



# Hindu Forum Britain

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21<sup>st</sup> Diwali Celebrations: Reception on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2022 • 15.30 -17:00 – House of Lords

## **The Hindu Forum of Britain [HFB] with Parliamentary hosts, Spiritual Commissioners Hindu Samaj and supported by Business community celebrated its 21<sup>st</sup> Diwali celebrations at the House of Lords on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2022.**

Sri Veljibhai Vekaria, Chair of the Diwali committee, welcomed guests on this great occasion and introduced Ms. Reena Ranger as the anchor for the 21<sup>st</sup> Diwali celebrations. In honour of HM The Queen Elizabeth II, and all other departed souls, Smt. Harshaben Shukla MBE, Vice President North, requested everyone to observe a short silence before the festivities began.

Harshaben invited the President of HFB and Trustee of the HFB Charity, Smt. Truptiben Patel, on the stage to address the guests and deliver importance and significance of Diwali. Smt. Truptiben invited Spiritual commissioner Swami Suryaprabha Didi from Brahmishi Ashram UK, and Shree Radha Mohan Dasa from ISKCON Bhaktivedanta Manor to light the lamps and give blessings by reciting a mantra to mark the beginning of the festival. Truptiben delivered a short Diwali message incorporating: “Diwali is associated with Prabhu Shri Ram. If we want to live in Ram Rajya, we need to be mindful, respectful but stand our ground, it is important that we don’t get bullied by people! We do not believe in raising a sword, but we believe in the power of persuasion! Let us all work together for achieving Ram Rajya in this country and in Bharat.’

Truptiben invited Reena, Councillor at Hertfordshire County Council and Joint Chair of the Conservative Friends of India, to continue with the celebrations. Reena invited Lord Rami Ranger, Padmashree Bob Blackman MP, the Chair of the APPG for British Hindus, and Sri Shashibhai Vekaria, Patron of the HFB on stage and commended them for their continuous efforts and support to the Hindu community by awarding them with a certificate and a shawl. Lord Rami Ranger addressed the guests, ‘ We are in House of Lords, first community Diwali here, keep up the message of Lord Rama to uphold family values, self-respect, respect for communities and our country’.

Bob Blackman MP gave his empowering, clear and direct speech, addressing those present: “As we approach this wonderful event, and we join with Hindus, Sikhs and Jains to celebrate Diwali, I was re-elected as the chairman of the all party Parliamentary group for British Hindus, earlier this week. So, as I’ve always said to all of you, I and my colleagues will act as your voice in this sovereign parliament to make sure that you are heard by Government, Parliament and the people beyond, and I will make sure there is no back-tracking on this particular commitment to ensure that British Hindu voices can be heard. We will not accept, in this country, people not being able to go about their lawful business and celebrate their religion, and my message has been to all the communities I’ve been to, in Navaratri, and I

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will say in Diwali as well, **be proud of being a Hindu, let everyone know you are a Hindu! You have the absolute right to celebrate in this country without fear of reprisals or any action against you because of your religion!"**

Bob Blackman launched the HFB Diwali magazine 2022 :  
<https://online.anyflip.com/xfczo/layr/mobile/>

Lord Navnit Dholakia and Sri Rickie Segal , both Patrons of the HFB , were called on stage, and presented shawls and certificate of appreciation to Sri Rickie Sehgal. Lord Navnit Dholakia gave an address, 'happy Diwali' and congratulated the Hindu Community, majority who arrived as refugees from Uganda 50 years ago and contributing immensely to the economic and wellbeing of the British Society.

Deputy High Commissioner of India, H.E. Sri Sujit Ghosh present on the stage, received his shawl, which Veljibhai had the honour of presenting. Shortly after, followed an address by H.E.Sri Sujit Ghosh, on the importance of what Diwali stands for: "This is the UK's way of saying thank you to the community for the contribution that you have made for the progress of this country. So, I again congratulate you on this and I wish you all prosperity, all health and wisdom, something that Diwali stands for in the year to come! <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>Diwali stands for diversity, inclusivity, and stands for being together as a family and that has been the core message that the Indian civilisation has been giving out over the last thousands of years, one of 'Vasudaiva Kutumbhakam' - the world is one family."

Hon. Theresa Villars MP was invited on the stage and & Sri Bimal Patel, President of BBS. had the honour of presenting a shawl to her . Hon. Theresa Villars MP continued to give a speech to all those present. "It is great honor to be back with HFB to the annual Diwali celebrations, my great pleasure to wish you all a Happy Diwali. <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>I think this is a very fit setting to celebrate the contribution of the British Indians and Hindu community in Britain. Hindus, Sikhs and Jains have been successful in building businesses, in becoming professionals, in contributing to our economy, our society, our culture and our services. Our National Health Service would collapse without the contribution of the Hindu Community. I will continue to oppose all inaccuracies about India and Hindus in parliament "

Watford MP Dean Russel was honoured by Kiran Patel of Alburry Associates, and was delighted to be a part of the Diwali celebrations "In my constituency of Watford we have an incredible community and the Hindu, Jain and Sikh community just do the most phenomenal work. I would say on every week through the year, I spend time with that community in different guises, doing volunteering, supporting business, and what I've seen, is just the incredible love. The heart that this community puts into our society, is one that beats very strongly, and I feel passionately about the love that you all give, the support you give and absolutely a part of the cohesiveness of what we deliver as a community, across the UK, and we're only united, when we come together."

