



King's College London: Dharmic Prayer Room

The National Hindu Students' Forum (UK), on behalf of the thousands of Hindu students across the country, would like to congratulate King's College London Hindu Society in pioneering the opening of the UK's first Dharmic Prayer Room.

The opening ceremony on Wednesday the 30th June 2021 marked the cumulative efforts of successive committees of our KCL Hindu Society, in their determination and perseverance over years to see this landmark project come to fruition. This is a milestone achievement that has inspired students of Dharmic backgrounds from across the globe.

The UK's first Dharmic Prayer Room will now be open for all Hindu, Jain, Sikh and Buddhist students and staff at King's College London in accordance with national lockdown guidelines.

Students and staff of King's can access the recording of the opening ceremony [here](#).

Faith societies play a pivotal role in allowing students to explore and engage with their identity. With the lack of a multi-faith facility at King's College London, student leaders across the university identified the need for such a room on their campus, as a place to celebrate and express their Dharmic identity. A prayer room not only serves the purpose of being a platform for spiritual well-being, but also acts as the catalyst for strengthening and empowering the university and wider community.

With the steer of the National Committee of NHSF (UK), students at the KCL Hindu Society, liaised with King's and the King's College London Students' Union, to bring about the change they wanted to see.

Dhra Gandhi, Co-President of KCL Hindu Society, said: "As soon as we step foot in the Dharmic Prayer Room we all felt a sense of belonging, and were confident that this would be a space where we can reflect on the qualities and aspects of ourselves and improve our efforts to practice Hindu Dharma."

Our current National Vice President, Dr Akshaya Rajangam, a former president of the KCL Hindu Society (2016-2017), was elected as the King's representative to the National Union of Students' Conference in 2019. She had the opportunity to submit a motion on behalf of NHSF (UK) titled "Equal access to faith and wellbeing resources for students from Non-Abrahamic traditions." This motion stemmed from the fact many British universities currently do not cater for multi-faith spaces, and less than 20% have chaplains representing students of non-Abrahamic traditions.

As NHSF (UK), it is our duty to ensure that our students have spaces that are inclusive and accessible. This motion called for the NUS to action the provision of multi-faith/meditation spaces for the numerous Hindu, Jain, Sikh and Buddhist students at all universities.



Passing with an overwhelming majority, meetings and discussions immediately began and continued in full vigour over years with the elected officers of the KCLSU and representatives of the student societies on campus.

Students were successful in communicating the need for such a space with KCL Estates and Facilities and the Dean's Office, being able to swiftly find an apt location on the Guy's Campus, London Bridge.

"We are proud of our diverse community – King's is more than the sum of our parts and this new Dharmic Prayer Room offers a space for our staff and students to meet, contemplate and share spiritual guidance. I am pleased to have worked with students to make the connections to ensure that we support our entire community."

- The Reverend Jim Craig, Chaplain of Guy's

"This is a moment for all our Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh and Jain members. To know that they are seen. That their traditions are honoured. That there is, quite literally, space for them at this university."

- The Reverend Dr Ellen Clark-King, The Dean of King's

The Rev'd Dr Clark King affirmed the commitment of the university to its students of Dharmic backgrounds, emphasising that the vision for inclusivity must be part of our lived experience, not just our rhetoric. Leading a moment of silence to give thanks, she closed the ceremony saying, "May this be a space of quiet and meditation, a place for building trust and increasing hope, a sanctuary of peace for all who use it."

Samyak Pandey, former president of the KCL Hindu Society (2019-2020), remarked that students have previously had to store their sacred artifacts in the shared cupboard with sports societies. This has led to much damage, an example of which being the breaking of a Bal Krishna Murti two years back. It is heartwarming that the students have still carefully kept the Murti, waiting for this day to come, to serve as a reminder of what this Dharmic Prayer Space means to them. A space that recognises and values the sanctity and uniqueness of their traditions.

This project paves the path for greater inclusivity for students of Dharmic backgrounds across the world, and acts as a model for every British University to follow suit.

As King's College London leads the way for ensuring a safe space on campus for its Hindu, Jain, Sikh and Buddhist students, NHSF (UK) continues its mission in supporting its Hindu societies to create similar opportunities at every campus with other Dharmic societies, truly making a home away from home.

Once again, we extend our congratulations to the King's College London community and hope that the light of your collective efforts will brighten campuses across the UK with more such safe spaces celebrating the flame of Dharma.