Everything in the Cosmos is intelligently put together including the insensate and sensate beings, the elements, the amoeba, and all other living and non-living things. Everything-the vegetables, fruits and flowers-everything speaks of the how they are put together by the two causes-the material and the efficient cause. These two causes-the material and the efficient manifest as the whole and it is the manifestation as reality. This is true and a fact. The reality being manifest and the two different causes of manifestation are the male and female principles. A plant cannot come into being by itself. Neither a man nor a woman can beget a child by themselves. There is the Sanskrit term-stri-meaning she who bears the child.-the one who bears and rears and sustains the human race. This is one of the reasons that women are revered and respected in Hinduism. If we look at the ocean we see the waves of the ocean. If we look at the water, it is still but then comes a movement-a projection of the water. That is called the wave. The still water embodies the male principle and the projection of the water-the wave is called the female principle. We see, therefore the entire Cosmos as the manifestation of the male and female principle. The unmanifest dimension of the female principle is called the male principle and the manifest dimension of the male principle is called the female principle. These are the main principles in Hinduism and in order to understand this the mind has to become subtle and we say that there is no greater discovery of the human mind than discovering this. Any learning is looked upon as a personification of the female principle in

Hinduism –the capacity to know and to think –gyan shakti-is personified as the female principle. The capacity to know and to desire is a female principle. Every phenomenon that is part of the whole is looked upon as the Devata –it is looked upon as female. The sun-Surya devata is looked upon as a phenomenon of the Lord. So is the moon –the Chand devata. All these phenomena are to be looked upon as expressing the female principle. In Hinduism women are to be respected and treated equally. In the Puja-ceremony of worship-the process is incomplete if the woman does not accompany the man. In the Upanishads many women rishis and seers were highly informed and competent and equal in knowledge and wisdom as their male counterparts. There are no restrictions on females over and above any on males and Swamini ji explained that in her case it was a personal matter of her own choice. In Hinduism we do have many sacraments (samskars) for the person to become emotionally refined and mature in order to achieve the ultimate wisdom. There are about forty one in all. We have the pre- and post –natal samskars. There is also the vivaha samskar-the marriage ceremony This is to achieve the ultimate end of understanding. To dissolve the Ego-that is the ultimate need of the pilgrimage of life. Marriage is where two pilgrims join together to prepare and ultimately achieve that end. One has to fuse and to dissolve one’s ego with the whole. Marriage is a process to facilitate this progress. One individual fuses one’s ego with another’s. When the marriage is fixed and takes place even if they start off being indifferent or even not liking each other, they begin to get emotionally involved, they discover love and start loving one another. When one fuses one’ s ego with another, then love is discovered and they fuse their ego with the whole. Everyone has a front with which he faces the world-our physical dress is a kind of public front. When we are undressed, then we are as we truly are! And in that kind of state, with no front /no dress anyone is capable of singing in the bathroom, of finding and expressing their true voice. And to first discover that one has to fuse one’s ego with another’s. Thereby they can live with one another and the mind can get sharpened in that rough and tumble of co-existence. The mind becomes sharpened. It is like the sharpening of a knife. One cannot sharpen a knife on a slab of butter. Nor can it be done on a hard and rough implement since it only succeeds in blunting the knife further. But on a sharpener-a simple tool the knife can become sharp again. In the marriage man and woman become the knife and the sharpener-they both grow emotionally and become mature and eventually become greater than the sum of their two parts. The man understands the importance of the woman within his life and within greater society. At the end of her discourse Swamini fielded a number of questions on the difficulties encountered in becoming a spiritual teacher, the roles of men and women in Hinduism, the status of single people and same sex couples within Hinduism though majority of these questions were answered, quite eloquently, by Hindu Human Rights representatives. Swamini Geetha is the disciple of Swami Dayanand Saraswati of Coimbatore Tamil Nadu India. He has initiated several centres of Vedic and Sanskrit Teachings such as Arsha Vidya Gurukulams in North and South India and the USA. He has founded the All India Movement for Sewa (AIMS) a charity for bridging the gap between urban and rural poor and initiated the first ever Acharya Dharma Sabha (gathering of Hindu spiritual leaders)in India in 2003. Hindu Human Rights distributed individual copies of David Frawley’s book on “Hinduism-The Eternal Tradition” to members of the audience. Sheila Maharaj Hindu Human Rights Hindu Human Rights Sheila Maharaj Hindu Human Rights Hindu Human Rights Hindu Human Rights Continue...

48 Hindu Council visits Army Foundation College

Hindu Council UK was invited by the MOD to visit the AFC at Harrogate in North Yorkshire. The program was co-hosted by Focus Consultancy and Georgina Brown and her team was in attendance

to welcome us. Representatives from Black Ethnic Minority groups were invited in accordance with the Mod policy of diversification and recruitment. MOD is actively pursuing these policies. This brand new facility opened in 1997 as Private Finance Initiative with Jarvis builders and is located some 3 miles due east from Harrogate Town Centre in North Yorkshire. The British Army selects 16/17-year-old youngsters for teaching and training over a period of 44 weeks. Young soldiers are given top quality facilities with physical fitness programs and character enhancement schemes. The presentation commenced with Lt Col Deacon Commanding Officer who explained that about £ 80 million was spent setting up the college and over 3000 persons live and work at AFC. Major Robin Russell -2nd in command elaborated on aims and objectives of the British Army and in particular, recruitment from the UK Hindu community. At present there are no Hindu soldiers at the AFC. Details of wages and other benefits to young soldiers at Harrogate were outlined and the package is attractive and appealing to our Hindu youth. Each individual practises strict discipline and adherence to rules. Tours of sports stadium, library, Chapel (includes prayer/meditation rooms) were conducted after a sumptuous lunch. I was impressed by the number of books on Hinduism and first class Internet facilities shown by AFC staff. The Chaplain emphasised that arrangements for young soldiers to attend places of worship i.e Temples, Mosques and Gurudwaras in nearby Leeds are in place and every effort is made to this end. Finally, contacts are going on with AFC and Focus consultancy, which are crucial to achieve more Hindu participation in these disciplines and I welcome your views. Satish Brahmhatt Defence Relations Executive – MOD Hindu Council UK Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 GEOFF HOON CALLS FOR GREATER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN ARMED FORCES RECRUITMENT

The British Armed forces comprises of Army Navy and RAF and it was decided to hold their Career Convention at RAF Cranwell in Lincolnshire this year. The chief host was Gen Anthony Palmer Deputy Chief of Staff who personally attended at Cranwell throughout the convention. Invitations were sent out to Universities, colleges, recruitment agencies and ethnic minority communities. Accommodation was at officers mess and car parking was allocated within RAF college which is the home base of the RED ARROWS. Over 300 guests attended from all areas of the UK. Reception on 14th evening commenced with a speech by Gen Palmer and a ground force display by a squadron in a chinook helicopter in the grounds of the college. On the 15th in adjoining Whittington Hall there were presentations by various branches of the Armed forces and we were shown footage from Iraq, Kosovo and Germany. Young soldiers both men and women gave personal presentations about life and prospects in the armed forces. Representatives from Hindu community asked several pertinent questions and senior army, navy and air force personnel were on hand to respond. Modern equipment, high quality training and excellent facilities exist in the armed forces and equality/diversity is promoted. The Rt Hon Minister of Defence Geoff Hoon arrived and welcomed the guests. His speech addressed issues of budgets for the Mottle govts.future plans and in particular the concerns and expectations of the UK Hindus in relation to global terrorism. Trevor Philips Chair of CRE presented his thoughts and observations with regard to the participation and assimilation of ethnic minorities in the armed forces in particular appointments to senior ranks. Next day the entire group was flown by jet to the world renowned military Tattoo in RAF base Gloucestershire where aerial displays by RAF was the highlight. Ministers and RAF elite were available to discuss and answer all relevant enquiries by participants. Catering facilities were

excellent and multiple contacts were made to permit/facilitate continuity between Hindus and the armed forces in the future. Gen Palmer was impressed by the performance of Hindu graduates in UK and was made aware of all activities in our self-supported community centre and temples. Several magazines, books and CD showing Hindu contributions are in circulation and a very capable team of Asian recruitment advisors is on hand to assist any aspiring Hindu youngsters. Finally, this event is held annually and I would request attendance/participation in ever increasing numbers from our Hindu Youth in the future. Satish Brahmhatt MOD Relations Executive Hindu Council UK Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 Government's RE National Framework review with Hindu Council UK

We had a meeting on the 23rd of September with the head of Religious Education at the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA – the regulatory body) and the chief officer in charge of Religious Education at the Department of Education and Skills (Dfes), at the QCA offices. Hindu Council (UK) was represented by Anil Bhanot and Jay Dilip Lakhani. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the new national framework for religious education consultation document and the importance of the Hindu contribution in the formulation of the final version. The final version will be published in the autumn term. The key ideas we had offered through our earlier response (the document can be viewed at the Hindu Council Website), are in line with the thinking promoted by both these departments:- The key features of Hinduism we had promoted in the earlier document were:- · Divinity of Mankind (spiritual humanism) · Religious Pluralism (the way for many world religions can co-exist) · Developing links between religions, science & art · Experiential religion (religion as a matter of first hand experience) · Contemporary Hinduism Additionally we touched on the Hindu concern that Hindi is not given a full examination status at GCSE levels. Both the QCA and the Dfes were not aware of this and it was decided to follow this up later. Jay Dilip Lakhani Chair of Education Executive Hindu Council UK Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 A cameo on Hindu health issues delivered at the NHSU and Faith Regen conference

I have put together some notes after a telephone conversation with our Health Executive Dr Raj Kumar who could not come due to short notice. Another one of our Executive members Dr Jaimin Patel also helped with some issues. The health needs of Hindus and people from the Indian subcontinent generally are a little different from the local population, due primarily to a different diet and a sedentary life style. There is a much higher risk of heart disease, problems with insulin and therefore diabetes, increased prevalence of anaemia, high cholesterol and blood pressure etc. We are all aware of these problems but what is needed is an education campaign just targeted for the Asian population. For instance the South Indians eat a lot of rice but probably don't know that even rice have a fat, Triglyceride, that adversely affects the blood. Even for chapattis, which north Indians eat in abundance, people don't know that they actually bind blood, i.e., they prevent iron from being absorbed, which leads to iron deficiency. Iron is important for haemoglobin, the red cells and these problems are in fact more common among Asian women, particularly Hindu women because as women they tend to lose blood and as Hindu they are vegetarians. Again as vegetarians Hindus eat a lot of milk products and these too are rich in fat. Of course rice, chapatties, milk products are very much part of the Hindu staple diet, especially for the vegetarians and we are not suggesting that they change their habits, only that they need to be made aware of the balance required from either other foods or supplements. The other immediate issue on food is the hospital food which does

seem to have improved in some regional hospitals but in the teaching hospitals, central London hospitals, where patients end up for acute operations we find that there is still a lot more room for improvement. Sometimes the vegetarians are totally neglected in these hospitals and they end up eating only bread and butter. We think the same chef can be easily trained to cook basic vegetarian dishes. The other problem Asians face is the language barriers. We think there are a sufficient number of foreign doctors in the NHS to cater for this but somehow the organisation surrounding this problem needs to be improved. Dr Raj Kumar sited an example to me where one Sikh priest got diagnosed as suffering from diarrhoea but when Dr Raj went on his round and talked to him in Hindi he found out that the patient was actually having a heart attack. Dr Jaimin Patel sited a similar example where a Hindu lady just kept nodding her head to an English doctor who recorded a yes to all the questions and when an Asian doctor, who was just passing by and simply stopped to converse with her, he found that all the answers in fact should have been no's. Presumably with the soft choice option where the patient is required to fill a form at the outset these problems will be resolved in time, we hope! Perhaps there should be a regional database of specific or special needs therapist or doctors which can be called upon as the need arises in the region. For instance if a patient has suffered from loss of speech then if the patient only knew Hindi or Gujarati there are no facilities at the moment to find the right speech therapist. These sort of illnesses e.g., post stroke, dementia etc. bring other problems for Asians. There is a social stigma attached to these type of illnesses. For instance if a woman suffers from dementia the husband won't even take her out to relatives let alone to a restaurant or the theatre and she is stuck at home all the time. If someone's hand is bent due to a stroke they won't feel comfortable leaving the house. These problems then lead to isolation, depression and it of course at that stage it becomes a vicious circle and in some severe cases ultimately Doctors start getting complaints of domestic violence. These social problems can only be overcome by proper education and although there are no short term answers we do need to start working on them as soon as possible. Another such problem is one of teenage pregnancy and yes these do happen sadly even among our communities. They are rare but when they do happen the consequences are far worse, rather devastating for the families. The girl is simply thrown out of the house and of course she has no one to talk to. We do not have any support services; there are hardly any social workers even to meet the demand. Perhaps we need to look at running targeted recruitment campaigns in areas where Asians are densely populated. Our elderly also do not have adequate support services though we have found that medical camps run by certain Hindu charities like Saibaba centres, Sewa International, Lions club etc. are very popular with them, where they can talk to various doctors in their own language and get a satisfactory diagnosis of their problems. Perhaps the NHS could look to promote and fund such camps from time to time and in certain regions. Finally I'd just like to touch on the ancient Hindu health system of Ayurveda. Ayur mean life and Veda means knowledge. Ayurveda takes a holistic approach to health problems, from body, senses, psyche and the soul. There are eight branches of Ayurveda from medicine to surgery and some of these practices come with the reciting of mantras even, that is for the soul. It is basically a science to bring about equilibrium in the natural elements that make up our composition. In Hinduism we have three distinct bodies, the physical made up of 5 elements, ether, earth, air, water, and fire and then the aura made up of mind, intellect and ego, and finally the transcendental body within us, loosely the soul but the Atma or the divine light, which is beyond all the other natural or supernatural elements. Ayurveda goes very deep into the imbalances that can occur among these elements and tries to redress the balance according to each illness or disease and there are in fact thousands of medicines dealing with all sorts of illnesses. Ayurveda rarely treats the

symptoms but attempts to cure the disease on a permanent basis. It is a complex science and in India it takes several years training. It does, however, worry us in the UK that for alternative medicine one can be licensed to practice after a mere 6 months training. We believe that this could lead to a lot more problems. The way the energy levels are worked out to redress various equilibriums in this science are highly complex and we believe that Ayurveda could complement modern medicine but only if its approached with the right methodology and respect. Anil Bhanot
General Secretary Hindu Council UK General Secretary Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 KRISHNA CELEBRATIONS MAKE HISTORY AT THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

The Members Dining Room at the House of Commons, which was transformed from its usual quaint wall-to-wall wooden panelled decor, to a traditional Hindu temple, overflowed with over 300 energized leaders and representatives from the British Hindu community, along with the deputy Prime Minister and many Ministers, MPs, Peers, the Indian High Commissioner and the Mayor of London, who gathered, in the evening of Tuesday 7th September 2004, to participate in the first ever celebration of Lord Krishnas birth (Janmashtami), which everyone proclaimed was an historic event. The momentous event, sponsored by the Narottam Virji Lakhani Foundation, that included wonderful cultural items, was hosted by Mr. Tony McNulty MP, the Minister of Transport and Mr. Abhay Lakhani, Parliamentary Adviser on Community Affairs, with the support of International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) and the National Council of Hindu Temples UK (NCHT). Mr. Tony McNulty MP who conducted the programme remarked, this is a historic event in the British Parliament, which should become an annual event. He also read out a message from Mr. Charles Clark, the Secretary of State for Education - FOR FULL TEXT PLEASE SEE BELOW. Ms. Fiona Mactaggart MP, the Parliamentary Under Secretary in the Home Office with responsibility for race equality, community policy and civic renewal, read out message of Mr. Tony Blair, the Prime Minister - FOR FULL TEXT PLEASE SEE BELOW. Mr. John Prescott MP, the Deputy Prime Minister, congratulated the Hindu community for holding the first ever birth of Lord Krishna in the House of Commons and said I have been to India seven times and have learnt a lot about India and its culture. I am reminded of the historical ties between India and Britain with festivities like these. Patricia Hewitt MP, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and Minister for Women and Equality, congratulated all present in the language of Hindi and apologised for her pronunciation. She also said, It is nice to return from the summer break to see the House of Commons looking like this (pointing to the Indian décor). The British Parliament is a historic building and the British Hindu community have contributed to its history. Normally one goes to a temple to celebrate the festival of Janmashtami but today the temple has come to the House of Commons said, Mr. Gareth Thomas MP, Minister for Department for International Development. Mr. Barry Gardiner MP, Minister for Northern Ireland, commented two days ago I was at the Bhaktivedanta Manor and the image of the child, with the butter, killing the demons has remained with me. Central demonic power is that which destroys the innocence in children. The festival of Janmashtami shows how the demonic powers can be overcome. Mr. Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London, applauded the Indian community of London for their great contribution and recognised the great step taken by the Hindu community to organise the festival of Janmashtami at the House of Commons. Mr. Stephen Pound MP, Chair, Labour Friends of India, said the journey that began 5,000 years ago, with the birth of Lord Krishna, still continues today. This journey is inspirational and joyful. Mr. Peter Luff MP, the Chair of the Conservative Friends of India, said I welcome the celebration of Krishnas birth at the House of Commons, which has been organised by Tony McNulty, Abhay Lakhani, ISKCON and NCHT

