



HARMONY CONFERENCE

8th June 2024 | London

Viśva-Dharma Prakāśena
विश्व धर्म प्रकाशेन

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Executive Summary



Conference overview and purpose

Purpose of the Conference:

The Action for Harmony conference aimed to unite and empower the Hindu community in the UK by focusing on building capability and addressing key community issues. Emphasising a holistic and connected approach, the conference tackled challenges faced by the Samaj, stressing the importance of developing strategies for change while addressing specific issues within this.

This one-day conference served as a catalyst for positive change, laying the foundations for forging stronger relationships within our diverse Hindu Samaj and creating an impactful and unified voice for the community. The conference demonstrated the need for comprehensive strategies to address community-specific challenges, ensuring a long term and inclusive approach. By bringing together leaders, key volunteers, and participants from various sectors, the event facilitated meaningful dialogue and collaborative problem-solving.

Purpose of this document:

This report provides an overview of the event and highlights important next steps and initiatives that will drive community outcomes. To achieve this, we will require the full support and engagement across a diverse range of Hindu organisations (large and small) and individuals from our diaspora across the UK.

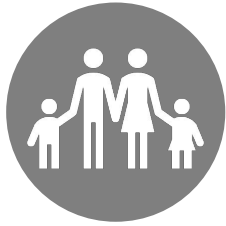
Key attendees

The conference united over **300 attendees** from **165** UK organisations across all 4 nations, including various **Mandirs, Sampradayas, and Samajs**, to address **community concerns** and **seek solutions** for the Hindu community. The collective efforts and insights shared were truly inspiring and are a catalyst for further change and harmony across our community.

Attendee category	Total
Total Attendees	300
National Level Organisations	75
Mandirs Represented	33
Indian Language Organisations	8
Community Organisations	49
Total Organisations	165

Overview of Hindu Community in the UK

Demographics



Population

Approximately 1.03 million people of Indian origin, with around 800,000 identifying as Hindu (2021 Census).



Geographic Distribution

Concentrated in London, Leicester, Birmingham, and other urban areas.

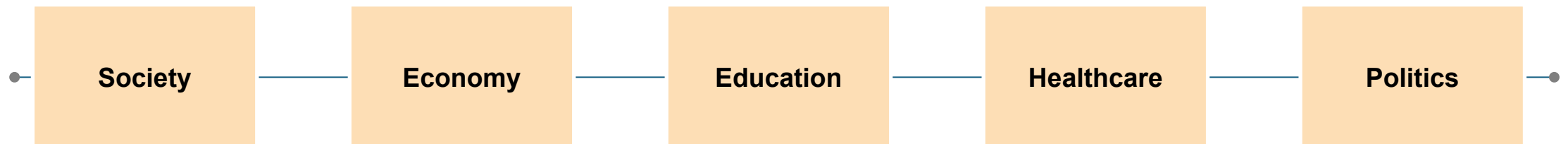
Positive Impact

The Harmony conference, Action for Harmony and all the tremendous Hindu organisations and dynamic individuals, are all part of the unique and diverse contributions of the Hindu community in the UK, over many decades. We are at an important tipping point where the contribution, voice and success of our community as a whole can be driven to new heights. This will be achieved by working together with unity.

The Hindu community in the UK significantly contributes to the nation's multicultural fabric, economic prosperity, educational excellence, healthcare system, and political landscape.

Our emphasis on family values, social responsibility, and community cohesion fosters social harmony. This is whilst the entrepreneurial spirit and professional achievements bolster the UK's economic outcomes and enhances global competitiveness.

The community's substantial contributions to healthcare and active political engagement further highlight the integral role in British society, ensuring better health outcomes, improved quality of life, and inclusive governance for all. Key areas outlined below:



Positive Impact

Society

- Cultural Diversity: Vibrant cultural practices, community festivals such as Diwali and Holi, and participation in religious and secular organisations; it is the Mandirs, community centres and cultural associations that provide support networks and a sense of belonging to many in the UK.
- Social Cohesion: Emphasis on family values and community networks, fosters integration and social harmony.

Economy

- Entrepreneurship: High rate of business ownership in retail, hospitality, and technology.
- Employment: Strong representation in medicine, law, engineering, finance, and IT.
- Economic Contribution: Significant impact on GDP through high-skilled professions and business ventures.

