



Swindon Hindu Mandir broken into and vandalised. Again.

With deep regret, we wish to inform our students that Swindon Hindu Mandir was vandalised and robbed for the fifth time. The Mandir has had an unfortunate history with acts of hate previously, and this time has shone a light on the vulnerability of Hindu places of worship in the UK.

In the days preceding Saturday 4th of September, vandals broke through the Temple doors again, ravaged the main office room, the priest room, the storage room, the community library and even desecrated the Garba-Griha (innermost sanctuary of the deities), stealing a significant amount of cash out of the donation boxes, collected from the recent Janmashtami celebrations. All doors were broken, all rooms opened into; every box and cupboard was ransacked, and every penny taken. A heartless and wicked act of hate against a Mandir that gives so much back to its local community and beyond. A Murti of Ganesh Ji lays amongst the vandalism, after being thrown onto the ground, upon the shoe rack.

The Swindon Mandir is the only Hindu temple in Wiltshire county, serving the spiritual needs of over 10,000 Hindus, and engaging the Samaj in Sewa activities. This was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, where the Mandir spearheaded fundraisers and relief work, helping those that were hit hardest.

At the Diwali event hosted by the Mandir last year, The High Sheriff of Wiltshire remarked, "When it is time to give something back to the community, you are at the forefront. But when it is asking for financial support you, the Hindu community, are the last. You never ask for help but you are first to give to others".

For a community that lives by its ancient ethos of Dana (giving), why should its sole safe space be under jeopardy?

After speaking with Ashish Chhanawar Ji, one of the devotees of the Mandir, he opened up to us about his shock and horror at the events that took place over the weekend, highlighting how the Mandir is "beyond repair." What is even more worrying is the "imminent sense of threat" he and the rest of the community feels after this experience.

NHSF (UK) has a strong bond with this Mandir; many of our national events and bhajan evenings were hosted here by the Samaj, with many of our students attending. Swindon Hindu Mandir is a spiritual hub for many of our South Zone students, making it even more unsettling for the safety of our Hindu students.

With festivals coming up like Ganesh Chaturthi, Navratri, Dussehra and Diwali, the Hindu Samaj of Swindon no longer feel safe in their own treasured place of worship. Feeling inadequate



support from the council and local authorities, community leaders now patrol the Mandir until 3am alongside regular police patrols. Must the Hindu community of Britain now fend for their safe spaces themselves?

The most recent attack has led to talks of Swindon Hindu Mandir moving location to somewhere safer, somewhere where the Hindu community no longer fear the threat of attack and desecration of their places of worship.

Pradeep Bhardwaj Ji, Chairman of Swindon Hindu Mandir, said "Swindon Hindu Mandir is well known right across the country for its progressive and inclusive outlook, and we have the utmost emphasis on charitable work in the society. These multiple targeted attacks are not just attacks on our Temple and the thousands of people we serve but also an assault on the peaceful fabric of the entire town and the society. We are shocked, shattered and devastated".

NHSF (UK) stands with Swindon Hindu Mandir, and all Mandirs across the country, endeavouring to provide any support we as Hindu students can, to ensure the safety of our community.

We urge our students and youth to [sign the petition](#), to provide a permanent, suitable, secure and safe place of worship to the Hindu community of Swindon. A [fundraiser](#) has also been started by one of our chapters, Queen Mary Hindu Society to help the Mandir regain some of the donations that were stolen.



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