(UK), for the British Hindu community, which plays an important role in the fabric of the British society. Lord Navnit Dholakia, pointed out that the Hindu community have been making a great contribution to the British society and said that although we, the Peers, are called Lords but the real Lord (pointing to the Deity of Lord Krishna) is here. Mr. Kamlesh Sharma, the Indian High Commissioner, acknowledged the importance of having a spiritual base in society and said observance of Krishna Janmashtami in the House of Commons is a significant event. He also added that people of a great nation, Indians, are privileged to live in another great nation, England. The festival of Janmashtami is now popularly celebrated outside of India due largely to the extraordinary efforts of the Swami Prabhupada, the founder of the Hare Krishna movement, who in the mid 1960s brought the ancient culture of India to the western world, said Atmanivedana Swami, from ISKCON. Bhakti Vigyan Swami, from Moscow, noticed it is for the first time that one of the most important Hindu holidays, Sri Krishna Janmashtami, is being celebrated in the world's oldest Parliament. And it is for the first time that a Russian-born Hindu monk is addressing all of you for the occasion. Now I have every hope that the first Hindu temple in Russia, which we are constructing, despite all the difficulties we encounter, will soon receive all of you for a similarly warm Janmashtami celebration as we enjoy here today - FOR FULL TEXT PLEASE SEE BELOW. Mr. O. P. Sharma MBE, the president of the National Council of Hindu Temples, said the National Council of Hindu Temples UK is very happy to support this historic celebration and hopes that this function becomes an annual event. Mr. Abhay Lakhani, Parliamentary Adviser on Community Affairs, gave the vote of thanks and pointed out that there is an urgent need for the community to work together. He also encouraged more participation in the political arena from the Hindu community - FOR FULL TEXT PLEASE SEE BELOW. All the speakers, after being garlanded, lit the sacred lamp, offered flowers to Lord Krishna and were then given the opportunity to swing baby Krishna. They all congratulated Mr. Tony McNulty MP and Mr. Abhay Lakhani, Parliamentary Adviser on Community Issues, for organising the festival with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) and the National Council of Hindu Temples UK (NCHT) for supporting the event and also commended the Hindu community for playing a significant role in Britain and encouraged more political participation from the community. Janmashtami is observed by over one billion Hindus in the world and is rooted in a 5,000-year-old spiritual tradition. It attracts people of all spiritual cultures. This festival is one of the most popular celebrations in Hinduism and is observed with great fervour by British Hindus. The biggest celebration in the UK takes place at Bhaktivedanta Manor Hare Krishna temple, near Watford, where over 50,000 people attend the festival that involves drama, dance, music, multi-media shows, and exhibitions accompanied with free vegetarian meal. The preparations usually start many weeks before the actual day that involve scores of volunteers. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) or the Hare Krishna movement is part of the ancient Vaishnava tradition, a monotheistic faith within Hinduism. ISKCON was founded by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who first brought the Krishna tradition from India to the west in 1965. The National Council of Hindu Temples (UK) is an umbrella body, which links over 90 Hindu temples and works with them for the benefit of the Hindu community in Britain. It acts as a resource and one of the main consultative bodies on the matters relating to the Hindu community of Britain and the Hindu religion and culture. For more information please contact: Abhay Lakhani on 020 8951 0843 (voice) or 07956 249854 (mobile) E-Mail: exinvestmentsplc@hotmail.com Or Bimal Krishna das on 01923 350093 (voice) or 07958 464072 (mobile) E-Mail: bimal.krsna.bcs@pamho.net NOTES 1. Other photographs of speakers and delegates are available on request 2. Full Text of the Prime Minister Message: I am delighted to send my very best wishes to everyone attending the Janmashtami celebration at the

House of Commons organised by Tony McNulty MP and supported by ISKCON and the National Council of Hindu Temples. Janmashtami, the birth of Lord Krishna, is a festival that teaches us the values of family, the importance of justice, and the significance of faith. As such it is a festival whose values are shared by all faith traditions. I understand that this is the first time that Janmashtami has been celebrated in the House of Commons. It is a tribute to the very positive contribution that the Hindu community has made to all aspects of life in the UK. Once again, congratulations to everyone involved in this event and I offer my best wishes and greetings to the Hindu community in Britain on this joyous occasion.

TONY BLAIR 3. Full Text of Mr. Charles Clark MP, the Secretary of State for Education: I am very sorry that I cannot be with you today to mark this important occasion but unfortunately my diary commitments have prevented me from attending. However, I hope that it goes very well and that you celebrate the very significant contribution the Hindu community has made to the economic, social and cultural development of British Society. I would particularly like to have joined you in celebrating the success of Hindu young people in our Schools, and the role that parents and community organisations play in this. I wish you every success for the event.

4. Text of Bhakti Vigyan Swamis speech Your Excellency High Commissioner of India, Honourable Party Leaders, members of the Parliament, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends! Today's event is indeed unparalleled not only in the history of the United Kingdom, but in a larger sense, in the annals of the world. It is for the first time that one of the most important Hindu holidays, Sri Krishna Janmashtami, is being celebrated in the world's oldest Parliament. It is for the first time that the head of the British government is presiding over such a function. And it is for the first time that a Russian-born Hindu monk is addressing all of you for the occasion. At our time of terrorism, inter-communal conflicts and turmoil the significance of this event cannot be overestimated. One of the oldest and most established democracies is showing to the world the brilliant example of the real freedom of conscience - one of the most fundamental democratic freedoms. English people loves traditions, so I hope that this celebration of Janmashtami in the House of Commons will also become a tradition among many others. It would be safe to say that the very possibility of such a historic event speaks for itself. It testifies to the principles of respect for spirituality and culture that your predominantly Christian nation firmly stands by. As such, it also epitomises your country's wise and successful policy towards all religious communities. Your Government cooperates with them, takes advice from them and supports them all. It is therefore a matter of great honour to me personally, and to the organization I represent, the International Society for Krishna consciousness, to be amongst you here today. Not merely because the occasion is so historic, but because it is my rare chance to imbibe, to absorb this spirit of religious freedom - in an attempt to bring it back to the place where I belong, which still has a long way to go in this direction. Thank you very much! I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude for your unreserved commitment to the cause of religious freedom in the world, which we feel so strongly. Now I have every hope that the First Hindu temple in Russia which we are constructing, despite all the difficulties we encounter, will soon receive all of you for a similarly warm Janmashtami celebration as we enjoy here today. My personal thanks to Tony McNulty and Abhay Lakhani for organizing such a marvellous event.

5. Text of Mr. Abhay Lakhani's speech May I firstly thank you all for participating in this historic event. A senior academic telephoned me yesterday in great joy and stated " Abhay, you may not realise what you have done. " This is History in Making. At your age of 40 you have created History. The Hindu community will and should remember this mile stone for years." All of you present at this event must be very proud that you participated in this historic event. I am grateful to all of you. For a long time the Hindu community felt that we were being ignored or our views were not heard. In fact our

colleagues in Parliament hear our views and they do take account of our concerns. We don't need to shout and scream. We do not need to threaten the very community that has adopted us. Our strength comes from our great ability to integrate in any community we settle in. It is this that is noticed. It is this that gives us our strength. When I ask my two daughters Ashni & Anisha aged 12 & 10, what plans do you have for the future. Their answer was "I want to be the next Prime Minister". Would not it be great to see a Hindu girl in 10 Downing Street. This is just a simple example as to how our next generation feel. They do not feel alienated. They do not see colour. But more important, our host community and Parliament do NOT see their colour either. They totally feel part of society. You see what I mean about our strength. Please take back to your communities this message that your views are heard and taken into account. Carry on doing the good work and carry on our Hindu traditions. We do not have to give up our separate faiths. When my wife is doing the washing up, she makes so much noise from the crockery, cutlery, knives, forks, spoons. As Hindus, we do the same. We are a very mature culture and we agree to differ. But when my wife finishes the washing up, the noise stops and puts the respective utensils in their own compartments. They sit in the drawer so nicely. This is what I mean about Hinduism. We all fit nicely together under the umbrella of Hinduism, with our own differing way but still manage to live together under the same banner and also integrate in the host community.

6. MPs in Attendance: a) Mr. John Prescott MP, the Deputy Prime Minister b) Mr. Stephen Pound MP, Chair of the Labour Friends of India c) Mr. Andrew Dismore MP d) Mr. Rob Morris MP e) Mr. Tim Boswell MP f) Mr. Graham Brady MP g) Mr. John Randell MP h) Mr. John Heppell MP i) Mr. Steve McCube MP j) Mr. Peter Luff MP, Chair of the Conservative Friends of India k) Mr. Paramjit Singh Gill MP l) Mr. Dennis Turner MP m) Mr. Keith Vaz MP n) Mr. James Clappison MP o) Mr. Rudy Vis MP p) Mr. Ken Purchase MP q) Mr. Hywel Williams r) Mr. K. Mountford MP

7. Ministers in Attendance: a) Mr. Tony McNulty, Minister for Transport b) Mr. Barry Gardiner MP, Minister for Northern Ireland c) Mr. Gareth Thomas, Minister for Development for International Development d) Ms. Fiona Mactaggart MP, the Parliamentary Under Secretary in the Home Office with responsibility for race equality, community policy and civic renewal e) Patricia Hewitt MP, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and Minister for Women and Equality

8. Peers in Attendance: a) Lord Navnit Dholakia b) Lord Swraj Paul c) Lord Naren Patel

9. Others in dignitaries in Attendance: a) Mr. Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London b) Mr. Kamlesh Sharma, Indian High Commissioner c) Mr. Rajat Bagchi, Minister for Co-ordination, Indian High Commission

10. Details of the three cultural items performed are as follows: a) Sital recital by Pandit Madhukar Mishra b) Bharat Natyan Dance by Gauri and Gopi Hopkins c) Krishna Dance by Suchi Rani Devi Dasi and Jamuna Priya Devi Dasi c) Krishna Dance by Suchi Rani Devi Dasi and Jamuna Priya Devi Dasi a) Sital recital by Pandit Madhukar Mishra b) Bharat Natyan Dance by Gauri and Gopi Hopkins c) Krishna Dance by Suchi Rani Devi Dasi and Jamuna Priya Devi Dasi Continue...

48 GHU of Crawley Temple lays the Foundation Stone, celebrating the Shila Nyas ceremony with a 500 people congregation.

Hindu Community in Crawley celebrated Shila Nyas (Foundation Stone Laying) ceremony and celebrations on Sunday, 29th August 2004 at the recently purchased 2.9 acre site at Appletree Farm in Ifield, Crawley. The ceremony of Shila Nyas started early and incorporated "land breaking" and "laying of foundation stones". This now paves the way to the development of the site which will accommodate the first Sanatan Mandir and Community Centre (SMCC) in Crawley, and the South East. Over 500 people including national and local dignitaries, councillors and members of the local community witnessed history in making at this celebration. The Mayor and Lady Mayor of Crawley,

Councillors Brian and Brenda Smith. Mr. Bharat Lukka, the President of GHU said "We really had a fantastic and very successful ceremony. It was the second major event for the GHU and the Hindu community of Crawley. We had a good day with many local people supporting the event. The great thing was we raised around £100,000! This sets out and progresses further our agenda on the development of our SMCC Project." The ceremony involved marble carvings shaped being ceremoniously placed in the ground at the spot where the Temple will be constructed. In Hindu culture after Shila Nyas the actual construction of the building may commence. The SMCC project consists of a 300 square metres (m²) Sanatan Mandir with a 1,200 m² Community Hall. The whole facility is serviced by 250 car parking spaces set in landscaped grounds. The GHU is finalising the designs with local architects and also professional temple builders from India on the finer details of the project. The Mandir part of the construction is intended to be in hand carved Indian marble. The overall design has been made with local planning laws and consideration. The whole project is estimated to cost over £3.5 million including the purchase of the site. With the considerable funds required for the construction of the SMCC, the GHU has appointed a strong fund-raising team to embark on securing possible funding for the project. Building work is anticipated to commence in year 2005 with final completion by 2007. Further information on the SMCC project can be obtained from the following: Mr. Umesh Nayee, GHU Trustee Tel: 01293548151; Mobile: 07774607749 ; E-mail: umesh.nayee@btinternet.com Mr. Bharat Lukka, GHU President Tel: 01293 518210 E-Mail: blukka@london.newsquest.co.uk Mr Rajesh Amin, GHU Secretary, Mobile: 01293 524983 E-Mail: Raj.Amin@eurotunnel.com

Mr Ash Soni, GHU SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION BACKGROUND

·Crawley Hindu Community has been striving for past 15 years to secure the land to build Sanatan Mandir and Community Centre (SMCC). All our hard work has paid off. We shall sign the contract for the 2.9 acre land. ·The formation of the GHU was the brainchild of a group of Asians originating from East Africa and India who came to settle in Crawley. Gurjar - comes from Gujarat, a predominantly large Hindu state in the North Western part of India from where most of the members originated from or had links with. As a new town, full of opportunities and promises, Crawley became a major attraction for the early Hindus arriving to live in the UK, particularly as employment was easily available. ·In 1968 GHU was formed as a net-working group to help provide members moral and spiritual support. This enabled the members to take an active role in the Community at large, make friends and at the same time maintain their ethnic identity. In December 1998 GHU celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in front of a full house in Crawley Hawth Theatre supported by other dignitaries including Laura Moffat MP and Lord Dholakia. ·GHU has grown over the past thirty years and currently there are over nine hundred families or 4,000 members in the Union. A large proportion of our members have been working and living in Crawley for over twenty years. Most of the youth members are second generation British. Like any such group, there is a desperate need for GHU to have a community centre where the members can meet to socialise, receive help and support, worship and celebrate the key events in the Hindu calendar together. ·Over the past thirty years, GHU has managed to organise and celebrate these events and functions on a ad-hoc basis by hiring the local school and community halls. This has served a useful purpose but over the past five years the members have become tired and frustrated by not having a Hindu Cultural Centre. It has therefore become absolutely necessary for GHU to find and establish a permanent base for the welfare of its young, elderly, ladies and other members. ·In the past GHU hired two rooms above the butchers shop on Horsham Road for several years. This was not entirely an appropriate venue given that Hindu religion forbids eating of meat products. ·In 1997 GHU finally took a bold step and acquired a freehold warehouse on Spencer Road. This was intended to be a short term solution for

the provision of administration office and storage facilities. In the longer term GHU has plans to buy a site at Appletree Farm and establish a purpose built community centre. Over the past five years GHU has been working very hard to obtain a purpose built Temple and a Cultural Centre to meet the modern needs of its members. The Gurjar Hindu Union (GHU) has rigorously pursued the Appletree Site for the last several years. Last June, Crawley Council granted planning application for the first purpose-built Sanatan Mandir and Community Centre (SMCC) on the site, after an exhaustive seven-year consultation and campaign. The GHU represents over 4,500 Hindu members in Crawley and surrounding areas. Bharat Lukka Hindu Council UK Representative www.hinducounciluk.org Bharat Lukka Hindu Council UK Representative www.hinducounciluk.org Continue...

48 Pluralism – a salvation from religious strife, a “genuine” interfaith dialogue!

Recently I had been invited to speak on the theme of "Interfaith" at quite a few meetings held in London. Let me share my thoughts on some of the key issues I touched on. In the last century we witnessed strife in the name of political ideology. We had two World Wars, with millions of people getting killed. The challenge we face in the new century is perhaps even more worrying. This time we are seeing strife in the name of religion. This is a far more contentious issue. Religions are far more emotive subjects and can generate much stronger passions. There is a reason why this happens. Religions have a habit of telling us, "Carry out this much finite activity here on earth and we offer you infinite rewards in the hereafter." The risk/reward ratio is skewed to the extreme. If we kill in the name of religion or be killed in the name of religion, surely, that is a small price to pay for an infinite reward in the hereafter! One can see how the emotive aspects of religions enter the arena. How can we diffuse the situation? We see the politicians and diplomats working away frantically. We may say that, "Surely these issues will get resolved by diplomatic manoeuvring; or by a bit of political haggling! Surely, all this is a matter of economics and the control of the oil fields! Or maybe we need to show greater justice to some disadvantaged people." Our American friends think that the situation can easily be resolved through military action. We know in our heart of hearts that all these: Political, Diplomatic, Economic, Judicial or Military approaches, at best are mere patchwork solutions. The resolution of a problem that arises in the name of religion lies firmly in the field of religion. It is wholesome spirituality that can tackle the issues thrown up in the name of religion. I suggest that the reason these problems have arisen in the first place is not because the world is somehow becoming more religious and hence these tensions showing up as the world religions are forced to interact with each other. The reason I suggest is precisely the opposite. It is because we are becoming less religious that these problems surface. We forget that we just cannot afford to ignore religions. (Even if some of us were to believe that all religions were erroneous even then these issues have to be tackled and contained). In a highly secular world that we live in the role of religions in society is not very clear. As society can no longer relate to religions two things begin to happen. On one side we see society adopting a more materialistic stance, and at the other end religions increasingly fall into the hands of simpletons. As the mainstream aspirants are no longer there to underpin religions; the rational and tolerant elements of religions are pushed aside in favour of the more fanatic elements within religions. What is the solution? The solution is to become more religious. Not to be religious only in name but in the real sense of the word. The problems facing us are the symptoms of a society that needs religion and yet has difficulty in relating to it. The religion that I come from has important contribution to make in addressing these issues. The issue is: - How can many exclusivist religions co-exist in a single society? We do not have the luxury of living in isolation, practising our own exclusive religion. We live in multi-faith societies and operating, as