Education

- Academic Excellence: Outstanding performance in GCSEs and A-Levels.
- Higher Education: High enrolment in prestigious universities, particularly in STEM and business fields.
- Professional Fields: Influential positions in academia, research, and various industries.

Healthcare

- Professionals: Significant presence in the NHS as doctors, nurses, and pharmacists.
- Research and Innovation: Contributions to medical research and advancements in healthcare.
- Healthcare Entrepreneurship: Establishment of private clinics, care homes, and pharmacies.

Politics

- Representation: Several MPs and local councillors, including Former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.
- Engagement: Active participation in elections and policy discussions.
- Policy Influence: Shaping policies on immigration, healthcare, education, and economic development.

Links for reference: [Hinduism in the United Kingdom](#), [Hindu and Indian Matters in Britain](#), [List of Hindu temples in the United Kingdom](#), [Hindus among healthiest, highly qualified in England and Wales: Census data](#), [29 Indian-Origin MPs set to shape UK Parliament after 2024 election](#)

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Conference Highlights



Conference Highlights

1. Morning Session

Featured over **10** distinguished speakers from volunteer organisations discussing **domestic abuse, grooming and coerced religious conversion, education, community needs, and political participation**. A critical gap was identified in the education of **Sanatan Dharma** as a way of life, essential for promoting peace and harmony.

2. Afternoon Workshops

Provided a platform for exploring potential solutions. The active participation and collaboration enabled organisations to deep dive into the **challenges** and work together on **solutions**.

3. Exhibition/Stalls

Showcased the commendable work of various volunteer organisations, highlighting the power and **impact of volunteerism**.



Importance of Support: The event underscored the need to support social organisations, **financially** and through **active participation**. Despite significant contributions to the UK's success over the last 40 years, the Hindu community remains **underrepresented** in public discourse, often leading to **misrepresentation**. Greater engagement in discussions about our community's future and heritage is needed.

Community Building: The conference fostered **relationship-building** with **networking** opportunities, creating a sense of **community** and **shared purpose**.

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Morning Session



Summary of Morning Session

- The morning session commenced with an **opening address** by the conference chair, who highlighted the event's objectives and the significance of the topics to be discussed.
- This was followed by a series of **keynote speeches** from distinguished speakers who shared their insights on industry trends, challenges, and opportunities.
- A **panel discussion** featuring prominent experts provided a comprehensive overview of current market dynamics, regulatory changes, and innovative solutions. Attendees engaged actively, posing questions and sharing their perspectives.



Outline

- Mantra Shlok & Deep Prajvalan
- Welcome & Introduction - Nilesh Solanki
- Opening remarks - Dhiraj ji Shah
- Harmony Conference Vision & Purpose - Nitin ji Palan
- Community Welfare - Shilpa Chheda
- Hindu Education - Prof. Nawal ji Prinja and Asmita Bhudia
- Scottish Hindu Foundation - Richa Sinha
- Preserving our Culture - Tulsi Dave and Janhavi Dadarkar
- International Centre For Sustainability - Sachin Nandha
- The Hindu Manifesto Launch - Mitesh Sevani



Key Launch

The Hindu Manifesto

The Hindu Manifesto 2024 was launched by major Hindu Organisations

Read and Share the Manifesto: Available for download [here](#).

Candidate Endorsements: Share the manifesto with candidates and request their endorsement [here](#).

Join Presenting Organisations: Submit your request [here](#).



Hinduphobia Policy

- The launch of the [Scottish Hindu Foundation](#) Hinduphobia policy by Richa Sinha and Shri CB Patel (Editor Chief of Gujarat Samachar and Asian Voice), with plans to integrate its definitions into other organisations.

