



## PRESS RELEASE

### DIWALI AT THE NEASDEN TEMPLE Over 1,000 Dishes of Devotion Offered for the Hindu New Year

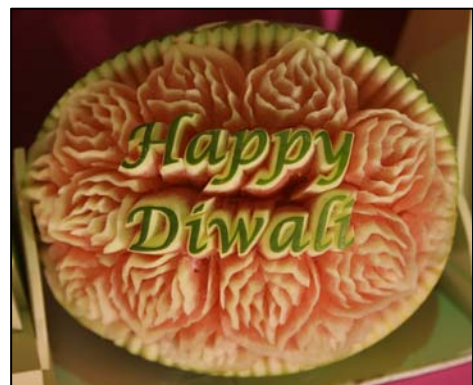
Stretching across the breadth of the grand prayer hall at the famous Hindu temple in Neasden, north-west London (officially called the 'BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir'), is a masterpiece of culinary artistry where the senses are treated to a stunning array of sights and



smells. More than 1,000 sumptuous dishes of snacks, sweets, curries, pickles, salads, fruit drinks and various other items are assembled to create a kaleidoscopic display of exotic vegetarian food. Visitors helplessly feast their eyes on the wondrous assortment of shapes, colours and food designs, and let their noses sway to the medley of aromas that waft through the air from the blend of charismatic Indian spices.

This is the magnificent 'Annakut' (literally, 'a mountain of food') through which the Hindus traditionally offer thanksgiving to God and celebrate the beginning of their New Year. Tens of thousands attend the Neasden Temple throughout the day to behold the offering and participate with their prayers and devotion.

This year, the organisers have given the event a special environmental theme, entitled "Go Veg... Go Green...". Through a series of eye-opening presentations in the waiting areas, visitors will be informed of the positive impact of a vegetarian diet on the environment. Some of the facts are indeed astonishing. For example, according to a recent report by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, the livestock industry is responsible for 18% of all greenhouse gas emissions from human activities. That's more than all the world's cars, trucks, trains, planes and boats combined!





“The aim,” explains Yogesh Patel, head of communications at the temple, “is to inspire visitors to do their bit for the environment and raise awareness about the impact of one’s diet.” “Good food,” he adds, “need not cost the Earth; in fact, it may even help save it if it is vegetarian.”

Diwali is the most important festival of the Hindu calendar, when charity, goodwill, family values and the love of God are celebrated and reinforced. It is also referred to as the ‘Festival of Light’, and is symbolic of the triumph of good over evil and thus marked with joyous celebrations.

The day following Diwali heralds the Hindu New Year and devotees arrive continuously from early morning to behold the beautifully adorned deities in the temple’s sanctum sanctorum. The first arti (Hindu ritual) of the New Year is performed at 5:30am followed by prayers for world peace and well-being.



Inside the main prayer hall, the ceremonial Rajbhog Arti (ritual offering) is performed at noon and then half-hourly until 9.00pm as guests and visitors pass by to observe the display and offer their prayers and thanksgiving.

For further information, contact Yogesh Patel on 07836 592 131 or at [info@mandir.org](mailto:info@mandir.org).

For information about the Neasden Temple, visit: [www.mandir.org](http://www.mandir.org).