single faith communities is no longer an option for the modern world. The resolution offered by Hinduism to handle this situation is unique to this faith. It is called 'pluralism'. It says that the same ultimate reality called God can be thought of and approached in different ways. "Why, different ways?" "It is because we are different", comes the answer. The goal may be same but as we are different; coming from different backgrounds; inspired by different prophets and scriptures, the manner in which we relate to the same ultimate will necessarily be different. This proposal would suggest that however relevant are our prophets and scriptures to us they only have contextual validity and not absolute validity. They relate to us and only to that extent can be considered to be absolute; but not for the rest of mankind. The simple example I give is - Imagine two children in the playground. One says to the other, "My mum is best." The other says, "No, my mum is best in the world." They both have tremendous love for their mothers and cannot tolerate the statement from the other so they fight. A wise man comes along and says to both of them, "Why don't you change your statements and instead of saying My mum is best, add two little words at the end 'for me' so now say: - "My mum is best for me". Then you are both right and there will be no reason to fight. The children would perhaps take this advice easily but many of my interfaith colleagues have great difficulty with this proposal. The advice suggests that their prophets and their scriptures are no longer absolute but only have contextual validity. Sounds blasphemous! The best resolution, the mainstream religions have been able to come up with so far is to use phrases like 'we tolerate other religions'. Meaning, we hold the monopoly on the absolute - the others somehow exist, on the fringes. As we can see we still have a long way to go! I have often wondered how can any religion claim to hold the Absolute within its framework of prophets, scriptures, doctrines and dogmas? By the very definition of Absolute if anything can encapsulate it then it is no longer Absolute, as the religion that has captured it has now become bigger than the Absolute! Hindu teachings on this matter are very clear they say, "At best even the most esoteric religions can only offer a 'perception of the Absolute' - but never the Absolute." As one can see, if the mainstream religions adopt this idea, the sharp edges seen dividing the major religions disappear. This simple idea says, "Your prophet and scriptures suit you and are best for you, my prophets and scriptures are fine for my purposes so why threaten or feel threatened by each other? This is the Hindu concept of pluralism. Many of my Christian friends shudder at this proposal as it suggests that the prophets or the scriptures they hold so dear are a 'perception' rather than the real thing. Why should this be? The reason I come up with is that we human beings exhibit serious weakness in spiritual matters. The Absolute is elusive in all religions, we try very hard to grasp it but fail. So in our weakness we ascribe absolute stature to what we can grasp in religions: The prophets, the scriptures, the doctrines and the dogmas. This is the source of our problem. We are not brave enough to recognise the necessary limitations of what we perceive as absolute. This is the transition I advocate when I suggest: "We need to be truly religious in order to resolve the issue of religious strife". Some interfaith colleagues asked what is involved in being a 'pluralist'? Firstly, pluralism suggests that we do not have to water down our own faith or beliefs. In fact pluralism suggests that our faith is perhaps the most suited to our requirements so there is no need to shop around or change direction. We do not have to emulate other faiths, as that may not be our way. We should hang on to our own path with full confidence and greater vigour. We can see what pluralism thinks of 'conversion' from one faith to another. It is best described as 'perversion'. Secondly, pluralism says that the validity of other faiths should not be taken as a compromise of our own faith. Do we not know that God is infinite? If he is present in other faiths that does not reduce his presence in our own faith! In a way, pluralism already exists in an apologetic manner in all the mainstream religions. These religions accept a

variation of approaches within their religion. A vast number of denominations and approaches are grudgingly accommodated within these faiths. Pluralism gives all these denominations full dignity to exist side by side and promotes the idea of extending this dignity to cover other faiths too. Pluralism has never promoted the idea that we take bits of all religions and produce some mix of all faiths called pluralism.... What a grotesque idea! One Christian colleague said quite candidly: "No doubt, we are nervous about taking on this idea of pluralism but in a way we are relieved that it is being put across. Thank God for that!" One of my interfaith colleagues suggested that even though pluralism sounds like a good idea it will not be easy for the theologians of the mainstream faiths to adopt it so easily. Why not be practical and focus on the common ground of humanity and develop interfaith ideals based on shared human values rather than through religious teachings? My response is: - This is precisely what the outcome will be if the secular lobby gets its way. The secular lobby has been suggesting that religions are responsible for the serious problems we face today hence they should all be toned down. In this scenario religions would have lost out to the secular lobby. Second criticism of pluralism comes from the 'main weapon of all philosophers'. (Use logic to show weakness of a logical argument!). In this instance it translates as: But then 'Pluralism too is also a dogma' hence why should it be given a better footing than the 'Exclusivist agenda'? Sounds, quite valid but fails to hit the target in this instance. Pluralism by its own admission recognises its limitations. It never said that 'pluralistic' approach in anyway is somehow 'absolute'. It recognises its own contextual nature. But then why invoke it? Because there is a great 'contextual' need for it in the world we live in. A world where many religions promoting exclusivist agendas just cannot co-exist without thumping each other! Hence the need to invoke this Hindu concept of 'pluralism'. The third criticism directed towards 'Pluralism' is that it seems like 'Relativism'. Meaning that 'anything goes' seems to be the mantra of pluralism suggesting that there is no underlying absolute. This is not right. The reason why there is a vast array of pathways in spirituality is because the 'absolute' is gracious and adopts itself to varying circumstances, thus producing a variety of pathways that sometimes causes confusion. Let me use a metaphor to explain this subtle idea. Suppose all of us are lost in a maze and are searching for the exit. For each one of us there will be a fixed prescription that we can follow to get out. i.e. Go straight take the third right then second left and so on. The prescription for each one of us will be different and yet binding. If we just compared our prescriptions we may be fooled into thinking that all these prescriptions are random and we may conclude that we are promoting a 'relativistic agenda' where anything goes! Pluralism accepts varied pathways but also recognises the binding nature of the methodology we have to adopt. We suggested that we have two options in this matter: - Either we adopt the idea of pluralism and incorporate it within all faiths quickly to diffuse the serious situation we face. Or, we will be singing the glories of pluralism only after many more serious catastrophes. Jay Dilip Lakhani Chair, Education Executive Hindu Council UK Hindu Council UK Hindu Council UK Jay Dilip Lakhani Chair, Education Executive Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 UNICEF Funds Appeal

Hindu Council UK requests all Hindus and people of Inter Faith persuasion to support the UNICEF Funds Appeal as illustrated below by sending cheques, however small or what ever you can afford, directly to UNICEF at the address given below, please: Continue...

48 "Multiculturalism" and "Cultural Pluralism"

Multiculturalism as a concept was a progression from the first attempts of immigrants to integrate and perhaps assimilate into the host society. In the context of Britain it demanded 'behaving like the British and speak English like the British' – in those days the BBC English – but if you lived in London – a smattering of 'Cockney'. Many were successful in Westernising and Anglicising. Such attempts to integrate were more successful for the Jewish and other immigrants from Europe than for the Black or Brown skinned immigrants from the Commonwealth countries. Back in the Sixties, when I objected to an 'educated' Englishman referring to me as a "WOG", he justified his derogatory remark by saying that it meant "Western Oriental Gentleman". Many such situations and examples highlight the difficulties of integration and assimilation with the host community – not only by Hindus and Muslims but even by Anglo Indians and other Christians from the Indian Sub-continent – despite the fact that they shared the common religion. Social thinkers came up with the concept of multiculturalism as an ideal situation in which many different cultures exist side by side. It assumed a recognition, acceptance and respect for each other's way of life and traits of one's culture – religion, language, food and dress habits. The concept became very popular in the Seventies. I recall attending the World Jewish Conference in London, where many intellectuals presented papers on the subject of multicultural ideal. Discussions made me ask a question: Are we trying to be: (1) The same, therefore, equal, (2) Separate and unequal, or (3) Separate but equal? Obviously the conference leaned towards the idea of "separate but equal". Multiculturalism allowed for that and Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs set up different places of worship in the same way as Synagogues already existed. This, however, in no way reduced discrimination in jobs, housing, health and education. Political commitment to eradicate discrimination resulted in the form of the Race Relations Act of 1976. Its full implementation still remains an ideal. The question of identity crisis became again a matter of concern when the second generation of immigrants became aware of various levels of cultural conflicts, in spite of the fact that, they were brought up in Britain. The 'Britishness' in thinking and behaviour had to exist along with cultural values, manners, morals and mores of their parental cultures. It was easy to find a successful business executive, fully in British dress, manners and behaviour during the working day, turning to Asian food, dress and music in the evenings, weekends and other social occasions. His children attending a fee paying prestigious public school during the week and going to religious and ethnic language classes over the weekends or evenings. 'Cultural dualism' (Cultural Dualism has also been called "hybrid culture", a term I don't like) is not an easy phenomenon for the young, while they also face many other pressures in academic and social areas. Lately, however, the concept of 'Cultural Pluralism' is being recognised as an ideal to suit the present developments. It envisages a society in which many different cultures exist side-by-side – they are accepted as of equal importance and are mutually respected; cultural differences are explained as 'cultural diversity' and diversity is respected as positive cultural enrichment; followers of different religions are able to attend their places of worship, wearing their cultural dresses and speaking their ethnic languages without intimidation of any kind; bilingualism and multilingualism are considered as positive assets to be proud of. (I am reminded of a friend telling me in the Sixties "we don't talk in Hindi or Punjabi as long as we are inside a pub.") While Britain progresses on the road to 'Culturally Pluralistic Society', the political requirement of 'Britishness' will automatically be strengthened. The two are not mutually exclusive. In this alone lies the future 'greatness' of Britain. These developments take me back three decades when I raised the idea of "Separate but equal". We are on that road but have a long way to go. Dr. JAGDISH SHARMA Foreign Affairs Executive Hindu Council UK Hindu Council UK Hindu Council UK Continue...

FACT, Foundation Against Continuing Terrorism, was fortunate enough, thanks to the efforts of Sunil Bakshi, director of Indo-European Kashmir Forum, to have last month, an Exhibition & Film on the plight of Kashmiri Hindus called "Terrorism Unleashed" at one of the most prestigious venues of London, the Commonwealth Club, Northumberland Avenue, just off Trafalgar Square. Mr. Pyara S. Khabra a British Member of Parliament, inaugurated the exhibition. Mr. Khabra highlighted the forced exile of Kashmiri Hindus from their homeland due to continued threat of Terrorism. He said the Indian government must create a safe heaven in Kashmir for the return of Kashmiri Hindus. Pledging his support to Kashmiri Hindus, Mr. Khabra assured all present that he will highlight the plight of Kashmiri Hindus in the British Parliament. Earlier the exhibition was also held at Brent Town hall, Wembley on 27th June 2004 and at the Clyde hall, Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre, Glasgow three day earlier. Unfortunately, in spite of a good crowd, the results were not up to the expectations. First, where were the 200,000 Hindus from London and the seven lakhs who live in UK ? As usual, most of Hindus abroad only look after themselves, giving their children a thorough western education and ensuring thus that they are lost for ever to India. I even saw an Indian man turn his heels as soon as he saw that it was something on terrorism. We also witnessed first hand the basic hostility of Amnesty International to the plight of the Kashmiri Pandits. Sunil Bakshi had repeatedly sent invitations to them three weeks before the exhibition. I personally called several times the head of Kashmir at Amnesty International, as well as Ingrid Massage, the Director Asia & Pacific Program of Amnesty. First she told us that they only reported on first hand facts, I replied that these were photos and statistics, which nobody could dispute. Finally, after ten phone calls, she said that "she had too many files on her desk and that she had no time to come", although the exhibition was a few blocks from her office. So much for Amnesty's sense of justice. We learnt later that many of the staff, including the Head of Amnesty has strong links with Pakistan and Bangladesh. I personally had however a lot of hope in the British Press. I thought that if they saw the photos showing innocent Kashmiri Pandits children being mercilessly butchered, the beautiful film made by renowned film maker Ashok Pandit (who just released Sheen) on the tragic story of a harmless community who became through terror refugees in their own land, the bare statistics which nobody can deny: 1 million Kashmiri Hindus in 1900 in the Valley of Kashmir and barely a few hundreds today, more than 1200 Hindu temples destroyed, they would be moved. I was sadly mistaken. One of the few journalists who cared to come to the exhibition was Michael Binyon, Lead Writer of the prestigious London Times. Michael saw the exhibition and sat during the film without saying a word and at the end he had this to say: "it is very crude, it is not made for the British public, it sounds too much like propaganda". I was shattered: here was an intelligent, upper class Britisher, who occupies a senior position in the most venerable of British newspapers and he reacts like that ! I understood also that the spirit put by a few people in institutions such as the Times, endure long after these people are dead and those decades later, journalists such as Michael Binyon still repeat like parrots what their ancestors whisper in their ears. Michael's utterances were so colonialist in their essence, so superior-minded in their content, that he should have seen it himself, although they were uttered in a very civil manner with the best of British accent. In fact he meant: "who cares if you poor natives, are butchered, its all your fault anyway" ! He also subtly implied that "anyway, Hindus are pretty fundamentalist and most Kashmiri Muslims are peace loving citizens who are persecuted by the Indian army". I replied that the poor KP had never carried a gun in their hands and had to flee the Valley like so many sacrificial lambs. But it made no difference to the Times of London or

Amnesty International. Yet, the Pakistani and Muslim Kashmir community in London, whose brothers butcher entire Hindu villages, blow up buses transporting families of Indian soldiers going on leave, get a much more sympathetic hearing from Times and Amnesty. What a world ! After listening to Michael Binyon, I also understood better the Times of India, why it seems almost sometimes anti-Indian, why it always appears to be more western than the West, why it advocates openly the surrendering by India of the Valley of Kashmir to Pakistan: institutions have truly a spirit which endures and the Times of India is still somewhere an offshot of the Times of London I understood also that in the West, journalists don't go by facts, do not substantiate their writings by on the ground reporting and search for truth beyond preconceived ideas. No, they go by the politically correct, by what is said at the moment, or what is in fashion in Left and Intellectual circles. This is not true journalism; this is the worst kind of conceited, false arrogant journalism. The sad thing is that journalists in turn influence the mind of the public at large, so that many of my friends in Europe, good, sincere people, repeat with great conviction things which they do not understand and which are based on no facts: "Hindus are fundamentalists, it's only a few isolated Muslims who are militants and Islam is a peaceful religion". In the end you are left with the realisation that nobody cares about the KP, neither abroad, nor in India, as they are too small a community to constitute a voting bank. They also don't make their voices heard: they don't blow up buses full of innocent civilians and don't fire Kalachnikovs at crowds and of course they themselves are a disunited lot and except for a few beings like Sunil Bakshi or Ashok Pandit, nobody sticks his or her neck out. There remains then a feeling of sadness, of a world upside down, where what sells by millions is the book of Clinton which has no interest except his affair with Monica Lewinski, where the politically correct, the shallow and untrue has the upper hand, and where the voices of the truly downtrodden are not heard. It is also a world where those who shout that unless we start accepting each other, unless Islam starts reforming itself and stops killing innocent people in the name of one true God, we are going towards catastrophe, are labelled as dangerous radicals. Nevertheless we are continuing our fight. We have the blessings of great souls such as Sri Sri Ravi Shankar who inaugurated the exhibition in Glasgow, many Indians are also giving us their support and ultimately, truth has to triumph. Sooner, or later, too, the world will realize that India is a great, liberal, pro Western nation, its best bet in Asia - and not China, which is neither democratic, nor liberal, nor pro Western. It will also realize that the greatness of India lies in greater part in its Hindu ethos, the belief that God manifests Himself at different periods of history through different names. India has to become the spiritual leader of the world, as Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and today Sri Sri Ravi Shankar prophetized. François Gautier François Gautier Continue...

48 ROUNDTABLE ON THE EMPLOYMENT EQUALITY (RELIGION OR BELIEF) REGULATIONS 2003 AND "FAIRNESS FOR ALL: A NEW COMMISSION FOR EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS" WHITE PAPER

Monday 26th July - Hindu Council UK was invited to a roundtable discussion on two key issues in which stakeholders in the religion and belief were required for their input. The roundtable discussion was attended by 25-35 key stakeholders from the religion and belief communities. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss both the 2003 employment regulations on Religion and Belief and the White Paper on a new Commission for Equality and Human Rights. The meeting took place in two parts: The first part was discussion on legislation outlawing discrimination in employment and vocational training introduced across Great Britain in December 2003. The Government is monitoring how the new law is bedding down. DTI briefed the faith group on how it is carrying out the monitoring and encouraged attendees to feed in their experiences and knowledge of how the

law is actually impacting on employers and individuals. DTI have worked at Regional level with businesses, trade unions and religious organisations. DTI had funding of £260,000 for supporting volunteers, non-governmental groups. . All information on funding and awareness is available from their website. This year DTI had available funds of 1.3 million for proposals to raise awareness. They have received positive response; DTI will make recommendations and decision by Mid August. DTI aim is to ensure that wide spread understanding on legislation is implemented. Strategically, regular updates are forwarded to Ministers. There have been no new cases, it is still early days, there is not much coming through. The level of enquires are dealt with ACAS and DTI in partnership. Mr Sharma - was very disappointed that the Hindu Groups have not been informed by DTI relating to fundings or any sort of communications to support the Hindu Community, with the new legislation. Mina Parmar requested if we could make a late application but were declined for this years funding, however we envisage to sign up to the DTI website. PART TWO FAIRNESS FOR ALL – A COMMISSION FOR EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS Presentation was provided by Kate Allan, Director – Equality Co-ordination The Government published the White Paper “Fairness for All” concerning the proposed Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) on 12 May 2004. The White Paper describes the vision, role, functions and powers of the new Commission, which will help achieve a fairer, more inclusive Britain. The CEHR will be responsible for challenging discrimination across society and for the first time promote human rights. The CEHR will bring together the work of three existing equality commissions – the Commission for Racial Equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Disability Rights Commission and take responsibility for new laws outlawing workplace discrimination on age, religion or belief and sexual orientation. The session provided an opportunity to discuss issues such as: ·What do you think should be the priority issues for the CEHR? ·What are the most effective ways the CEHR can deliver change? ·How should the CEHR listen to and communicate with its stakeholders? and what are the practical ways to ensure effective participation of stakeholders in shaping its priorities? ·Which bodies and organisations should the CEHR work in partnership with? ·What activities should the CEHR carry out regionally? Mina Parmar Education Executive - Training Hindu Council UK Education Executive - Training Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 City Hall meeting with major Faith Groups : July 04.