SCOTTISH HINDU FOUNDATION

Hinduphobia: A Policy Document
Hate Crime and Public Order Act [2021]



SCOTTISH HINDU FOUNDATION
ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः। AUM, MAY ALL BE HAPPY
AUM, GUM BI A H-OILE DUINE TOILCHTE



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Workshops

Highlights and Actions



Workshop 1: Hindu Education Hindu Education Board (HEB)

The afternoon was dedicated to a series of workshops designed to provide practical knowledge and skills. Each workshop focused on a specific theme

Outline

- **Funding required** to develop resources such as teaching plans
- **More Hindu teachers** required in education sector
- **Training**, HEB could provide training to parents on taking school assemblies
- **Become school governor**, encouraging Hindu Samaj members to become School Governors
- **Chat group**, creating WhatsApp or similar group to facilitate exchange of ideas
- **Content development**, the International Centre for Sustainability could support content development through their internship programme



Workshop 2: Community Welfare

Hindu Support Network (HSN)

Domestic Abuse (DA)

- **Nominate** individuals at committee level within an organisation to take a lead on DA on behalf of their organisation
- **Provide support** by offering safe homes space/residential support to DA victims within the Hindu Community
- **Invite HSN** to present to congregation/membership of organisations
- **Become HSN supporter**, nominate individuals from the various community organisations and mandirs who can become ambassadors for HSN.
- **Marketing HSN** to statutory and voluntary organisations
- **Resource**, employ part time and full time staff for Social media, Support, Admin and counsellors to create national teams in the UK, Scotland and Ireland.
- **Donations**, raise £200,000 in next 2-3 years to expand the team part/full time staff and services
- **Collaborate** with authorities, police, councils and other key organisations to provide holistic support to the victims and families in suffering

Grooming and Coerced Religious Conversion

- **Hindu identity and knowledge of Hindu Dharma:** Hindu children need to be confident of their identity and have knowledge of Hindu Dharma
- **Hindu parenting:** Sign post parents to organisations that promote Hindu parenting advice
- **Raise awareness:** Mandirs, Hindu organisations and youth forums such as NHSF (National Hindu Students Forum) need to be proactive and create the awareness in collaboration with HSN
- **Professionals network:** HSN to enhance network of professionals
- **Resource:** Employ part time/full time staff and raise funds to do so



Workshop 3: Political Engagement APPG for British Hindus & INSIGHT UK

Outline

- **Resource**, funding for full time resources for APPG for British Hindus
- **Political Membership**, drive membership across the country to increase political engagement across all the parties
- **Funding** for political engagement and political leadership programs run by INSIGHT UK
- **Awareness campaigns** for office bearers of Hindu Mandirs and charities, as well as holding national level events and local level meetings
- **Social media**, more social media presence and content focused on youth in the community



Workshop 4: Hindu Mandir Network/Hindu Council UK

Bringing Pujaris to the UK from Bharat

- **Establish an Advisory Group:** Create a group to provide guidance and advocate for changes with UK authorities
- **Develop Guidance Materials:** Prepare detailed documents covering the entire process, including visas, legal requirements, and employment contracts
- **Address Immigration Challenges:** Engage with UK immigration to address delays and unfair rules
- **Standardise Salaries and Contracts:** Provide guidelines on fair salaries and employment contract templates
- **Explore UK-Based Pujari Training:** Investigate the feasibility of training programs in the UK for diverse Mandir needs
- **Share Best Practices:** Encourage experienced delegates to share successful application tips

Funding for Mandirs

- **Form an Advisory Group:** Establish a group to provide ongoing guidance on funding applications
- **Develop Application Guidance:** Create resources on writing successful funding applications
- **Promote Specialist Consultants:** Advocate for using experts to enhance application success rates
- **Increase Awareness and Creativity:** Raise awareness of available grants and encourage creative application approaches
- **Share Success Stories:** Use successful case studies to inspire and guide other Mandirs
- **Organise Workshops and Training:** Hold regular training sessions on funding applications
- **Foster Networking and Collaboration:** Encourage Mandirs to collaborate on funding applications and share resources

Workshop 5: Preserving our culture - NHSF UK

Youth

- **Educate Parents:** Provide resources for parents to teach sanskaars through child-friendly stories
- **Engage Youth in Mandirs:** Mandirs and community groups should invite local Hindu societies, engage with youth, and ensure cultural continuity

Workplace

- **Own Hindu Identity:** Embrace and educate colleagues about Hindu identity
- **Representation:** Join workplace boards to represent the Hindu voice, especially in diversity and inclusion initiatives