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Lord Dolar Popat was honoured by Sri Jas Singh Sharma, Vice President of Midlands . Lord Popat thanked the HFB for the wonderful 21<sup>st</sup> Diwali celebrations at the HoL and spoke with passion about‘ success storey of refugees from Uganda those who arrived in the UK 50 years ago.

This year, it was a great privilege to witness Sri Premanand Sahoo, a young Odissi dancer who has a Bachelor of Arts from University of Delhi and is a scholar of the Sangeet Kala Parishad, Government of Delhi. Sri Premanand performed a traditional dance piece to the famous bhajan, Sri Ram Chandra Krupalu Bhajman. Shortly after, Truptiben was invited to stage, and presented Sri Premanand Sahoo with a shawl, showing great appreciation.

Sri Pravinbhai Amin and VP Community Liaison and President of National Association of Patidar Samaj had arranged a beautiful Annakut with NAPS volunteers. Sri Pravinbhai was offered a scarf, presented to him by Sri Mitesh Vekaria, Company Director of HFB, and Sri Pravinbhai followed with a warm message to all present. “Annakut is a mountain of food, and it means this is the offering made to God, and all the public joins in to feast. This is called Annakut Darshan, which temples all over the world organize! Diwali is when Rama came back from his 14 years in the forest, and established a kingdom which was peaceful, and the new society on the principles of peace and progression.

Padmashri Bob Blackman, Lord Dholakia, Lord Rami Ranger pointed out about the pressure on Hinduism and the Hindu- phobia and we must make sure that doesn’t grow. We do not want some religion to step on others, to make sure theirs grow. So make sure that we unite and work together for Hindu Forum.”

We were honoured to be able to invite Ms. Varsha Mistry, BME from Metropolitan Police. She tendered apologies from Deputy Commissioner for Met Police, Mr. Neil Basu (QPM). Dr Shorna Pal was invited on stage to give a shawl and appreciation for both Ms. Varsha Mistry and Mr. Neil Basu, followed by a message ‘to keep our communities safe , we have been working together with the HFB representing Hindu community over a long period and continue to do so’ .

Reena invited spiritual heads of various Hindu sects to light lamps and bless the community present, Mahant Ma Nithya Atmadayananda of Kailasa UK, Satguru Shree Ramani Devi of Shiva Trust, Sadhavi Bhakti Priya Didi & Swami Kabirji from Divya Jyoti Jagrati Sansthan UK, Sister Rachel Priestly & Sister Urvashi Patel of Brahma Kumaris, and Swami Suryaprabha Didi of BM UK.

Truptiben invited Shri Vijay Ramiraidoo, of Mohanji Foundation, Shri Sukanta Sahu from Shree Jagannath Society, Shri Kishore Gillani of Shree Jalaram Mandir Greenford and Trustee of Sai School of Harrow, Shri Amatjit Singh Dassan from British Sikh Association, Dr Pradeep Anand from Panjab Society, Shri Radha Mohan Das & Shri Alpesh Patel of ISKCON to thank them for supporting the HFB..

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Truptiben invited Ms Sirol Davies, representative from the Lambeth Palace and Dr Harriet Crabtree, Director the Interfaith Network to be honoured with a scarf who wished Happy Diwali to all present .

Following on, business supporters were invited to stage to be appreciated with the HFB scarf: Smt. Kajal Nayee of Lubbock Fine LLP, Shri Rajesh Vekaria of Finsol Tax advisors, Sri Nilesh & Smt. Hinal Solanki, Smt. Chandni Vora of Vascroft Foundation, Sri Yogesh Nakarja of Prestige, Shri Kiran Patel from Albury Associate .

Truptiben invited Sri Vinubhai Bhatessa -Trustee of BAPS, Sri Prakash Gandecha Trustee of the Jalaram Mandir, Dr Malav Bimpuria Trustee of Cambridge Sanatan Village , Sri Vinod Nakarja President of Anoopam Mission, Ms Ranjula Madhani OBE and Smt. Meena Parmar to appreciate with scarfs by Taraben Patel, chair of membership committee and to give them special thanks for being affiliated with the HFB .

Reena invited Shree Guru Nair, all India youth coordinator and executive Director of GNP production and Truptiben to appreciate him for his excellent work with a scarf.

Veljibhai requested the evening's anchor Reena to come on stage, and receive honour from Truptiben .

Veljibhai conveyed Vote of Thanks to everyone involved in making the Diwali celebrations successful and invited Shri Vishal Shah of HSS on stage to give special thanks for working with the HFB and helping to celebrate Online Diwali 2019 and 2020

The afternoon came to a close as Reena Ranger invited Sadhavi Bhakti Priya Didi and Sister Usha Patel of Brahma Kumaris to conduct the closing prayer with mantra and blessings.

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Photos : Parliamentary Hosts , MPs , HE Deputy HCI MC of the HFB , Spiritual heads of various sects , Trustees of Temples and Samaj, Business Sporters and Artist.

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The Hindu Forum of Britain is the largest umbrella body with a broad-based membership of over **320** Hindu organizations from different regions and cultural backgrounds in Britain with their membership ranging from **300 to 30,000 and over**. At the core of the Forum's activities is a strong belief in the richness and diversity of the Hindu culture, its value system that encompasses respect for all beings and faiths, and a cultural heritage that facilitates community cohesion and coexistence.

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