Extending upon the issue raised by the Muslim Council representatives on disproportionate sentences for the persons found guilty for committing offences towards the Muslims, the Hindu Council representative Mr. Bhatia reminded the Chair that Mr. Ken Livingston should take up the issue of the disproportionate sentences granted to the culprits who exterminated the Hindu Gods and shouted slogans inciting religious hatred in the place of Worship & Prayers in a Hindu Temple at Wembley last year. Bill on Inciting Religious hatred. Hindu Councils views are welcoming in its spirit. There is a very thin line between describing a faith and commenting upon or criticising a faith. The latter would be construed as inciting religious hatred. We do not think that the faith groups or the Government have done enough inter faithing to educate their communities to understand each others religion and the need of co–existence in a multi-religious Society. More Forums for inter faith dialogues, visits to other faiths religious places to understand the sensitivities and auspicious-ties and recognising the religious beliefs in the day to day social life, were the few suggestions made by me, to make the communities academically qualified to understand what is inciting religious hatred. There was a total support to my views. The Mayor office could help funding to under resourced faith groups to come forward and participate in promoting this Education of other faiths. The Mayors

office should arrange discourses & lectures by the religious preachers on the topics of recognising, accommodating, tolerating and adjusting the other religions. Other faith groups who are already covered, in a way, under Race Act will have a double protection with the Inciting Religious hatred Act (if legislated) because of the common and overlapped areas of the two acts but Hindus will have only the single protection of the religious hatred act. Sudarshan Bhatia Faith and Culture Executive Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 Foreign Office Ministerial Visit To Durga Temple in Ealing

The Minister of state for foreign affairs, trade and investment, Rt. Hon. Mike O'Brien MP visited the Hindu Council UK at one of the temples in Ealing, the Durga Temple built by the Sri Lankan community. The Royal Nepalese Ambassador, His Excellency, Prabal Rana and the Sri Lankan High Commission Minister Mr Gauthamadasa graced the occasion with their presence. There were almost 250 delegates, of which at least 100 were Presidents of major Hindu organisations from across the country. The Minister was led into the main temple to see the Deities, with the South Indian music played by their resident band, after which the pandits recited a prayer and put the tilak marks, white for purity and red for righteous action, onto the Ministers and the dignitaries foreheads. As they came out of the temple and into the main hall the temple executives garlanded the Minister, their Excellencies, Dr Mukherjee and Swami ji. Mr Ratnasingham and Mr Bhanot from the Hindu Council UK welcomed the Minister and the dignitaries. Sunil Bakshi, the Human Rights Executive for the Hindu Council UK gave a 10 mins. address on the plight of the Hindu Kashmiri refugees, the successive Indian Governments silence ignoring their plight, the incorrect and false information disseminated into the world opinion machinery on human violations on those rather than by those who have carried out a systematic ethnic cleansing. He made the point that Kashmir belongs to these very people who did not convert but fled. He said that a similar thing is now happening in Bangla Desh where Hindus are being persecuted and that the population levels of Hindus in Bangla Desh is fast dwindling. Dr Tara Mukherjee, Chairman of European Multicultural Foundation and a senior Executive of the Confederation of Indian Organisations then spoke for 10 mins. about the role of Hindus in Britain and in Europe. He emphasised how the Hindus find it quite natural to their religion to culturally integrate in whichever country they happen to find themselves in. He said that he considers himself, nationally British, culturally Indian, Religiously Hindu and Economically, well, a good for nothing, and that to an obvious laughter by the audience. Mike O'Brien gave an eloquent speech for 15 mins addressing the issues raised above and highlighting the contributions made by the Hindu community, their children and how they excel through education. He said that their Government was committed to religious freedom and saw the benefits of multiculturalism in Britain. He spoke of the importance to maintain such an open culture and that Ministers needed to go out more to the communities in their outreach programmes. He said that the temple was beautiful and he was happy to share some of the customs in this well attended meeting, itself projecting a synthesis that Hinduism is rightly proud of. Mr Ratnasingham opened the questions to the audience and Mr Bhatia, the faith and culture executive of Hindu Council UK asked whether the foreign office will be influencing some of the middle eastern countries where Hindus are not allowed to practice their religion. The Minister said that he was aware of the problem and that Christians had complained also and that whenever they meet officials from these Muslim countries they will continue to raise these issues. Bimal Krishan Das, general secretary of National Council of Hindu Temples in UK, raised the point that after the Godhra incident the VHP(UK) here in this country was wrongly admonished, without proper evidence except what they feel as simply being a Hindu social

organisation. Dr Chawdhary of the Bangla Desh Human Rights presented the Minister with some pictures showing atrocities committed onto the Bangla Deshi Hindus. Mike O'Brien assured the meeting that he will be visiting Bangla Desh later in the year and that he will be raising this point with the Government there and he further said that whilst they cannot interfere in the policies of any sovereign country, human rights violations ought not allowed to be tolerated anywhere in the world. Mr Karunalingham, the Chair of the Temple Executive, finally, extended a vote of thanks to all the delegates and the dignitaries who came to participate in the meeting. Ends. Anil Bhanot, General Secretary, Hindu Council UK For photos, contact: 020 8566 5656 Continue...

48 Hindu Council UKs part response to the draft document - National Framework of Religious Education in England and Wales.

Present status of Hindu teaching in Schools: The discussion on the National framework of religious education offers us a welcome opportunity to interact constructively with the educational authorities to remove some serious misconceptions that are masquerading as Hinduism in schools. We have already made the Department of Education; the QCA; the ACCAC; the examining boards, as well as many Sacres, well aware of the issues that concern us. Just to illustrate this point let us offer one concrete example. Last week we were contacted by a Radio 4 producer for a programme called Beyond Belief. The producer asked, "How does polytheism help Hindus understand God?" We responded by asking, "Who told you that Hinduism is polytheist?" Of course we knew the answer. The educational system in the UK is responsible for promoting such poor notions about Hinduism. We have interacted with over a hundred schools in the UK and in the process have come across a vast number of RE teachers. Almost all of them thought Hinduism to be a polytheist religion. Not one of them knew that it is in fact a pluralistic religion. There is a vast difference between these two concepts. The first suggests a naïve paganistic religion that is happy to accept many all-mighty Gods. The second term expresses Hinduism as a very mature religion promoting the idea that the ultimate reality can be thought of and approached in a variety of different ways. This is not a statement of compromise but a matter of fact: As we are all different (as individuals or as religious groups) our concept and approach to the ultimate must necessarily be different. It is this subtle insight offered by Pluralistic Hinduism that holds the resolution to how many religions can co-exist with full dignity; unfortunately most RE teachers are oblivious to this fact. Some Recommendations: 1. Balance: For a balanced view of world religions, we recommend that if the first religion taught by a school (at any key stage) is Christianity, then the second religion should be a non-Abrahamic religion for a better grasp of world religions. 2. Greater involvement by Hindu academics at all levels of the consultation process; specifically with the examining boards to ensure that we have a coherent and comprehensive portrayal of Hinduism in schools. 3. Vetting resources on Hinduism: Many books written on Hinduism attempt to fit Hinduism into an Abrahamic straightjacket, thus producing a very grotesque version of Hinduism. We are in the process of producing resource material (covering all key stages) both on the internet and through publications. In the meantime we are happy to supply guide notes to teachers via the internet. 4. Seminar: In the near future we hope to offer a free one-day seminar for all Religious Education teachers in England and Wales at a major temple in London. This paper has been produced on behalf of the Hindu Council (UK) by: Jay Lakhani of the Vivekananda Centre London, Chair – Education Executive, Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 HINDUTVA ...a principle of unity

"The BJP might call Hindutva a way of life but that's not how the new edition of the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (COD) defines it. Instead, Hindutva, as a noun, is explained as "a very strong sense of Hindu identity, seeking the creation of a Hindu state". Hindutva is just one of the 900 words of Indian, largely Hindi, origin that make an entry into the 11th edition of the dictionary to be launched on July 7 in New Delhi..." Having read the above extract from the hindustantimes.com website, there was a momentary spark of anger and irritation. But then I decided to dig out the origins of the word. It must be new as it relates to 'Hindu' which in itself is a recent term, since the invasion of Bharatmata. The word HINDUTVA was invented by Swatantrya Veer Savarkar in the 1920's. Savarkar, a commemoration volume on the life of this great Hindu, published by Savarkar Darshan Pratishtan (Trust) (1989) notes that "Apart from the religious aspect involved in the conception of the words 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism' Veer Savarkar had to coin some new words such as 'Hindutva', 'Hinduness', 'Hindudom' in order to express totality of the cultural, historical, and above all the national aspects along with the religious one, which mark out the Hindu People as a whole. The definition is not consequently meant to be a definition of Hindu Dharma, or Hindu religion. It is a definition of 'Hindutva' 'Hinduness'. It is essentially national in its outlook and comprehends the Hindu People as a Hind-Rashtra". Perhaps there is some truth in the Oxford dictionary translation after all. So then why that feeling of agitation when the definition is put to print in a modern dictionary? Perhaps it is time to stand tall and agree with the creation of a Hindu State. There can be no harm in that at all. After all we have Christian states, Islamic states and why not a Hindu State. The world will have us believe that it is wrong, but could it be that they are afraid owing to the power that may emanate from just such a state? A Hindu state would be much better than a secular state. India as a secular state is ironical. The whole of the culture of the Hindu people, who incidentally are a majority in India, is based on a religious platform. The Dharma, or religion for want of a better word, becomes a way of life. Secular denotes that which relates to worldly things as opposed to religious and hence at the outset is at odds with the 'way of life' of the majority in Bharat. Secularism carries a notion that religion should have no place in civil affairs, how far from the truth can that be especially in Bharat? Sadly, as Francois Gautier recently wrote on rediff.com that the so called intellectuals, Marxists and Muslims in India who have, and continue to do so, prevent a Hindu majority to come to power by what ever means possible are shooting themselves in the foot. Where else do Muslims get the more than fair treatment that they get in India? Not even in Islamic states. Apart from India, name one other nation that pays individuals for their pilgrimage to Mecca? Do the Hindus get such luxuries for their pilgrimages? Where else can the Marxists get to spread their gospel, as it were, but in India. Even China is embracing capitalism. In fact their quibbling will stop for once and all in a Hindu state, for where else in World do they believe in VasudaivaKutumbakam (the whole world is one family)? It is when there is constant injustice towards the majority that there is friction. Give them a fair share and see them become the best of all. Dare the minorities take the chance? Nay, there is far greater an inferiority complex embalmed into their minds and hence feel insecure to allow the most peaceful of all religions to lead them. So what of it here, in Britain. Well we are British and we are Hindus. Hindutva concerns us only in that India is the land of our heritage, a rich heritage that astounds the whole world. Preservation of that land is the salvation of the world. But we owe our nationalist tendencies to Britain and not India. Our children are born here and are to grow up here and know this land better than India, it is our duty to teach them to be patriotic to Britain. Their duties as defined by Atithi Yagna and Bhoot Yagna should fall within the realms of the UK first before going abroad. Fulfilling responsibilities on the Pitri Yagna aspect may take them to Bharat, and so it should. Hence British first, as Shri Anil Bhanot, General Secretary of Hindu Council UK, so eloquently

put it in the recent Inter-Faith meeting. We should be proud to call ourselves British Hindus but Hindutva as the word was coined to mean does not apply to us British, perhaps we should just stick to Hinduism. Or does it in reality apply to us here also, especially in the light of the threatened conversions of our vulnerable young? Jaimin Patel Public Relations Executive, Hindu Council UK
Hindu Council UK Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 MULTICULTURALISM

Multiculturalism is a fashionable word and it is what we are part of. The globalisation, the drive to better ourselves through migration brings about a different people of different cultures living in close neighbourhoods. Still, wherever we go we try to maintain our core culture, sharing and picking the good bits out only of each other's cultures. As a result the multicultural takes a distinct culture of its own. Different people from different lands, different cultures develop a synchronised understanding. However it seems to me that there is a limit to this synchronisation in the sense that people still hold onto their own core values, customs and quite rightly feel the need for a belonging to them, rather they feel the comfort in belonging to the, perhaps in the way of their religion or their birth nationalities or their clans or their regions in the same nation. Our tribal instincts do not die. Our need for an identity does not diminish with the awesome power of multiculturalism moving upon us. But what it does do is raise our understanding and our respect for each other and that makes it all worthwhile. Take a simple thing like food. The British were in India for two centuries and yet they never took to Indian food. Now, under this multiculturalism, they can't get enough of it. The identities of the people have not changed but their respect for each other has. It is the same with music, clothes and even religions. If it is a good thing, as we see that it is, then we must minimise the impact of the factors that hinder its progress and maximise the impact of factors that will enhance its progress, since we recognise that it is good, good for society, even for the Home Secretary's byword – community cohesion. The factors that hinder its progress are, I believe, set in one's conditioning of one's mind. This conditioning of the mind begins to give an illusory comfort to the individual as the individual tries not only to identify but to protect what the mind is conditioned to believe as worthwhile and not worth sacrificing anything for. Part of this conditioning comes from one's own culture, one's own religion and to overcome such conditionings, such comforts is a slow and difficult process. But it is nonetheless a natural process that will carry on at its own pace. Differences and identities will always remain, people will always form their own clubs, and the only difference, under the multiculturalism, is that the clubs or the families will be a lot more cosmopolitan, a lot more fun. Perhaps one way around the factors that inhibit this multiculturalism is to celebrate a common identity as our prime identity, for instance British. Perhaps this identity that "I am British first" will begin to develop a sense of pride for the immigrants, particularly the vulnerable in our society. It is of course when one challenges us, imposes upon us or even attacks us that we withdraw into our own identity, our own culture, our club that we risk then the natural development of multiculturalism. But if that culture, that club, that identity is widened, that conditioning of the mind is opened out and we begin to call ourselves first as British, only second as Indian or Black or Sikh or Buddhist then I believe we will move a step closer to the inevitable converging of our cultures, a step higher than multiculturalism as we know it now. In Britain we have the single important factor that binds us, the English language. I believe it is not sufficient just to accept the growth of multiculturalism in its natural form, rather we have an opportunity to capitalise on it, to cement it further in our minds that we hold it dear, that it is so and only so in our being British. The Britishness would overtake the multicultural. The Britishness will become our prime first

identity with secondary identities only to suit each individual. However, we could only achieve that from top down, from Government campaigns, which are ongoing and continual. Then even if some negative forces do try to take advantage of our multicultural sensitivities they would find it hard to persuade us, especially our impressionable young, to follow a different belonging, or different pride, even if the appeal of it was seemingly exotic or exciting. We have to find ways of protecting our multiculturalism, a brand that exists only in the UK not in any other country in the world, perhaps by redefining it, by giving it a new identity of Britishness, that I am “first” British. Anil Bhanot, General Secretary, Hindu Council UK Photo, from left to right: Professor Ian Hall – Our Host, doing the introductions. The Rt Hon Baroness Scotland of Asthal QC – Gave an eloquent, separate lecture. Mr Anil Bhanot – Speech as above. Dr David Earle – Spoke with current examples on our responsibility, or the lack of it. Continue...

48 ID CARDS SEMINAR

Confederation of Indian Organisations invited Hindu Council UK to take part in Roundtable Discussion on the proposed Government Legislation on Identity Card. The event was arranged by Buddhdev Pandya MBE, Senior Development Officer at CIO. The discussion was held at North London on 19th June 2004. The speakers were Mr Stephen Harrison – Head of Identity Card Programme Team – Home Office. The event was attended by key Hindu Representatives including, Dr Tara Mukherjee – Chairman, European Multicultural Foundation and from Hindu Council UK, Venilal Veghala, their Race and Religion Executive and Minaxi Parmar, their Education departments Training Executive. The Government announced on 11th November 2003 its proposal to build the base for compulsory national identity cards scheme. The Government is now seeking, final consultation before the implementation takes place. Dr Mukerjee opened the forum by welcoming everyone, and explained the purpose of the forum. Mr Stephen Harrison summarised the reasons for the forum and explained that Consultations and papers had to be summarised by 7th July. A discussion on favour or not for ID Cards was carried out last year. · Explained purpose of scheme – complicated scheme · Phased implementation · National Identify Register and family of identify cards · Biometrics – finger prints and eye print · Identity checks · National Identity Register – only one database for the government · Costs · Police Powers · Race Equality Discussions Purpose of the Card Scheme: · Improved immigration control · Reduce pull factor · Increased public confidence · More effective enforcement · Countering terrorism and original crime · Reduce identity fraud – at least £1.3 billion at the moment · Improved access to public service – effective customer services (in banks) · Prevent unauthorised use of free services Stage One: · Establish National Identity Register · Populate the register as people apply or renew existing identity documents. · Introduce voluntarily pilot identity care · Require foreign nationals to obtain residence documents and link these to scheme Second Stage: Move to a compulsory scheme if conditions were right. · Compulsory to register, compulsory to use to access public services in defined by those services, not compulsory to carry a card TIMETABLE: Legislation Nov.03 Government announcement, Apr.04 Publication of draft ID Card, July 04 – end of consultation on Bill. Delivery Nov to Apr 05 – solutions, design and further feasibility trials 2005 –2006 procurement, 2006 – 2007 Build, 2007– 2008 large scale test Early 2008 – first card issued, 2013 80% of economically active Population covered. Key Features: · Built from scratch as people apply for a new identity documents · More rigorous and sophisticated background checks on applicants · Cross reference applicants, details with information held on other government and possibly private sector database. · Link each persons ID record to unique biometric information · Limited to core personal information, eg. Name, address, date, place of birth, nationality,

immigration status · National Identity Reg. No. · Will not hold information such as tax and medical records · Will not hold details of ethnicity (raised by CRE) - is there value in holding info. National Identify Register: To cover people resident in the UK for longer then 3 months Not proposing to register under 16 years of age Provisions to record information on people not eligible to register eg. Failed asylum seekers Those refused biometric visas Family of ID Cards: One record of identity on the National Register linked to family of cards such as ·Passport card, photo card, driving licence, residence permit card, plain identity card, Cards would include photograph clip Biometric Information: Requirements to ensure a person cannot register more than one ID provide a way of verifying that are who they claim to be. Types of Biometric Digital Photo, fingerprints, Iris COSTS: These may be up to £70 but will be revised after the consultation process. Mina Parmar, Education Executive – Training, Hindu Council UK Photo: Mina Parmar – Third From Right Sitting Buddhdev Pandya – Top Left Standing Dr Tara Mukherjee – Third from Right Standing Mina Parmar – Third From Right Sitting Photo: Buddhdev Pandya – Top Left Standing, Dr Tara Mukherjee – Third from Right Standing, Mina Parmar – Third From Right Sitting Continue...