Media

- **Fact-Checked Sources:** Follow reliable social media pages like Insight UK
- **Combat Hinduphobia:** Call out and stand against Hinduphobia online
- **Narrative Control:** Develop a strategy to promote Hindu narrative in mainstream media

Chaplaincy

- **Role Profile:** Create a standardised role profile for Hindu chaplains in education, hospitals, and prisons
- **Lobbying:** Work with councils and various organisations to establish chaplaincy requirements

Workshops: Trustees

Summary

- **Central body**, support Central body to help ensure we achieve better community outcomes together in harmony
- **Promote and raise awareness** (inc. campaigns) to inform Hindu community nationwide
- **Wellbeing**, develop wellbeing ambassadors to enhance support network available for Hindu community members
- **Share knowledge**, share common useful materials and best practice between organisations at all levels
- **Support youth organisations** e.g. NHSF UK, INSA UK etc to better support Hindu students [including those from India in UK]
- **Train and develop** more knowledgeable and confident public speakers to be a voice for our communities where appropriate (this can include kathakars)
- **Raise funds** for key organisations and initiatives that generate positive outcomes for Hindu community and drive societal harmony
- **Relationship building**, further enhance relations with local neighbours and neighbourhood organisations
- **Media**, engage more effectively with national and local media organisations
- **Governmental organisations**, build a stronger voice with national government, local councillors, NHS Trusts, Police etc
- **Hinduism in Schools**, improve availability of Hinduism being taught in schools, help better train teachers and provide strong materials and support to do so (inc, recruitment of volunteers to sit on SACRE bodies across UK)

Workshops: Trustees cont.

Summary

- **Develop working groups and volunteers** across all key initiatives and outcomes
- **Deliver festivals and events** nationally and locally that drive greater harmony and social cohesion. Also encourages PR opportunity
- **Share policies** e.g. safeguarding of children, DBS, vulnerable adults, joint workshops by charity commission
- Outsourcing, Rely on an external company / expertise
- **Funding opportunities**, database of sponsors for A4H, sharing funding best practices. A4H website can post funding opportunities and case studies
- **Talent and expertise** on website (lawyers, accountants, funders who specialise in charities), relationships with local councils and civil servants
- **Retired and semi-retired professionals**, identifying people & skills, work with specific communities for specific skills (Kutchi - trades people)
- **Summer experience**, GCSE (one week experience), A levels - 3 months experience, Apprenticeships - 1 year paid by government (e.g. Ramdutt seva sangh in Leicester 1200 volunteer group), summer camps, parents & children's sessions
- **Hindu manifesto**, increase awareness of Hindu Manifesto across various levels of society and government
- **Donations**, encourage and motivate our community organisations and members, as well as individuals to donate to Hindu supportive fundraising campaigns/events to benefit our community and wider
- **Develop 3 year plan** for Action For Harmony to be shared with all key stakeholders



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Exhibition/Stalls



Exhibition/Stalls

We showcased the commendable work of various volunteer organisations, highlighting the power and **impact of volunteerism**.

- [Hindu Support Network](#)
- [Hindu Education Board UK](#)
- [Hindu Puzzles 108](#)
- [NHSF UK](#)
- Hindu Mandir Network UK
- [Hindu Sahitya Kendra](#)
- [Heartfulness Heartfulness](#)
- [INSIGHT UK](#)
- [Go Dharmic](#)
- [Sewa UK](#)
- [Sewa Day](#)



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Closing Remarks & Feedback



Closing Remarks: Summary

The Harmony conference aimed to unite and empower the Hindu community members in the UK by focusing on connecting, discussing key topics of community concern and being action and outcome orientated.

The level of engagement and feedback was very positive. Equally, to assemble such a diverse group of skilled and knowledgeable individuals and organisations contributed to the success of the conference.

Dr Mayank Shah remarked in the closing speech the ethos of the conference, to 'move and work in harmony together' and that 'we have started the journey together' to drive key community outcomes that will provide a better future for the Hindu community in the UK.

The conference covered social issues, the lack of presence in the UK education system, under representation across many areas of public life including in the arena of media and political engagement. Through insightful presentations and engaging workshops came key learnings and actions to be taken forward.

There was a stress on the importance of preserving our culture and not forgetting our shared values and that although this was the closing part of the conference it was the ignition for the action to come.

