



Kapil's KHICHADI

by Kapil Dudakia - email: kapil@abplgroup.com

'Pilgrimage' to Parliament

The Hindu Forum of Britain (HFB) celebrated Diwali for the tenth year in a row at the House of Commons. As usual adherents of the dharmic faith and others made their annual pilgrimage armed with that 'Golden Pass' affording them this unique opportunity.

As it has become custom and practice, MP's of all colours lined up to show how much they love the Hindu community; and their grasp of Diwali and of the core values defining Hindus. Their sincerity occasionally tainted with the thought that votes might have been more on their mind than anything else. Nevertheless, it is important that those in power begin to appreciate that politics in Great Britain has changed, and for any political party that wants to grab power – the votes of the various minority groups are now even more important. The next election will be decided most probably by no more than a few percentage points – and understanding that means all our com-

munities have the potential to affect real change at the ballot box.

It just happens that I was asked to comper the event. This by definition gives one a unique perspective of the dynamics of power play unfolding. Some MP's playing hard to get and arriving late for that grand entrance, community leaders wanting their 5 seconds of fame, Ministers absently thinking they are Gods – and amongst this chaos – the dance of righteousness unfolds. Unknown to the participants, Diwali sheds light and the miracle of seeing the true nature of one's friends and foe unfolding.

Interestingly the plight of the Coptic Christian community was raised and rightly. However, disappointingly the plight of the Kashmiri Pundits did not get a mention. Even more importantly and closer to home, neither the plight of the Adhya Shakti Mataji Temple in Hillingdon did not feature.

ISKCON Mark II?

You will all remember the outrageous decision of the local council when Bhakti Vedanta Manor sought planning permission and were refused for many years. That was the work of a Tory Council which eventually relented, no doubt with polite pressure from central office and the tremendous support given by Asian Voice and Gujarat Samachar.

Hillingdon is also a Tory Council and they have served an enforcement notice on the Adhya Shakti Mataji Temple which if they do not comply with – will result in its possible closure. The Trustees have made valiant efforts to seek support from our community by contacting various national bodies as well as those in power. However thus far it seems there has been reluctance by many to get involved proactively.

There are some features of the Tory Government that we have to commend, for example David Cameron was the first western leader to call a spade and spade when in his first official visit as Prime Minister to India he said Pakistan was akin to a terrorist state. More locally, the Labour Government managed to develop only ONE Hindu school in 13 years, but under the stewardship of Michael Gove the Tories have already granted permission for a further four more Hindu schools. So whilst at one level we can value this positive step change in policy and practice, it is rather disheartening then to see that you can end up having a one-sided anti-Indian debate in the House of

Commons on Kashmir also led by a Tory! It is equally incredible that even today a local Tory party can believe they can act in a manner that is alien to being inclusive by serving an enforcement notice on a Hindu Temple. Even more astonishing, did you know that the lead officer who signed off this disgraceful act was a gentleman by the name of Mr Rajesh Alagh (Hillingdon Borough Solicitor) – is there a need for me to say anymore?

For you the readers of Asian Voice; please do check out this website and assess for yourself the facts and whether in today's society it is right for the Council to do what they are doing: <http://www.matajitemple.com/>

The political class need to understand that the Hindu community is a good friend of the nation. Not only is the community well educated, great in business and contributes significantly more towards the national GDP than other communities – its core values are such that they enhance the very fabric of our country. Therefore, for any entity to undermine such a community for at best petty reasons, and at worst for reasons that coined the phrase 'the nasty party' should be unacceptable to everyone.

I sense I will have upset a lot of powerful people – but I say to all of them (many of whom are my friends), rise to your responsibilities and start doing the right thing for the community rather than indulging in self gratification.