48 HINDU COUNCIL MEET RECRUITS AT ARMY TRAINING CENTRE

Today Monday 5 July thirteen members of the Hindu Council met trainee soldiers at the Army's initial training centre at Whittington Barracks, Lichfield, Staffordshire. They also talked to Hindu's already serving in the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and the Army. This is the first time that the Hindu Council has visited an Army training establishment. The visit gave members of the Hindu Council an opportunity to see for themselves how recruits for the Army are selected and trained and to find out what arrangements are made to take account of their cultural needs. During an informal lunch they talked to Royal Navy Lieutenant Anand Mantri, Royal Air Force Sergeant Kirit Khushalbai from the Armed Forces Careers Office in Leicester, Royal Air Force Corporal Shiv Chand from the Armed forces Careers Office in Birmingham, Warrant Officer Ashok Chauhan MBE and Warrant Officer Makand Singh from the Army. Brigadier Chris Sexton, the Commander Recruiting Group from the Army explained what happens during the Army's recruitment, selection and training process. He said: "I was delighted to meet a group from the Hindu Council and to discuss the various careers available and the excellence which exists in our initial training establishments across the three armed services. The serving soldiers, sailors and airmen they have met today have shown that while we foster the team ethic, we lay great store in the care of the individual." Mr Anil Bhanot, General Secretary for the Hindu Council said: "The Hindu leaders from across the UK came and found the visit very informative, almost an eye-opener into life in the Armed Forces. Certainly on the training front the cadets get a fantastic deal with welfare, medical, recreational and educational facilities. At the end of the 12 week training period recruits are awarded a civilian qualification to add to their CV which will help in future civilian life. Moreover we have found that the commitment is really 4 years within which they can also complete a degree course. Ends Notes to editors 1. The latest defence news and digital pictures are available on the MoD website 'UK Defence Today', which can be accessed through www.news.mod.uk 2. Photographs of the visit are available. 3. For more information please contact Pat Sever, Defence Press Officer Midlands on 01543 434 348 or 07802 206729 or Howard Rhoades MoD Press Office on 0207 218 0978 Continue...

48 Anti - Terrorism Acts

The Home Office held a meeting of the various faith community in order to assess their views of the Anti-Terrorist Acts of 2001 and 2002 as these Acts were due to elapse shortly. Ms. Linda Robinson, Head of the Home Office Terrorism and Security Unit, chaired the meeting. There were 23 Leaders of various Faiths and Suraj Sehgal represented Hindu Council UK. NEED OF THE LAWS. The Chair gave a brief resume of the Acts and referred to the existence of the international terrorism and sought the views of the meeting. A Church leader asked the significance of the International Terrorism. The chair explained the various counties were effected and there was an international network which is spreading this menace. The Muslim leaders showed their opposition to those Laws and stated that these were being used against their community and Muslims in the country were feeling harassed. Suraj Sehgal referred to the prevalence of terror in countries like India and Pakistan. In Pakistan the Sunnis were attacking Shias and their mosques. The Shia Muslim leaders supported his comment but other Muslim leaders retorted that now the priests of both sects have had a meeting and there had been no trouble since. Sehgal commented that we the leaders present were sensible and realise the ghastly effect of this menace but there are thugs out there who want to use terror in order to achieve their nasty goals. Suraj Sehgal strongly recommended the continuance of those ACTS as they were preventive measures and demanded that very stringent sentences should be prescribed in order to discourage others joining those thugs. GUJARAT The Muslim council representative referred to money being sent to RSS and VHP who were responsible of the riots in that state. Sehgal strongly refuted and stated that RSS and VHP were not terrorist organizations but were purely Hindu social organisations. The riots in Gujarat were purely retaliatory because those Muslim terrorists had burnt alive in a train 59 Hindu children, women and old people who were returning from their pilgrimage from Ayodhya. There had been no attacks on Muslims from any Hindu organisation at any time in history and more so since Independence, and we condemn the violence that occurred but it was apparent that no body could expect the relatives of those slaughtered persons to sit at home and accept it. One cannot blame the VHP and RSS for it. There was no further comment on this matter. POLICE POWERS Muslims leaders referred to the Stop and Search powers of the police and stated that their community was being targeted all the time. The Police representative replied that there was no other way to check crime, there may be excesses by some persons but there was a procedure to investigate such complaints. Sehgal commented that there are equal numbers of Hindus living in UK but there had been no complaints from any quarter. As far appearances are concerned the both communities looked like the same. RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS HATRED Suraj Sehgal Referred to the attack on Hindu Temple in Wembley where a Hindu Deity was attacked and damaged by a white person but as there was no law against Religious Hatred the person was charged under criminal damage and let off with minimal sentence. The Police officer present commented that stricter sentencing was needed, to which Sehgal replied that that would not do as the assessment of sensibilities and sentiments of thousands of Hindus would not be covered. It was not as simple as damage to a table or chair. Sehgal then referred to the meeting of Inter-faith network in which this matter was discussed. As the Racial Laws covered the Jews and Sikhs only and not Hindus and Muslims, the leaders of the above communities do insist on a Law against Religious Hatred. There are one billion Hindus in the world and a larger number of Muslims and these communities cannot be ignored. The Muslim Council representative supported the argument. IMMIGRATION AND NON-BRITISH DETAINEES. The Muslims leaders referred to people of their religion detained and sent to high security prison in Belmarsh where there was no provision of meeting outsiders and seek legal help. The Police Officer stated that it could be looked into and

prisoners of low risks could be sent to other prisons. The meeting had commenced at 10 AM and finished at 3.45 PM. Suraj Sehgal, Defence Relations Executive, Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 National Framework of Religious Education Draft Document for the UK.

Hindu Council UK has been engaged in an interesting dialogue with some of the members of the Religious Education Council on how to incorporate ideas of Spirituality in the educational system of the UK. We found that the National Framework draft document is poor in its understanding and promotion of the key feature of all religions:- "Spirituality." The document puts aspects like:- Social & Traditional features of society at par with Spirituality. We found this unacceptable hence we have offered some suggestions on how to redress this balance. Before we discuss this aspect in greater detail let us first touch on some other matters of serious concern about the way Hinduism is portrayed in the educational system in this country. We have already taken up these matters with the Qualification and Curriculum Authority and some of the Examining Boards like Edexcel, Oxford, Cambridge and the Welsh Board. The foremost issues that spring up when Hinduism is taught in schools are:- "Polytheism and the Hereditary Caste system." Working on a recent publication by the Professional Council for Religious Education we had to press hard to ensure that Pluralism and Divinity of Man are portrayed as the central tenets of Hinduism and not the other two. We are winning the support from many in the field of religious education. The Welsh Education Board did an actual survey with their own teachers of Religious Education to see how replacing these two key tenets of Hinduism works out in practice and came back with extremely positive comments. First we have to remove many such misconceptions about what is and what is not Hinduism and then only can we be in a position of making a positive contribution to the spiritual health of this nation. The United Kingdom is one country where Religious Education is part of the mainstream school curriculum. Nowhere else in the world do we have the freedom or opportunity of exploring ideas like: What is spirituality and how it can be infused in a nation through education? In our opinion Hinduism will play a pivotal role in developing and promoting this agenda. We will keep you informed on how this issue develops further. Jay Dilip Lakhani Education Executive Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 Ministers of Religion from Abroad - A Consultation by the Home Office

The Home Office invited a delegation from Hindu Council UK for a consultation on the oncoming legislation for "Ministers of Religion from abroad". Dr Stadlen, Head of the Faith Communities Unit, chaired the meeting and explained that the White Paper, "Secure Borders, Safe Haven", undertook to review the existing arrangements whereby they would like to look at the proposal for allowing appropriately qualified persons to be allowed an entry clearance. One of the proposals for an entry clearance is that the Minister has sufficient knowledge of English (IELTS Band 6 Competent User). O P Sharma responded to explain that there are about 140 temples, each having its own Executive Committee of volunteers from the community and that these are the people who actually run the temples and arrange community activities. The priests take a secondary role of performing various rituals and carrying out worship activities. They are not preachers as such and each temple on average has 2 to 3 priests only, in fact very few come to the UK, at least, in comparison to other faiths. Mr Sharma said that these priests, although highly educated and trained to perform the temple duties may not know English at all and that while we are trying to get them trained in English also it will take about 10 years to achieve that requirement, which we too prefer. Dr Stadlen

commented that English is a useful tool to communicate to the younger members of the community and in addition the requirement would be complimentary to the community cohesion programme. Raj Bali said that for community work in the north Midlands he is an active member in every society/organisation one could name but he could not expect the priest to take any such participation. He said that we are concerned more about the priests scriptural education and his command of Sanskrit rather than any other language. Ishwer Taylor also continued that community cohesion is the responsibility of the community, not so much of the priest. In Preston, he said that do encourage the priests to attend college for English as a second language course but it is more important to them that he speaks Gujarati and Hindi. Community activities like visits by schools etc. are always dealt by one of the Executive persons. Dr Rao clarified that a Hindu priest is not a preacher nor does he give sermons. In his Ventakeshwar Bala ji temple they have 6 priests and none of them preach, which is left to the monks. Kishore Ruperalia elaborated that someone like Morari Bapu, who is a spiritual leader, would travel various countries and give sermons/lectures but he is not a priest, nor can be termed as a high priest. However these leaders come only as visitors and do not require a work permit. Jitu Patel then explained that at Swaminarayan they have various categories, e.g., a) Sadhus, who will preach and most know English well b) Pujaries, who do the worship and ritual duties (actually, are the priests) c) Puraanies, who read and analyse the scriptures d) Bhandaries, who cook for the Deities. Mr Patel explained that actually the categories b, c and d have little or no contact with the public and they would like to maintain that. Mr Ratnasingham then added that in a Sri Lankan temple they observe many more rituals in comparison to the North Indian customs and they need a minimum of 6 priests to observe all the duties. Currently their senior priest does not know English and some of the junior category priests do but the senior priest is a highly educated scholar in the Hindu scriptures, Sanskrit and temple duties, which the junior priests, cannot match. Mr Ruperalia added that the priests are for practical work in the temple and that there is a lot of symbolism in Hinduism. Mr Taylor continued that for us the Deities, once consecrated in the shrine, have life infused in them and therefore we need priests to look after them, to feed them, to bathe them, to clothe them and so on. Dr Stadlen enquired whether the priests were in two categories, a) where they provide a moral leadership role and b) where they just do the ritual work of the temples. Mr Bhanot tried to sum up saying that probably only 5% of the priests take up the leadership role, where they do actually start giving sermons and go out to the community but the other 95% remain basically in the temple and would give moral and scriptural guidance on an individual basis. He continued on Raj Bali's comment that our priest is consulted by the community on an individual basis and although he commands respect from the congregation he does not lead it as would be the case for instance by an Imam in a mosque, who actually acts as their leader. He clarified that the Hindu priest does not get involved with community issues, nor does he comment on them. Mr Sharma gave an example of the Wolverhampton temple where recently they held a congregation where the priest, who speaks broken English, did all the religious duties but lectures and talks were given by the community leaders and the congregation included three MEP's and fifteen councillors and he reminded that that is community cohesion at work. Dr Rao, finally made a point that actually switching does not happen in Hindu priesthood; it is not that an I T engineer can switch to becoming a priest; the training is long and arduous. He enquired at the end from Dr Stadlen whether it was now clear that such a law would undermine our system totally and although efforts can be made in future to request the schools to train the priests in English also that at the very least Hindus should be exempted in a transitional period of say 10 years. Dr Rao said that if our youngsters demand that the priests speak English the system will automatically begin to cater

for that and this legislation is not seen as necessary for the Hindu priestly roles; that would be the case for our exemption. Dr Stadlen thanked the delegation and said that it has been very interesting for him to learn the differences and that he will keep the Ministers informed for a further review and another possible consultation. He briefly touched on considering the downgrading of the IELTS Band 4 limited user requirement for English but there was still no consensus on that by the delegation. Anil Bhanot, General Secretary, Hindu Council UK Photograph: Anita Thandi – Home Office FCU O P Sharma – President NCHT/Faith & Interfaith HCUK D Ratnasingham – Durga temple/ Legal Affairs HCUK Raj Bali – Derby temple/ North Midlands Faith HCUK Dr G. Stadlen – Head FCU Home Office Anil Bhanot – General Secretary HCUK Jitubhai Patel – Swaminarayn trustee/ Representative HCUK Kishore Ruperalia – General Secretary VHP (UK) - Associate member HCUK Dr V P N Rao – President Bala ji temple/ Faith & Interfaith HCUK/Executive member IFN (UK) Ishwer Taylor – President Hindu Forum of Britain/ Hindu Council North - member HCUK M. Sharma – President of Laxminaryan temple Belfast/ Representative HCUK was absent but gave a written representation. Continue...

48 A “Mythical Ram” of Today’s Media in the UK

Last week in some news magazines and in a Sunday Broadsheet, the stories about the Indian elections included references to a mythical Ram and it is this word “mythology” that I would like to enquire into the basis of. In so far as I know, when Lord MacCaulay, a historian, was sent to India to evaluate the people and provide a strategy as to how best to conquer, he came back with all praise and glory for the “highly civilised society with the loftiest morals existing anywhere in the world”, and for his strategy part, to enable the proportionately few English officers to control the many Indians he recommended that these people must be made to believe that everything Indian is inferior and everything English is superior and right, i.e., the masses had to be broken down psychologically in order for the system of control by the few over the many, to actually work. To launch his strategy he proclaimed that the entire literary works of the East can be replaced by one book shelf of European literature. This may sound far fetched in the modern era but at the time the strategy was hailed brilliant in the British parliament. It was a different era, of course. Concurrently the Church saw an opportunity to convert the millions of India and set out, with the help of some “Indologists” to label the Hindu historical books, the itihaas in puraans and the great epics as mere myths, quite akin to the already accepted Greek mythology. Greek mythology actually does resemble certain tones of the Hindu demi-gods, the Devas, but it lacks any sense of spirituality even at that level of the pantheon. The Hindu pantheon, of course, extends to the divine manifestations of the indescribable Brahmm but the idea of mythology served a useful purpose then to conveniently lump all such divinities with the lower strata of the demi-gods and call it all Hindu Mythology. They never stopped for a moment in a temple to see that it was not the demi-gods who were adorned and worshipped, even though in line with the vedic tradition prayers are also offered to them in a comprehensive puja, but that the Gods that are worshipped actually are the spiritual divine manifestations like Ram, Krishna, Shiva and so on. The Church and the State worked in harmony which from the religious side was also made easier by the already prevalent Muslim influence in India, which after the Great Akbar’s time had become less tolerant towards the Hindu religion and as I have heard that there is evidence that the Mughals, being the then ruling power, had inserted written inconsistencies in the puraans. It became then in fact quite easy for the newly appointed Hindu baboos, placed to run the administration under the British rule, to shun these historic epics and stories of India as mythical. Furthermore the Bible and the then scientific discoveries pointed to the first man as Adam as having been a few thousand years old phenomenon

only. It is only very recently that when they discovered a man's skeleton in Ethiopia dating back 100,000 years that immediately the time post for Adam's birth was deferred back to that date or so I have heard. Of course our Manu is only mythical even though the word Manu, even, comes from the Sanskrit word Manushya – I am sure, the Goodness Gracious team could have presented a rather humorous sketch on this! Some Hindus say that, "oh, by mythology they don't mean myths, they mean legends!" Well, stories, over time, do get exaggerated but to my mind a myth is a myth, it is not real. Then they say that even Jesus Christ can be called a myth in the same way. These arguments seem pitifully defeatists. Moses parted the seas and Noah's ark, a story quite akin to the Hindu flood at the end of a yug, are never called mythical because in simple terms they are part of the Bible but probably the same Hindu flood remains mythical. I don't wish to remind people of the past but I believe that until we re-assert our heritage as true and historical, even if scientific discoveries at the moment do not go as far back, we will keep following, chasing our tail, continually trying to stamp one insult after another. If our one Kalpa lasts 4.32 billion years and one Krati as 34,000th of a second and modern science has not given credence to it yet does it mean that we should take the route of arrogance and refer to the Kalpa and Krati as mere myths? Otherwise is there any other basis for calling these a myth or are we to be selective and call one thing a myth and another quite plausible, without any firm basis but simply for our present ability to evaluate information, an ability that is fluid not firm. Do people go to the temple to pray to Ram that is unreal, a myth? Durga, a myth? How does one feel when others call it a myth, which a people presume to be the ultimate reality? Is Hanuman a myth, even though it goes along with the theory of Darwin but perhaps against Western sensibilities? Are great works like Mahabharata and Ramayana mere myths, in spite of the exaggerations that may have occurred through centuries? Lord Buddha too was also considered mythical until an English archaeologist, in the early part of the 20th century, found some buried artefacts in an estate that are thought to belong to Lord Buddha. Suddenly then, the Lord was promoted by man to be a real historical fact and no longer mythical. Nanak Dev meditated on Hari (Lord Vishnu) and Ram and achieved Godhead. Saibaba meditated on Krishna and Ram and achieved Godhead. Swaminarayan meditated on Lord Vishnu and achieved Godhead. These are very recent historical events – it would seem to me that the belief system does actually work and as the West is always influenced by miracles then all of the above divinities are attributed with various miracles. Furthermore let us not forget the most recent miracle of Lord Ganesha drinking milk, all over the world, in 1996. The newspapers should acknowledge that it is unnecessary to label a belief system followed by a one billion people as mythical. Even Christianity has moved on, it has well evolved from what it was like in those Middle Ages. I have the greatest respect for some of the Christian scholars whom, I dare say, would no longer take part in condemning another religion for, I am sure, they see how easy it is to fall from the righteous to the self-righteous as only a fine line divides the two, though I must confess I am hardly qualified to be the judge for such lofty ideals. Anil Bhanot General Secretary Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 Jainism - perceptions of the Divine in our daily life