A word of thanks was given to the organising team and all participants. There was also a key ask for all to take away the key messages from the conference and come back with new ideas and thoughts.

In conclusion, the conference not only addressed immediate community concerns but also charted a path for future collaboration and harmony, to build a stronger Hindu community in the UK.



Feedback Summary

Highlights

Unity and Participation

- It was inspiring to see Hindus coming together and uniting in a meaningful way.
- The event brought together a significant number of attendees and various Hindu organisations, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose.

Networking Opportunities

- The conference provided excellent opportunities for networking, allowing participants to connect, build relationships, and learn about other organisations.
- Leaders and representatives from different Hindu communities had the chance to interact and discuss common goals and challenges.

Engaging and Structured Program

- The program was clean, to the point, and engaging, featuring a structured agenda that kept participants involved.
- Key presentations and initiatives, such as the Hindu manifesto launch and the Hindu Education Board's activities, were well-received and impactful.
- HEB work was particularly enlightening and prompted some participants to take on new roles, such as becoming SACRE representatives.

Key Enhancements

Room for Improvement in Logistics

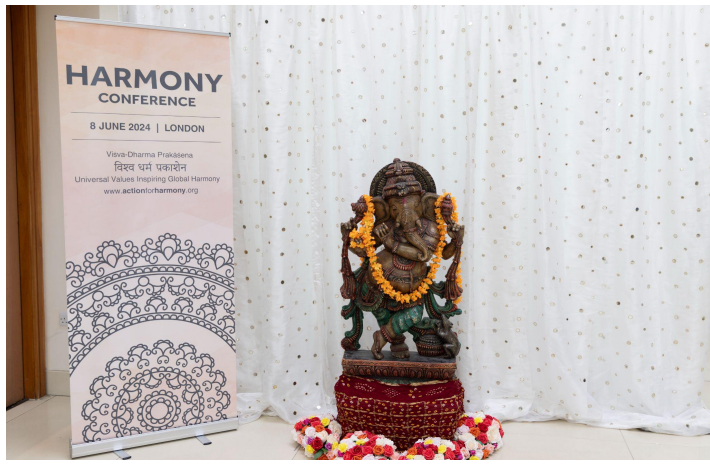
- While the event was largely successful, there were mentions of areas needing improvement, such as the sound system, hall layout, and slide presentations.

Future Event Suggestions

- Participants expressed a desire for similar conferences to be held regularly, ideally before every general election and possibly once a year or once every two years.
- Suggestions were made for conferences targeting specific age groups, such as 25-50 year-olds, who are the next generation of leaders.

Addressing Key Issues

- There is a need for more collaboration among organisations, particularly in addressing issues like conversion, grooming, and political engagement.
- The importance of providing young people with information, confidence, and financial support was highlighted.
- Participants emphasised the necessity of fundraising and making the Hindu presence known in the British demography.



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Action - Next Steps



Next Steps

- ✓ Produce Conference Report
- ✓ Collate reports from all verticals
 - Action for Harmony to arrange follow up meetings with all verticals
 - Develop Actions plans for the 4 workstreams focus areas for this conference
 - Education
 - Fundraising & Community Welfare
 - Political engagement
 - Cultural Preservation
 - Develop www.actionforharmony.org portal into a collaborative platform
 - Organisations to be added to the national list - <https://www.actionforharmony.org/organisations>
 - All to complete the survey for the conference and review
 - Work toward a funding workstream to support Action for Harmony and Community project
 - Look into Regional meetings
 - Continue Organisations Trustee meetings and briefings connecting new and diverse organisations

Key Projects 2024	Month
Raksha Bandhan	August
Hindu Memorial Day	September
Diwali in London	October
Hindu Awareness Month	November

We extend our heartfelt gratitude for the invaluable contribution to the Action for Harmony Conference in London by all participants. Your engagement was key to the event's resounding success.

By bringing together diverse perspectives and fostering a collaborative environment, the event successfully highlighted the strength in unity and the collective efforts towards dharmic causes.

Your continued support and participation are vital as we move forward together. Namaste

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Dhanyavad

Info@actionforharmony.org | www.actionforharmony.org

