



PRESS RELEASE

GREEN DEVOTION Environmental Theme for Diwali & Hindu New Year at the Neasden Temple

Compassion and care for Mother Nature have been enshrined in the ancient Hindu scriptures for millennia. And what more opportune time to reiterate this message to Britain's Hindu community than at the beginning of their New Year – a time traditionally set aside for renewal, reflection and resolution.

With this in mind, this year's Diwali and New Year celebrations at the famous Neasden Temple in north-west London (officially called the 'BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir'), will be themed "*Go Veg... Go Green...*". Through a series of eye-opening presentations, the tens of thousands of Hindus who visit the temple on this day will be informed of the positive impact of a vegetarian diet on the environment.



The presentations will include a series of posters, 3D exhibits, multimedia shows and a children's art wall.

They will invoke facts from the world's leading environmental scientists as well as words of personal wisdom from some of the world's most renowned politicians and celebrities. 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! In another study reported in the *New Scientist* last year, 1kg of beef is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions and other pollution than driving for three hours while leaving all the lights on back home!

"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." "Hindu scriptures," he adds, "have always taught us to respect Nature, and have enjoined us to pray and act in a way that promotes peaceful, sustainable coexistence with all of God's creation."

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 throughout nature.



A breathtaking array of over 1,000 vegetarian dishes is offered to the deities in the main prayer hall, where the ceremonial Rajbhog Arti (ritual offering) is performed at noon and then half-hourly until 9.00pm as guests and visitors participate with their prayers and personal thanksgiving.

For further information, contact Yogesh Patel on 07836 592 131 or at info@mandir.org.

For information about the Neasden Temple, visit: www.mandir.org.