Since the dawn of civilisation, humans have been curious about the universe, about the nature and its functioning, about the various types of living beings, their creation, divinity and divine power, birth and death, and about human behaviour and its causes. Different philosophies, faiths and scientists have given answers to these questions in various ways. Some say their answers are from the revelations of their prophets, while others say their knowledge has come from the purified souls of great persons, but surprisingly the ethical teachings, moral preaching and the perception of

humanity of different faiths look similar. We believe the reason is simple. If we analyse the lives of the great souls such as the Moses, Christ, Mohammad, Rama, Krishna, Mahavira or Buddha, we will find they meditated for a long time and their knowledge was coming from within – from their purified souls. Jainism believes all souls are equal with infinite bliss, knowledge, perception and perfect conduct, but in worldly souls, such as us, their characteristics are influenced through the clouding caused by the karmic bondage that was created by the past actions. The answers found in Jain sacred texts are the teachings of such great persons, self-conquerors or Jina, who purified their souls by shedding the karmic bondage and manifested the true characteristics of their souls such as the total knowledge of the Universe and its contents, the heavenly beings, humans, the beings of the natural world and the infernal beings. They taught the spiritual path of liberation or moksa for all. The spiritual values were always given great importance in India and the religions have played an indispensable role both in the spiritual life of the people and the social realm. Ascetics and scholars were respected and supported by a society, which fulfilled their material needs, and discussions on philosophy and spiritual values were the norm, supported by the rulers and the elites of society. As a result, in the sixth century BCE, when Mahavira and Buddha emerged, hundreds of schools of thought were extant, of which the most prominent were the Vedic and the Sramanic. Hinduism developed from Vedism, and Jainism and Buddhism from the Sramanic tradition. The name Jainism comes from Jina, meaning “victor” in the classical Indian language Sanskrit, also known as tirthankara to Jains. Each tirthankara establishes four order of the society caturvidha sangha consisting of monks saadhus, nuns saadhvi), male lay followers sraavakas and female lay followers sraavikaas and lead it towards the path of spiritual perfection by teaching the truth about the universe and its nature, the meaning of life and the path to be pursued. Ascetics follow the teachings of the Jina vigorously, while laypersons observe the teachings to a lesser extent, as they have to undertake their necessary day-to-day worldly duties. Jainism does not demand unquestioning faith from its followers, but encourages understanding before acceptance. The fourfold order established by Mahavira is still in existence in India, but because of the strict adherence of their vow of non-violence, Jain ascetics are unable to come to the West. Jainism believes the universe to be eternal, working by its inherent laws and not created by any supreme being or God. It is divided into two parts: occupied and unoccupied the universe to be eternal, its constituents such as living and non-livings things may change form, but they are basically eternal. Living beings may be worldly or liberated. To attain liberation is to attain Godhood, an opportunity available to any one who follows the path of Right Faith, Right knowledge and Right Conduct and sheds all karma, not by grace of others by their own self-effort. Jains do not believe in an all-powerful Creator God, but believes in Godhood and tirthankaras. Worldly souls are engaged in the cycle of birth, rebirth and death, while liberated souls do not take rebirth, and are eternal in permanent happiness and bliss. Time rotates in a cycle, like a wheel moving clockwise, descending and ascending. In each half of the time cycle aeon, descending and ascending. The first tirthankara in this aeon was Risabhdeva, who according to the Jain Texts lived millions of years ago, and the twenty-fourth and last was Vardhamana Mahavira who lived from 599 to 527 BCE; i.e. about 2,600 years ago. The last tirthankara Mahavira is not the founder of Jainism, but he revived and expounded the religious, philosophical and ethical teachings of previous tirthankaras. His successors, a series of omniscients for 260 years and prominent ascetic scholars evolved Jainism into a complete religious system, with its own philosophy, ethics, rituals and mythology. They produced a vast sacred literature covering all aspects of human life and the situation of other living beings in the universe. What did Mahavira teach? And how do Jains live out of their belief? Teachings Mahaviras teachings included the co-ordinated path of the “Three Jewels”:

Right Faith, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct; involvement in the welfare of others and the care for the natural world; the equality and pluralism, the life of equanimity and simplicity, and the obedience to the law of the land. He was a great reformer and addressed the various problems of the day, such as the caste system, slavery, and equality of women, carnal desires, killing or harming life for religious rituals or pleasure of the senses. He taught the acceptance of multiple views - pluralism anekantavada and qualifying dogmatic assertions - relative pluralism syaadavaada to understand multiple facets of the truth; it was a spiritual democracy that made the Jains tolerant and respectful to others. He taught his followers to observe Ahimsaa - non-violence and reverence for all life Satya - truthfulness, communication in a pleasant and non-hurtful manner that is free from falsehood Asteya - not stealing or taking anything which belongs to others including the states or nations, without their permission Brahmacharya- chastity and control over senses; for the ascetics total celibacy and for the laity faithfulness to ones spouse Aparigraha - non-attachment to material things Austerities -both external and internal as a help to shed karma The ascetics observe the above totally as far as humanly possible, while the laypersons observe them partially giving allowance to their worldly duties, will avoid all intentional violence, violence to mobile beings and are always vigilant in avoiding harm to any living being. Jain Practices For the progress in spirituality, Jains observe six essential daily duties: equanimity, veneration of the twenty-four tirthankaras, veneration of the ascetics, penitential retreat, renunciation of some material things, and meditation with bodily detachment and givings. Jains are vegetarians and have traditionally formed a merchant and financial community. They avoid professions, which involve harm to living beings, such as the meat trade. The acceptance of multiple views - pluralism anekantavada and qualifying dogmatic assertions - relative pluralism syaadavaada to understand multiple facets of the truth have made the Jains tolerant and respectful to to others. The Jains do not proselytise, but accept any person who follows the Jain way of life as a Jain. The Jainism emphasises that the human beings are co-habitants with the natural world in our planet. Jains care for the environment and are involved in human and animal welfare projects. The Jain conviction of parasparopagraho jivanam teaches that all forms of life are bound together in mutuality and interdependence and emphasise the reverence for all life. Life is a combination of soul and body. The soul is eternal and is characterised by consciousness. The body is made of matter and is to be used for self-conquest and freeing oneself from the bondage of karma. At re-birth, according to its karmic bondage, the worldly soul occupies different bodies, - in one of the four destinies, namely: Heavenly being -deva Human -manusya Animals, birds, fish, insects, bacteria, viruses and plants -tiryanca Hellish being -naraka All our actions - mental, vocal or physical attract karma and produce further karmic bondage or clouding of the soul. To be free from karmic bondage one has to prevent karmic influx and to shed the attached karma. Prevention of the influx of karma - samvara can be achieved in five ways: undertaking vows, diligence, right attitude of mind and right knowledge, avoiding the passions, and restraining activity. The shedding of karma-nirjaraa can be done in two ways: volitional shedding, referring to removal through the observance of austerities and penance; and natural shedding, referring to gradual removal due to realisation and exhaustion. As karma produces its effects or reaches its zenith, it is exhausted and shed from the soul, but if one is not careful there is likelihood of influx of new karma due to our activities When karmic particles are shed, the soul becomes free from karmic bondage and attains liberation -moksa. To attain liberation is to attain Godhood, an opportunity available to any one who follows the path of Right Faith, Right knowledge and Right Conduct and sheds all karma, not by grace of others by their own self-effort. As mentioned earlier, Jains do not believe in an all-powerful Creator God, but believes in Godhood and tirthankaras. Jains adore and worship the tirthankaras as Gods, revere

other liberated souls as exemplary persons, ascetics as true spiritual teachers, and teachings of an omniscient as true religion. These are considered as Divine and revered by all Jains. The temple is central to Jainism, as it houses the image of the Jina -tirthankara. Meditation on the Jina and reverence for the Jina image is fundamental to the religious life of the Jain: this may take place before a small domestic shrine, or it may be in a temple. The image of a tirthankara depicts the characteristics of a liberated soul and Jains worship the image as an exemplary figure for showing them the pathway for spiritual liberation; they do not ask for any favours from him. In a Jain temple, one may find statues of guardian deities, the heavenly beings, who protect the temple and guide the devotees to worship the tirthankara. Jains do not worship a creator God, but meditate on the nature of the jina who has attained the ideals of enlightenment and final liberation. They meditate on this ideal as an example, do not ask any favours, and pay homage or worship with devotional gratefulness for the path shown to enlightenment. Jain worship is, not worship of a God or a deity, but of a human being who has reached perfection by liberating the soul from all bondage. It is the worship of the godhood, the attributes of the perfect human being or liberated soul that is remembered, adored and meditated as an ideal, not hero-worship. The idol or the image, therefore, serves more as a symbol or the attributes than as the portrait of a jina. In worshipping the image, the devotee remembers the divine qualities or virtues of the jina and tries to imbibe them into his or her own life. Strictly speaking, image worship is not absolutely necessary for the attainment of emancipation; it is the psychic worship, not physical or ritualistic worship that really matters. But it is obvious that worship of an image has been found to be much needed in the initial stages, until one develops the spiritually advanced mental attitude to contemplate on formless pure soul. Not only individuals but also whole communities may take the initiative in the construction of a temple, which becomes a socio-religious focal point, a necessity for Jains. The worship in a temple may be individual or in congregation, the purpose of which is to be like a jina attainment of liberation. The Jain contribution to the Indian heritage, art and architecture and philosophy and thought is outstanding. Jain temples are known for their sheer beauty, cleanliness and devotional ambience. Jain ethics and principles of conduct make Jains ideal citizens in this troubled world. The principles of anekantavada and syaadavaada have made Jains tolerant and respectful to other faiths, which may well be compared to modern interfaith movement and their application in daily life may help the peace and resolution conflict in our troubled world. In conclusion for the Jains a pure soul is a God. They believe each of them have a divine pure soul, manifestation of its characteristics is their goal, which can be attained by following the path of Right Faith, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct. The progress on spiritual path of purification and meditation on the soul lead to perception of the divine which is within oneself and that can be attained by anyone by self-effort. Right Faith is the belief in the Realities as they exist in the universe; Right Knowledge is the knowledge in all aspects of the Realities; and the Right Conduct is the action that leads one to the path of liberation. Jai Jinendra! Dr Natubhai Shah, Jain Samaj Europe Chair & Hindu Council UK Executive (Dr Natubhai Shah is a retired medical practitioner, who has PhD in Jain religion. He was responsible for the creation of the beautiful Jain temple in Leicester and is the author of "Jainism: The World of Conqueror s- 2 volumes". He is the chairman of Jain Sangha of Europe, Chairman of the Ahimsa for Quality of Life and the Secretary-General of the World Council of Jain Academies. He is an Hon. Research Fellow in the University of Birmingham, Visiting Professor in Jain Studies in the Faculty of Comparative religions at Antwerp, and has been involved in interfaith movement for many years. He represents Jainism at the highest level.) Continue...

48 Hindu Representatives Visit To Portsmouth Naval Base

The Royal Navys top personnel officer - Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Burnell-Nugent - recently hosted a visit from a group of influential Hindu faith leaders at Portsmouth Naval Base. The visit gave Vice-Admiral Burnell-Nugent an opportunity to learn more about the faith, culture and perceptions of the Hindu community, as well as promote the Royal Navy as a diversity employer. The Vice-Admiral and a number of his policy officers were able to seek the groups views on the communitys perception of the Royal Navy; ways in which the RN could adapt to be more embracing of ethnic diversity; and explore ways in which the RN could better promote itself to the community. The group, which included the President of the National Council of Hindu Temples and member of the Ministry of Defence Religious Advisory Panel, Mr Om Parkash Sharma, toured HMS Iron Duke in Portsmouth Naval Base in the morning, and was then briefed in the RN personnel HQ about what the RN has already achieved and plans to do about minority ethnic recruiting and in-Service policy, procedures and practices. The group further discussed the issues over lunch with Vice-Admiral Burnell-Nugent. One of the groups, Dr Satish Brahmhatt of the Hindu Council UK, said: "The whole arrangement of the visit was excellent. There was plenty of time to discuss a lot about the Royal Navy - its facilities, equipment and people. We met with young recruits, who were very positive about the RN and who were very open about why they had chosen the RN as a career. We also had time to discuss the special needs Hindus have and these were all tackled. I will be happy to talk to anyone in my community interested in the RN and tell them that it is definitely worth looking at the service as a career choice." The Royal Navy is keen to build strong links with the Hindu community. Vice-Admiral Burnell-Nugent visited the Swaminarayan Hindu Mandir (the Hindu Temple in Neasden, London) last summer to meet the elders there. A group of 20 youngsters from the temple then visited Portsmouth Naval Base last year. More visits are planned. The Royal Navy is committed to recruiting from culturally diverse communities. Its Diversity Action Team visits schools and colleges all over the country, as well as community and multi-faith centres, so its members can speak both to potential recruits and to parents and elders about the benefits of a career within the Royal Navy. It also runs personal development courses for potential recruits from different faith backgrounds. The Royal Navy is sensitive to the needs of culturally diverse groups and considers individual dietary requirements, clothing and also puts aside time for prayers and religious observances. Continue...

48 Government "Working Together" with the Faith Bodies

As far back as one can delve deep into history of any nation, a "faith counsel" played a prominent part in the court of Kings or any system of rule. It is only over the last few centuries, as democracy, Marxism or for that matter dictatorships took root, that the new systems or ideologies did not find the need for such advice. It was right of course that the ruling and legislative systems evolved through democracy, but the advisory function that faith can provide to even the most mature democracies was still lacking. The UK Government has now set out to fill that gap. The need for it to do so may have been demanded by the UKs multifaith, multicultural, multiethnic mix of population. Nevertheless the impact of such an advisory system on Government policy cannot be underestimated, by mere virtue of the fact that faith will try to put in place preventive measures before the costly and negative events that so haunt our daily life, as opposed to just creating systems to tackle the after-effects. The Government has now introduced a fully fledged "Faith Communities Unit" (FCU) in the Home Office and the Minister responsible, Fiona Mactaggart, started last summer a review of the best consultation processes that the Government has with the major

faith bodies. Another great institution, the Inter Faith Network of the UK, has been an important partner in the process. At the end of the 9 months a report, "Working Together", has been produced and is full good advice on how Government Departments and faith communities can work well together to develop and deliver policies. A copy can be obtained from the FCU or downloaded from their website. http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs3/workingtog_faith040329.pdf Working together has already started between various Government departments and faith bodies. For instance, the Hindu Council UKs various Executives have met with the Department for Education and Skills, Ministry of Defence, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other related organisations like the Commission for Racial Equality, the Greater London Authority etc. Secularism is the key to any Governments success and within the overall context of governing, "faith" has an advisory function only. Nevertheless it can influence policy to an extent, and this can only produce positive results for society and a knock on effect on its prosperity. Anil Bhanot General Secretary Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 Ram Mandir Foundation Stone Ceremony

The oldest temple in the UK, Shree Ram Mandir in Southall laid the foundation stone this month for a major re-build project, which is to last 70 weeks. Ram Mandir was established in the late 1960's in old Southall and has seen thousands of worshippers visiting it through the years. It was here also that during the milk miracle week in 1996 that worshippers who gave milk to the metal snake over the Shiv Ling saw it fast evaporating from their spoons. A few years ago Mr Pathak, a former councillor at Ealing, and his colleagues took over the running of the Mandir and since then its fortunes have been amassing manifold. It is indeed due to the hard work Mr Pathak, Mr Umesh Chander, Mr Thakkar and their team has been relentlessly doing which inevitably had to result in good dividends. The committee, in addition to the normal running of a Hindu temple also embarked upon various other projects that helped the wider community residing in the area. The current rebuild costs are estimated to be in the region of £1.5 million and the Mandir has been raising some generous donations. Mr Pathak donated the single largest sum of £31,000 plus a promissory note to pay all costs pertaining to the Ram Darbar; it was no surprise that Mr and Mrs Pathak were the main Yajman at the puja for laying the foundation stone. Local Hindu and Sikh leaders were also invited, each of whom shared in the ceremony to lay the bricks, shovel in some soil, all sprinkled with the holy waters of the river Ganga. Stephen Pound MP also passed the ceremonial brick down to Mr Pathak and not without his normal wit, referring to Mr Pathak, said, "well, a brilliant mathematician, a long standing politician, a poet and now a brick-layer!" Anil Bhanot General Secretary Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 Lord Rama always wins – except at the Ealing Road temple in Wembly

BEING A regular worshipper at the Ealing Road temple, I went dutifully to offer my prayers to Lord Sri Rama on His birthday. Rama Navami, the appearance day of the Supreme Lord, occurs on the ninth day of Chaitra, and is a day of fasting, chanting, singing, austerity, meditation, penance, sacrifice, discourses and charity. I woke early in the morning and eagerly left for the temple, feeling enthused by thoughts of Lord Rama's glorious pastimes of valour and bravery as described in the Ramayana, I wanted to meditate on Lord Ramchandra who appeared during Treta Yuga for the purpose of dispelling ignorance and darkness. I wanted to revel in the glory of the Supreme Lord's victory over the evil Ravana. I wanted to thrill in the joy of chanting His holy name that offers all

protection and victory. Yet, as I walked to the temple, I felt a tinge of sadness gnawing deeply within the core of my heart. The Ealing Road temple was still the same. The devotees who came to pray there at Ramnavami were still the same. And the priest who took my offerings of worship was still the same. Yet, something had changed the very nature of worship in the temple. Something had irrevocably maligned the entire atmosphere of spirituality. Something was sending wrong vibrations into my heart, and causing a great amount of anxiety, discomfort and trepidation. The reasons for my anxiety were not hard to trace. As I bowed my head to the Deity of Lord Rama, the image of the Supreme Lord, fashioned out of marble and lovingly clothed in silk garments, I realised that I felt so stressfully distressed because the temple authorities had no regard for acceptable spiritual practices. As many of you will recollect, on 25th October, two vandals had entered the temple and desecrated the Deity of Lord Rama. One of them, Toby Champney, rudely shook the Deity of Lord Rama and broke his arm. According to the rules of Pancharatriki, the sacred rules and regulations, that govern Deity worship, a broken Deity should immediately be floated in the sea or buried in the ground. A new Deity should be consecrated and installed for worship. These rules are set very strictly and any laxity is considered unnatural and inauspicious. However, the authorities of the Ealing Road temple have shown utter disregard to the accepted rules of Deity worship and have steadfastly failed to replace the Deity of Lord Rama. They have 'bandaged' his arm, and put him back on the altar, with little regard for the inauspiciousness they are spreading amongst the devotees who come to worship Lord Rama. Every time, I now bow down to the Deity of Lord Rama, I feel distressed and burdened. I do not think that it is correct to pray to a Deity who has been glued together. We celebrate Lord Rama's birthday with praises of his glorious reign and his victory over evil, but I feel defeated by the thought that we have not even been able to replace the desecrated deity of Lord Rama. I wonder if the temple authorities have lost their sense of purpose and direction. What is the use of flaunting the wealth of the rich benefactors, when it is more important to provide correct facilities for community worship? What is the use of building a large temple, when the most important person in the building, the Supreme Lord, becomes sidelined and forgotten? The temple is a place for spiritual realisation and worship to deliver the masses – and for succeeding in this selfless mission; the temple authorities should carefully follow the rules described in scripture. The Ealing Road Temple authorities have failed in this mission without batting an eyelid or lifting a finger. What is strange was that I had actually heard Pujya Ram Bapa declaring to Harish Rughani, the Chairman of the Vallabh Nidhi Trust, that he would get a new Deity of Lord Ramachandra installed in fifteen days if the temple authorities cooperated with him. Four months have passed after Ram Bapa made his noble offer. But it seems that the temple authorities have done nothing about replacing the Deity of Lord Rama. Surely, the Trustees have a task to safeguard the temple and its value system. They must ensure that the temple serves as a centre of community activities that provides relief for the downtrodden, development of youth, care of the sick and elderly and most important, spiritual training and education. Culture and heritage is kept alive only when parent and community leaders make an effort to communicate, demonstrate and explain to the next generation the meaning, significance, and essence of our ancient Vedic tradition. Religion can only bind us together in this country, if temples extend a hand of support and affection to the people who constitute their faith. The Ealing Road temple's laziness in consecrating a new Deity of Lord Rama is a classic example of religious leaders failing to nourish the requirements of the same community from which they have eagerly collected large amounts of funds. Irresponsibility has no limits in the kingdom of the opportunist. Mina Parmar Executive Representative - Education Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 Pupils learning Hindi in UK

Hindi Samiti UK, Katha UK, Kriti UK and other Hindi teaching and Hindi Organisations of the UK hold, every year, a Hindi writing & speech competition for all the age groups. Because of an increasing number of participants, this year, the event was organised in two parts. The programme was hosted at Birmingham for the Northern Region and Shri Ram Mandir Southalls arrangements at Featherstone High school. The programme was organised by Mr Anil Sharma –Hindi Officer at the Indian High Commission and honoured by Mr P.C. Haldar, was attended by many Hindi promoting veterans . Over two hundred people and the Hindi PEN (Poets, Essayists & Novelists) who have been actively working for decades joined in the event. We believe that the essence of our religion in its original form can be better understood in its soul and spirit, when studied through Hindi. The translations in different language carry different connotations for some words and gives controversial messages and certain concepts are mutually exclusive. The Hindu Council UK acclaims the work of the attendees and the participating organisations that encourage the children to do better by sitting in such Hindi competitions. Whilst Urdu, Punjabi and Gujarati are recognised as languages that may be opted for in Schools, Hindi is not. Over the years various Hindi organisations have been working piece-meal to achieve this but now Hindu Council UK jointly with these working groups has undertaken the consolidation of this work. In an interview with Zee TV, on behalf of Hindu Council, I commented on the appointment of Imam at Eton, acknowledging that faiths & cultures studied through original language are better understood in their soul and spirit. Although I must confess I do not understand why a Hindu priest is not appointed, given that there will be an equivalent number of Hindu students at the school also. Sudarshan Bhatia Faith & Culture Executive Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 Commission for Equality and Human Rights

The Government launched its white paper on the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) with keynote speeches from the Rt. Hon. Patricia Hewitt MP, Lord Falconer of Thoroton and Rt. Hon. Jacqui Smith MP. Patricia Hewitt explained that there are at the moment three existing commissions for Race, Disability and Equal Opportunities but now to cope for the additional strands of equality on Religion & Belief, Sexual Orientation and Age, we had to study the case for a Single Equality Body. In addition, whilst we had the Human Rights Act 1998 there was not a Commission set up to deal with the promotion of Human Rights but rather the Act was left as a stand alone litigious tool only. The promotion of Human Rights is not only an ethical case but its an economic one too. There is still a continuing prejudice that people suffer, not only at work place but in other areas also, like Housing, Education etc. She went on to say that in Britain, multiculturalism has now probably reached its limits. People are now identifying themselves as British and only then giving another “secondary” identity, which can be particular to each individual. This move towards multiple identities forces us to look at the individual rather than see people in sections or boxes according to race, age etc. A single Commission, though dealing with each of the six individual strands of equality, will be able to promote equality as an overall “whole” unit. For instance, say in Housing, one community may see “favouritism” in place for the other community, who in turn may be claiming discrimination. Lord Falconer then, in his speech, focused on the need to build a Human Rights culture, to have a one-stop shop for businesses to tap into rather than not know which strand body to go to as clearly the cases invariably overlap. Furthermore if one case wins through one strand then it is possible that it may be thrown out on the grounds of human Rights. He emphasised,

therefore, that the new Commission would focus on the promotion rather than the litigation aspects. Jacqui Smith, answering questions on the need for a single body, clarified that we need to move away from the hierarchy of rights, hierarchy of people and their identities and that the only way to achieve that was through a single equality commission, with a cross cutting approach. The white paper is on www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk and the Government will be receiving consultations up to 6 August 2004. Equality strands are Age, Race, Disability, Gender, Religion & Belief, and Sexual orientation. Anil Bhanot General Secretary Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 Misconceptions on Hinduism being rebutted in UK schools

Sometimes we use harsh words against our Hindu youth if, for example we find them promoting Bollywood in the guise of Hinduism. Sometimes we have to thrash the Western Youth if we feel that their attitude towards Hinduism is seriously irreverential. This morning we were invited to speak at two top English schools: St. Olaves and Newstead Grammar schools in Orpington, Kent. We have to thank the recent issue of the "Hinduism Today" article for generating this invitation. There were about 120 youngsters (mostly English) at this sixth form conference on "Life after Death." They listened to our presentation on Reincarnation but then the manner and calibre of questioning exposed a serious anti-Hindu bias. Taking this into account, our response to the questioning was severe. The Catholic speaker who was to follow-on was visibly shaken up! Let us share some of the material we dished out The idea that there are only two lives: This and the next ever lasting one; where you either have a barbecue with God for eternity or you are the barbecue, is highly unjust. If God has created this set-up then He is a most vindictive person. This system is not only unjust but also creates one of the greatest threats we face in the world today, "Killing in the name of religion." "What is wrong in taking our own lives and a few other innocent lives (as that is a finite price to pay) for eternal rewards in the hereafter (infinite reward)?" This obnoxious risk/reward ratio springs up from such a theology. It produces fanatics who will produce greater bloodshed than seen in the two world wars. This idea of just two lives: this and next ever lasting one, has to be re-examined in the light of the Hindu teachings of reincarnation where finite actions produce finite results. Of course we had immediate responses like: "Oh, reincarnation is just your belief, we have our own" We responded, "Yes, you can say the same in science: "You are happy with Newtons Laws of gravitation, though Einsteins laws of gravitation give a more comprehensive explanation, you are welcome to live in the past." Then we had an obnoxious question: "What if a person thinks he is a cow?"... , no doubt a pun used as a put down to the idea of the Holy cow of the Hindus. We replied: "Think about this: Which culture is grander? One that promotes and gives dignity to a gentle animal by giving it a human status or the culture that demotes its women by calling them cows? You have two choices: Either Call the Cow your mum or call your mum the Cow? Which do you prefer?" There was a stunned silence, so we added, I think this reply deserves an applause.....and forced a loud applause. Sometimes we have to rub these points in. These youngsters are not to blame for the serious bias they exhibit against Hinduism. The present education system is in the hands of Religious Education teachers who are themselves seriously prejudiced against Hinduism. This phenomenon becomes very visible when we have such encounters at schools. There were about a dozen RE teachers in the audience, no doubt sitting there, thoroughly stunned! We have told many audiences: "Hinduism holds real treasures that can defuse two of the greatest challenges faced by the modern world. (a) How to resolve the thorny issue of strife in the name of religion and (b) How to revive spirituality through the findings of modern science." In the days to come we will contribute in these fields. Jay Dilip Lakhani Education Executive Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 European Constitution draft neglects to mention non-Christian religions

The Hindu Council UK's Executive in a press release pointed out that not much thought has been given in the draft for EU Constitution to Article 51 that regulates relations between different religious organisations and the EU. It said, the work on the European Constitution has been going on for over two years now – first through the European Convention that drew up the draft constitution, and then by the Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) since last summer. Although there have been discussions on the Preamble (and whether God should be mentioned in it) there has been very little public mention about Article 51, the article that regulates the relationship between religious organisations and the European Union. "Religious communities in the UK have shown some concerns about Article 51: Status of Churches and non-confessional organisations. As its name indicates, the language in the article is predominated by Christianity which seems inappropriate in a legal document that is meant to regulate members from a variety of faiths." "Leaders from the Hindu Council, the National Council of Hindu Temples, the Jain Samaj and the Sikh Network, the Muslim Council, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Buddhist Network tried to meet with European Minister, Denis McShane MP since the beginning of December to discuss their concerns about Article 51." "Finally, on April 1, they managed to meet with members of the negotiation unit for the IGC at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)." The FCO officials were presented with suggestions for changing the article, suggestions that had already been officially submitted to the European Convention in May 2003. The FCO officials reportedly agreed that the suggestions were an improvement to the current article but thought the article "did the trick", that is it was good enough for its purposes. But religious leaders who met the officials explained how the article did not "do the trick", and how the UK has "the opportunity, and maybe a moral responsibility, to lead the discussions in Europe on multiculturalism and social unity. "The UK is perceived to be far more advanced on religious integration than many of its European partners. The lack of consultation on this important matter was also brought up, since none of these religious leaders were consulted about it. This lack of consultation runs contrary to the guidelines of both the FCO and the Home Office." The FCO officials, who are negotiators on the Constitution, expressed reluctance to take on board the recommendations because of the practical difficulty in finding consensus with 24 other countries. They said they would report the concerns to Denis McShane MP, but an official response from him, as the minister in charge of European affairs, would only come if the representative bodies wrote to him again. "MP and media pressure was recommended as a way to add momentum to the issue." Local MPs and MEPs are now being approached. Merudevi Dasi, the Hindu Council UK's European Executive. Continue...

48 Government takes initiative for better community relations

Various faith communities should be able to work more closely with the government to build strong active communities and foster community development and civil renewal following recommendations published by the Home Office. The recommendations are contained in a report produced in partnership with senior faith community representatives. It highlights how Government departments can identify key policy areas which would benefit from faith communities' experience and how both can work more effectively together when national policy is being framed. The report recommends measures to: * ensure Government consultations include relevant input from faith communities when forming policy * assess the extent to which faith communities benefit from Government funding programmes and how to address funding deficiencies * involve the different

faith communities in national services and celebrations in a way that reflects the multi-faith diversity of the UK The Home Secretary, David Blunkett said: "Faith groups have a long tradition of working to build active communities and foster development and civil renewal." He said: "Our faith communities matter. Faith determines the way many people conduct their lives and the values they hold. By consulting faith groups, we can ensure their concerns are given full consideration when policy that will affect them is developed." "Places of worship and faith-based organisations are engaged in a huge range of voluntary activities such as training, child care and social activities for the elderly which benefit the wider community. This report will help the government and faith groups to work more closely together in delivering services on the ground." The Home Office's Faith Communities Unit will lead in taking forward the report's recommendations, such as establishing a new inter-departmental committee to exchange good practice and information, better engagement with faith communities at regional and local levels and reviewing faith communities' access to Government funding programmes. Home Office Minister, Fiona Mactaggart, said: "This report is called Working Together because we have worked together, government and faith groups in a unique partnership, to produce a framework for productive engagement between public authorities and faith communities." "It was a challenging process, but I am delighted with the success of the Review. It will enable government and faith communities to work together more effectively to build strong, active communities and foster civil renewal." Rosalind Preston, Co-Chair of the Interfaith Network said: "The Inter-Faith Network has worked hard in recent years to promote engagement between the government and faith communities." "This relationship is not always easy whether from the perspective of government or faith communities and the advice which this report contains on good practice will be helpful in improving the quality of that relationship." The Steering Group will reconvene next year to evaluate the impact of its recommendation. Among all other major faith bodies the Hindu Council UK, the National Council of Hindu Temples met several times over the last 9 months to work, under the Chair of Minister Fiona Mactaggart, to produce a comprehensive document devising the best methods for a consultative process to take place between the Government and Faith. The report was launched on 29th March and it can be downloaded from the Home Office website. Further information can be obtained from the following persons involved: Bimal Krishan Das (NCHT) who was on the Steering Group; (Vijayanti Chauhan NCHT made a good contribution also).Anil Bhanot (HCUK) on the Panel of Advisors, and Ishwer Taylor (Gujarat Hindu Society) on the working committee. Anil Bhanot, General Secretary , Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 Ministry of Defense & Hindu Council UK Meeting under the Chair of General Palmer

Present: Lt. General Palmer, Martin Fuller, Rvd.Terry Maze, Mary Bevis – from MOD,O P Sharma, Anil Bhanot, Suraj Sehgal, Dr Satish Brahmhatt – from HCUK General Palmer opened the meeting and raised the main issue that although they have made some progress in recruiting Hindu youths to the Armed Forces there is still a high degree of under-representation. It was mentioned that perhaps there are very few role models for the youth in the UK and that time was now right for Hindu youths to start considering these careers as the new generation now inevitably identifies itself with the UK as its home. O P Sharma is on the religious advisory panel at the MOD and for several years, as the President of NCHT, have been working with Rev. Terry Maze and other interfaith leaders on their chaplain and priest issues, which the MOD is reviewing, though a full time Hindu Chaplain position is not yet justified on account of the low number of Hindus in the forces. It was stated that there is a lot of emphasis placed on religious training and respect for other religions. Lectures are also held crossing over religions. It was stated that Hindus achieve 50% proportion for the officer ranks, which

is higher than average but that recruitment has probably been of those specifically seeking such roles and that it had not probably filtered to the wider community yet where all calibre of people would apply. It was argued that whilst Hindus generally taking the education route would probably seek officer ranks the forces had also to assess their leadership qualities for such roles. Mr Fuller said that there are a lot of mis-conceptions about the jobs in that there are 128 trades and it is not as such that if you join the forces that they will be carrying a gun somewhere in the trenches. General Palmer said that not only our training is one of the best and equivalent to the civil education system one would get it free while earning a salary. Other points discussed were, long term commitment as opposed to short-term work, the freedom to move/change, having a support system behind them, media reports on fatalities mis-reported which may have put people off, whereas the highest standards of psychiatric care, welfare service are available in the forces, etc. General Palmer proposed a plan of action for the next 6 months, which was welcomed by the HCUK delegation in the hope that it will serve to raise awareness and allay mis-conceptions about a career in the armed forces. Anil Bhanot, General Secretary & Dr. S. Brahmhatt, MOD Recruitment Executive Continue...

48 Spanish Government brought down by the weakness in our own systems

Our declining trust is a greater evil than terrorism It was not Al-Qaida but an ethos of suspicion that brought down the Spanish government Was the decision by the people of Spain to get rid of the government which took them to wage war in Iraq a rejection of that war? Some have said so, but there is a problem with that line of thinking. If the Spanish electorate were objecting to the fact of war then this would surely have shown itself earlier in opinion polls. And yet until the last minute the pro-war centre-right Popular Party looked set to win. What seems to have snatched defeat from the jaws of victory was the publics conviction, rightly or wrongly, that government ministers had initially sought to blame Basque separatists for the bombs because that would play better for them at the polls. The issue that turned the Popular Party into a decidedly unpopular party was not war but trust - as ousted PP officials yesterday tacitly admitted by declassifying internal documents in attempt to prove that they did not wilfully lie. "Even though we lost the elections," one politician said, "we cannot lose our honour." The question of trust is coming to the fore in many countries now where disillusioned voters have come to the bitter conclusion that they have leaders who find it easier to fight for our principles than to follow them. But terrorism also involves a betrayal of trust because we unquestioningly expect there to be a core of rational humane values to which even our enemies subscribe. When they declare "you love life, but we love death", as the video claiming responsibility for Madrid did, something fundamental is subverted. So too is it when a leader proves to be untrustworthy; it is, in its way, a form of terrorism too, for it undermines a fundamental need we all have to place our trust in others, and find shelter and peace in our lives. Yet the problem goes deeper. For the bad example at the top seems to say, implicitly, to the rest of society, that if subterfuge, duplicity and deceit are acceptable norms for presidents and prime ministers then they must be good enough for the rest of us. Creating a suitable image is more important than nurturing what goes to make up our real self, our spiritual self. Trust is a universal need. It is the subtle oil that makes relationships and societies work. No matter how we focus on political systems, philosophies and causes, in the end it all comes down to relationships. When Mahatma Gandhi - a politician of a considerably different ilk - was shot, on his lips when he died was the name of his Lord Rama. Next week we celebrate Rama Navami, the birthday of Rama, one of the incarnations of God for millions of Hindus. He is but one of many incarnations because to Hindus the many manifestations speak to a truth about God, the One, knowable only as many. We can not limit the unlimited, even to the

amount of ways God may wish to incarnate in this world. But Rama was the personification of religion, duty and good leadership. He was the antithesis to Groucho Marx's "I am a man of principles, and, if you do not like them, well, I have got other ones". Today two aspects of Rama's story hold messages for our politicians and for our terrorists. In the Ramayana, the scriptural story of Rama, a demon kidnaps Rama's wife, Sita. The demon is then confronted by Jaytayu, a huge bird and a devotee of Rama. The fight is unequal from the start and both sides know it, but Jaytayu acts on principle and he has been glorified ever since for his dutiful sacrifice. Standing by our principles, even if it risks electoral loss, is non-negotiable if trust is to be maintained. Artful expedients, thought they can get us out of trouble in the short term, eventually destroy the trust and the lives of the very people we claim to protect. In a second story Rama and a powerful companion, Hanuman, are engaged in building a bridge by throwing massive boulders into the sea. A spider appears and tries to help by hurling in sand. But when Hanuman laughs at this pathetic spectacle Rama chastises him, declaring that he accepts all service, no matter how meagre, when offered with sincerity and love. Terrorism is the reductio ad absurdum of the arrogance which Hanuman displays in this section of the scripture: it says that only its own world view is significant, to the extent that all others - and the innocent people who hold them - can be treated with utter contempt and expended without regard. We must, of course, despise that; but we must also be vigilant for traces of the same trait, albeit less dramatically evil, within ourselves. In India it has become a cliché for politicians to call for a return to Ramraj, the rule of Lord Rama - a regime of peace, happiness and plenty. It is a notion which is articulated cheaply. And yet in their own way the Spanish people have demanded a bit of Ramraj in Spain. It may yet happen in the United States and Britain. Our votes may seem meagre, but in the end we are what we elect. Shaunaka Rishi Das is Director of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies Continue...

48 Statement on Terrorism on behalf of UK Hindus by the Chairman of VHP (UK)

The report that two persons with Indian names have been linked to the recent terrorist bombing in Madrid has evoked speculation and a degree of interest in certain quarters. Further details are awaited to know of their background and whether they were implicated in the terrorist plot. We must therefore reserve our judgement until we possess all the relevant facts. Several reports have appeared in the press, in which the writers seem to be keen to link terrorism with Hindu religion. In response to these, we wish to make two points. First, we wish to reiterate the stand of the British Hindus on Terrorism. In the past, we have categorically and unequivocally denounced terrorism. Our stand remains unaltered, irrespective of any circumstances, including the identity of any terrorists. In Hindu dharma, under no circumstances can one fight against unarmed people, nor undertake any action that may harm innocent people, especially women, elderly and children. Indeed it is a sin to harm any living being. Acts of terrorism are, therefore, against the tenets of dharma and no Hindu can claim scriptural justification for such actions. These are not only acts of sin, but also crimes against humanity that must be severely dealt with. Girdhari Lal Bhan, Chairman, Vishwa Hindu Parishad-UK Continue...

48 Faith Groups Meeting at City Hall Under the Chair of Ken Livingston, Lord Mayor of London

Muslim Council seeking support to form consensus of all the faith groups to denounce French Govt.'s decision to disallow Hijab. HCUK Views: Faiths are practised universally and are not limited or confined to a group or section of community in a particular Nation. National Government of any

country must go through a consultation process with the Faith Leaders and their views should be considered with an open mind on such issues. The decisions to reap Political benefits to stay in power at the cost of denting the beliefs and Traditions of a Community following a particular Faith should not be on the Agenda of any Government. Asylum and Immigration Bill HCUK: Most of the people seeking asylum in this country are political victims in the country they flee from. People who land on the doorstep of this country because they were victims of religious persecution or stripped of their basic human right to practise their own faith they were born in, carry a lien of hatred and bad experience in their memories against other religion. We live in a multi faith Britain. Tolerance for each other and hatred for none. To carry this message across to this category of refugees, Faith leaders should organise joint sessions with these Asylum Groups. However, at the same time, we need to remain vigilant of economic migrants abusing the Asylum system. Proposed Multi Faith Leaders Conference, European Social Forum, Olympic Bid support and Emergency Plans for natural calamities. HCUK: Support and active participation from the faith groups will only be possible if they are involved in the organising Committees of these events and join the discussions from the very early stage to have full transparency. The representatives can then cascade it down to their organisations and bring forward the volunteers and relevant people from their communities

Sudershan Bhatia Faith & Culture Hindu Council UK Continue...

48 Heart Seminar Study at the Ilford Hindu Mandir & VHP Centre

CHOLEST-ATTACK Heart disease is hitting the Hindus of Redbridge with vengeance according to tests carried out by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad Ilford Hindu Centre last week. Over 100 people were tested for cholesterol, diabetes and blood pressure. The group was between 40 and 70 in age, mainly Indians although a few Pakistanis and a few English and Irish people were tested too. This was part of an overall project sponsored by the Ilford Hindu Centre to combat the health problems that Asians are suffering at present with respect to heart disease. 30% of the group had total cholesterol levels of over 5.2 mmol/litre compared to 35% in the previous year. 10% had levels above 6.8 mmol/litre, a level regarded at which medication intervention may be useful. Diabetes levels were relatively bettered compared to last year with only 5% of people tested having higher than normal levels compared to 10% last year. High Blood pressure is still high with 20% of people having higher than the normal diastolic range of 70-90 mgHg. The figure remains the same as last year. "Overall compared to last year the condition of our heart is better although we are still not doing as well as indigenous white community" said Ravi Bhanot, the organizer of the project. "A lot of us do not know that we have high cholesterol as it is a symptom less condition and Doctors are sometimes too busy to send patients for cholesterol tests unless they are requested to do so or there is a medical condition that warrants this to be done." "It is funny that whilst in the English the poorer people had a higher incidence of heart disease in the Asians it is the more affluent. This may possibly be due to the richer Asians' diet and lifestyle habits such as exercise," said Dr Sandy Gupta, a cardiologist from Whipps Cross Hospital. "In Redbridge the incidence of heart disease generally was lower in the more affluent parts of the Borough such as Wood ford. The message is we need to look at diet, exercises and life style as clearly there is nothing we can do about our genes," said Dr Gupta. "Our diet can be altered to reduce cholesterol levels," said Kiran Sanger, a Community dietitian from Redbridge PCT. " There are two sources of cholesterol-that made by the body and that in your diet. We need to reduce the amount of fat in our diet and use small amounts of unsaturated fats instead of saturated fats in our cooking. Foods containing cholesterol rarely affect our cholesterol. Having said that we should not eat more than 5 eggs a week. Adverts that say zero cholesterol oil do not

necessarily mean that they are the best," she said. "Stress and exercises are two areas we need to look at," said Prakash Kalra, a yoga therapist who teaches at the Ilford Hindu Centre. "Gentle yoga and meditation exercises help reduce heart disease and can be done by virtually everyone," he said. As part of the project sponsored by the Ilford Hindu Centre, anyone wanting a blood cholesterol test done at a subsidised cost of £5 or a Lowering Cholesterol Diet Sheet can contact Ravi Bhanot on 020 85979039 or E- mail ravibhanot@hassclinic.com

Tips to reduce Cholesterol

Reduce the total amount of fat by: Avoiding fried foods. A vegetarian samosa is 27g fat whilst a meat samosa is 47g fat. Use skimmed or semi-skimmed milk Use low fat spread high in polyunsaturated or monosaturated fats (see label before buying) Cutting off meat and skinning poultry before cooking Use low fat yoghurts Use cottage or low fat cheese Use unsaturated fat such as sunflower, corn, soya or olive oil. Avoid saturated fats such as ghee, butter, whole milk, saturated fats found in pies, sausages, samosas, parathas, chocolate, ice cream. Increase fibre in your diet by eating more fruit and vegetables-aim for five portions daily in frozen, fresh or tinned Use high fibre cereals and wholemeal bread Use more pulses such as lentils and beans Use more oats such as porridge. Continue...

48 Draft Gambling Bill, Hindu Council UK Meeting, under Chair of Tessa Jowell MP

Ms. Tessa Jowell MP secretary of state culture and sports held a meeting on 9 February 2004 to assess the views of different religious communities on the draft Gambling Bill which is before the Commons Committee. Mr. Suraj Sehgal represented Hindu Council UK and put forward the following views on that legislation.

- 1 Protection Of Children A strong view was expressed not to pursue the category D in which the children will be able to gamble up to £5. This provision will promote gambling among children and lead them to become compulsive gamblers and ultimately ruin their adult life. It will also encourage truancy in schools and bullying among gangs. It will also lead them to borrow, steal and rob in order to play gambling. Hence children under 12 should be barred in Casinos.
- 2 Walk-in Casinos The provision of walk-in casinos is dangerous and it will encourage Gambling among ordinary persons who would otherwise not visit a casino. They could be pensioners and unemployed who would lose their meagre income and potentially ruin themselves and resort to beg, borrow or steal. These places would present similar problems as pub, which have destroyed and ruined the childrens lives by producing compulsive drunkards. These Casinos will add to the misery of vulnerable people and create more broken homes and shattered family life.
- 3 Credit Cards This provision in the bill is also dangerous. These cards are already bringing bankruptcies and ruining peoples lives even by spending money on goods and services. If they are allowed to play gambling it will play havoc on their lives. Hence only cash gambling should be allowed.
- 4 Rules Of Conduct The proposed rules of conduct should be made as a part of law to be enforced rather than leaving them for the Casinos to operate voluntarily. The private companies always cut corners to save money.
- 5 Hours of Business The opening and closing hours should be regulated so that people should not spend their all nights in the casinos and ignore their families.
- 6 Security There should be provision for security of the people and Casinos to avoid criminal activities.

Suraj Sehgal, Defence Executive, Hindu Council Continue...

48 Department of Education & Skills & Hindu Council UK Meeting

The meeting was held at the Caxton House Westminster at 2.30pm today. Anil Bhanot and Jay (Dilip) Lakhani from the Hindu Council UK met with Cynthia Davies and Susan Ackland-Hood of Department of Education. Key issues discussed were: - How can the Hindu Council work closely with

the Department of Education in promoting the more dynamic aspects of Hinduism? Aspects like: - Hindu teaching of religious Pluralism that is needed in a multi-faith society like Britain. Hindu response to philosophy and science oriented inquisition faced by all religions. Promoting teaching of Spirituality rather than Religions in schools. It was emphasised that Hindus in this country have come with a unique inheritance - the inheritance of spirituality that should be infused into the host nation. The Hindu council will work closely with the Department of Education in promoting spiritual education and values. The Department of Education suggested that we obtain a copy, if possible, of the preliminary document from the Hindu member of the Steering Committee on the new format of the Non-statutory RE national framework. Dfes will send the document to Hindu Council UK once produced for consultation. It was recommended that we study this document and respond to it in due course. At the meeting we also discussed the scope of involvement by the Department of Education in handling poor presentation of Hinduism in Schools, Colleges and Universities. The Dfes suggested that the Hindu Council UK writes the guidelines, perhaps a more comprehensive study document from an academic point of view, which may help address the presentation problems. It was explained that whilst we have the skill resource any such project might need some assistance in funding. The Department of Education suggested that it might be possible to obtain funding for such a project at a later date. Jay Lakhani Education Executive Hindu Council UK Continue...

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4 Commision of Racial Equality's Building Safe Communities Initiative

The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) is launching a Safe Communities Initiative (SCI) to promote good race relations by responding to community conflicts and tensions. SCI, once fully staffed, will act in a supportive capacity and as a resource of advice and guidance. For the last few months the CRE, in the form of a steering group, which includes faith bodies, like the Hindu Council UK, Muslim Council of Britain and the Board of Jewish Deputies has been developing, with the help of various other public agencies, a core researched programme by studying a)the past conflicts like in areas like Tower Hamlets/ Wrexham/ Bradford/ Oldham/ Birmingham etc. b)the problem of youth gangs springing up in certain areas and their activities degenerating into drug abuse and crime c)the work of agencies like Leap to deal with such gangs through schools and teacher liaisons d)the disseminating of loose youth groups creating anti-social behaviour by trying to allure them to drama/theatre participation and such constructive but enjoyable activities e)the far right political parties taking advantage of peoples vulnerabilities to incite further community conflicts and thereby, to try and draw the middle vote f)the negative attitudes in certain localities towards asylum seekers etc. We have learnt how certain agencies, including neighbourhood renewal programmes, work to provide local solutions for conflict resolution. Equally we have seen that a serious civic disengagement can be brought about in certain areas by an absence of community networks or their

leadership. Where there is no infrastructure for dealing with disorder then the problems festering through community conflicts usually, over time, lead to potentially violent outcomes. Such a violent and riotous behaviour does, however, have a long lead time; it does not happen suddenly on the occurrence of some single adverse event but rather through a relatively long series of brewing discomfort among one community against another and that it is sometimes then taken advantage of by external politically motivated parties to aggravate the situation. It is during this process we need to have adequate systems in place, an infrastructure for guidance and counselling to be able to put at least a halt to any increase in tensions among the communities affected. The CRE through its SCI will run pilot studies across the UK during 2004 and will hope to develop sufficient expertise to deal with the problems of community conflict. It will build various models of conflict management in order to be able to provide longer-term solutions. It will develop specific guidance proposals, though from a faith perspective it will need to deal with the underlying causes to religious conflict as indeed we have recently seen in the Wembley Hindu Temple desecration by two Christian zealots on the Diwali day. The guidance will need, in religious cases, to look to offer cohesive educational programmes, as clearly a somewhat different approach has to be taken to erase bigotry. Equally as a fail safe the recently enacted legislation on religious discrimination applying to employment ought now to be looked into to extend to goods and services. Anil Bhanot General Secretary Hindu Council UK Continue...

4 Religious Equality Legislation At Work Place - Hindu Council UK's work with ACAS and the Department of Trade & Industry

The mix of workforce in the UK has been rapidly changing over the last 25 years and projections show that over the next 10 years the change in that mix will continue to accelerate, e.g., only a 1/3rd of the workforce will be male and under 45, 80% of the increase in jobs will be filled by women, the minority ethnic population accounting for 8% of the total population is also rising. The business case for the equality legislation is well understood by the large employers but a much greater awareness drive is still needed at the smaller end of the economy, for businesses having 50 or less staff. It is generally acknowledged that the costs of replacing and retraining staff far exceed the benefits of maintaining a low staff turnover ratio, both from the point of view of business success and the shareholder returns. The legal case, therefore, for this legislation though may seem burdensome to the small employer, initially, may prove to be a blessing, once understood. The guidance on the religions should help to adapt and devise new employment policies and practices, which ought to yield long-term benefits to businesses. The new regulations will come into force on 2nd December 2003 and will outlaw discrimination or harassment or victimisation based on one's religion or belief. These regulations cover all facets of employment from training to promotions and dismissals. The regulations will give wide powers in the sense that the definition of discrimination is extended to include an unjustifiable practice that could even disadvantage someone following a particular religion. Any intimidating and degrading conduct of either employer or colleagues that may be seen as offensive to someone from a particular religion would also come under scrutiny, e.g., continual teasing about someone's belief, say, in not eating meat, where on justified evidence the Tribunal may order both the employer and the teasing staff to pay compensation to the victim. One of the criteria the employers use to assess a candidate's application is whether he or she will "fit in". It is an important test for the employer but if the "fitting in" test is based on the candidate's behaviour as a result of his belief, e.g., not socialising in a pub or in a similar environment at work because his belief forbade alcohol, then such a test would be construed as discriminatory. Recruitment

advertisements to carry a full force against a complaint have to be shown to be accessing a sufficiently wide and diverse population, i.e., an advert placed only in one particular religious journal may constitute indirect discrimination, as its restricted circulation may be proven to disadvantage people from other religions or beliefs. Employers can, however, advertise and recruit staff based on a particular religion where this is a genuine occupational requirement (GOR) for the job but GOR's have to be identified at the beginning of the recruitment, training or promotion process, before the vacancy is advertised. An example of this would be a hospital, which is not a religious foundation, wishes to appoint a chaplain where patients and staff are mainly Christian. The guidance notes in the appendices give a brief outline of each religion in terms of festival days, clothing, food and bereavement. Of the Indian Vedic religions Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism separate briefs are published. On Hinduism, the Hindu Council UK to formulate the published information with ACAS received a wide representation from temples across the UK and additionally care was taken to give a balanced outline, for employment purposes. The guidance notes are available on the Internet on the ACAS website: www.acas.org.uk Anil Bhanot General Secretary Hindu Council UK Continue...

4 Hinduism is sweet verdict at the Foreign & Commonwealth office open day

"Hinduism is sweet though somewhat complex", was the verdict of many visitors to the Hindu Council UK stand at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) "faith fair" on Saturday 11th October. As Sudershan Bhatia, a cultural activities director of Hindu Council UK, offered chocolate sweets to the visitors to the stand whilst explaining a little about Hinduism many visitors described the religion to be just as sweet as the chocolates offered. Mr Bhatia and his team had exhibited a colourful array of Hindu Council UK posters, leaflets, books and various materials from its member organisations. Copies of the Bhagawad gita, donated by Iskcon the Hare Krishna temples were well received and taken away by many Western visitors and as many as 200 visitors registered to go on the mailing list of Hindu Council UK. The UK government has begun a process of consultation with the faith communities to help shape policy and through the Inter faith Network of UK all major faiths are represented. Earlier in the week Mr Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, opened a full day's seminar where many a scholar and dignitaries were invited to participate in, yielding a high quality debate. Lively music filled the Locarno room, which is normally reserved for diplomatic receptions of a more sombre nature. A Baltic Russian band played some jazzy melodious tunes, even the London Choir group followed up a familiar tempo leading well into the fast qawalies. Equally thrilling was the Bhangra beat, which on the open fair day had many visitors trying the dance in the spacious Durbar Court, otherwise famous for its State Receptions and Celebrations. Mike O'Brian, the Minister for Trade, Investment and Foreign Affairs, after having had given a welcoming speech at the Reception earlier, informally mingled in with the Faith Representative on the Open Day. Anil Bhanot General Secretary Hindu Council UK Continue...

4 David Blunkett visits Southall Ram Mandir

The Home Secretary's office telephoned OP Sharma, a director of Hindu Council UK, to suggest a temple he could visit and Mr Sharma promptly suggested the famous Swami Narayan Mandir in Neasden. But the Home Secretary was rather keen on visiting a temple that was currently in the process of carrying out a project and Sharma put them in touch with Pathak of Ram Mandir in Southall. Ram Mandir is one of the oldest temples in the UK and in recent years, with the efforts of Pathak and the new Executive Committee, it has gone from strength to strength, both in its cultural

activity programmes and financial balance sheet. David Blunkett arrived at noon and Mrs Pathak, a trustee at the temple, gave a brief description of the Hindu pantheon culminating into the one God, Brahma. She explained to the Home Secretary how in Hinduism the preserver, Vishnu, incarnates on earth to set right the balance of good over evil which he so did in the form of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna. The Home Secretary was then introduced to many guests who had arrived from the Inter Faith organisations, councillors from Ealing, Hounslow and Brent, North Ealing MP Stephen Pound, the Indian High Commission minister PC Haldar, local Mosque Imam and Church Leaders. Mr Thakkar, the President of the Ram Mandir, announced a £1.3 million building project and showed the new plans. David Blunkett spoke on the excellent work being carried out by community organisations like the Ram Temple and the immeasurable contribution they make to the multicultural British society. He briefly mentioned how the Hindus generally fit into his community cohesion programme so easily. He talked of his understanding of the Hindu deities and praised the great Hindu religion. Anil Bhanot General Secretary Hindu Council UK Continue...