



# Central Valmiki Sabha International (UK)

Established 1964

**Chairman**  
**Commission for Equality & Human Rights**  
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Dear Sir / Madam

## Re: Caste discrimination in United Kingdom

I am writing this letter on behalf of Central Valmik Sabha (UK) which represents the interests of members of Valmik community, one of the ethnic minority groups in the UK. Our members live in most of the major cities in the UK and we have well established temples and community centers that cater for the social and religious needs of Valmik community. Our community originates from India, worships Bhagwan Valmik Ji and follow his teachings through two of his famous holy scriptures known as "Ramayan" and "Yog Vashitha", which provide valuable ideals and way of life for our people. These two scriptures also form the foundation of Hindu religion.

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It is important for us to highlight that members of Valmik community have been victims of inequality, prejudice, oppression and caste discrimination in India for many centuries. Our members who arrived in this country in early fifties, found British Society to be more liberal, accepting and more harmonious. Our people from humble background found co-existence with British counterparts as more cordial and respectful. We thought and believed that we had left the caste discrimination behind for ever and were proud to become an integral part of British society.

Since the arrival of upper caste Indian Diaspora from South Asia in greater numbers, the dimension of caste prejudice in the UK has dramatically changed for our people. In early sixties and seventies, our members were denied dignity and equality at the places of religious worship. Our members were not treated with respect in Hindu and Sikh temples and were made to feel uncomfortable. This kind of humiliation lead to formation of our own organizations and places of worship where we could pursue our religious beliefs freely and without any prejudice. Our first temple was established in 1978 (copy of the clip from Coventry Evening Telegraph attached). Our members have always lived in peace and harmony and tolerated the unatibcal behavior of the so called upper castes Hindus and Sikhs, in the hope that exposure to British Values would change these people and would liberate them of their caste prejudiced attitude. Unfortunately, the situation has become worse for us over the years. We believe that following are the main reasons for this social suffering of our communities in the United Kingdom:

Affiliated Sabhas:

- India
- PUNJAB
- UK
- Canada
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- USA

1. **Education in School:** Caste System is taught in schools as a part of Hinduism in the religious studies curriculum. Our children are made to feel inferior from a very young age and experience name calling, derogatory remarks about their low caste and are not included

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in the peer groups. This bullying traumatizes our young children who find it difficult to complain to authorities as there is no awareness or guidelines available to consent to what is to deal with caste related issues. Caste discrimination is brushed under the carpet and victims are disciplined instead. (Example of a Book used in schools in UK attached as evidence). It can be seen that people from so called low caste are officially taught in schools about their inferior origins and are given an impression that it has religious sanction.

2. **Places of Hindu Religious worship:** Hindu priests, who are normally brought from India, bring their caste prejudice into UK with them... There is a lack of awareness on the part of priests about British values and the way of life in this country. They are persistently advocating caste prejudice, discrimination and the myths based on Hindu scriptures. This is causing a great concern to the members of our community because the caste training in schools is reinforced in the minds of young children in the Hindu temples. People from low castes are portrayed to be impure in thoughts, in deeds and in general. (Copy of a Hindu Booklet given to visitors in Neasden Temple, London in May 2008 is an excellent evidence of the caste prejudiced messages being portrayed in the Hindu temples. The section that deals with low caste people shows them as thieves, plunderers, low lives, impure in thoughts, impure in deeds.)

3. **Caste discrimination in employment:** Indians have become major employers of workforce in this country. Normally these Indian employers are from high castes and in absence of any legal protection to people from low castes, caste discrimination is endemic in these places. Normally, if the caste is known before employment, the jobs are denied. If however, the caste is discovered later on, they victimized and treated very unfairly. Caste discrimination is also endemic in general workplaces where there is a significant Indian population in the workforce. People from Higher castes mistreat fellow workers who happen to be from low castes. This phenomenon is not known to British employers and as a result the complaint about discrimination are not taken seriously. Many cases have come to light where members of low castes were pushed out of employment with constant knit picking and fault finding by high caste fellow workers or Managers. (Example of a booklet published by Department of Equality & Social Justice in 1995 – Coventry City Council – and it clearly shows an attempt by high caste Hindus to legalise caste discrimination in UK. This department of Coventry City Council was headed by a Brahmin Councilor. However, this was spotted by our organization who started a campaign against caste discrimination and Coventry City Council was made aware of caste issues. The booklet was withdrawn immediately and Coventry City Council apologised to the campaigners. News in Guardian Newspaper is also enclosed.)

4. **Caste discrimination in social clubs:** There have been many instances when people were humiliated in social clubs and many times it all ended in violence. In absence of guideline to Police, these incidents were not recorded as caste related violence but just as pub brawls.

5. **Caste discrimination in marriages:** Caste prejudice shows its ugliest form when people from low caste happen to fall in love with someone from higher castes. In the words of Mr. Virender Sharma Member Parliament (Ealing & Southall) people have known to commit suicides because of caste discrimination (reference - "More4 news at 8.00PM on 15<sup>th</sup> February). The cases of violence and intimidation are not recorded against caste discrimination as there are currently no guidelines available to police. There have been highly publicized honour killings in London because of caste related issues.

6. **Caste discrimination in Media:** Asian media is controlled by High caste people and religious sentiments of our community have been badly hurt when provocative and derogatory remarks about holy Guru Bhagwan Valmiki Ji and a complaint with Radio Authority against Radio XL (West Midlands) about inconsistent, discriminatory and

commit suicides because of caste discrimination (reference - "More4 news at 8.00PM on 15<sup>th</sup> February). The cases of violence and intimidation are not recorded against caste discrimination as there are currently no guidelines available to police. There have been highly publicized honour killings in London because of caste related issues.

**6..Caste discrimination in Media:** Asian media is controlled by High caste people and religious sentiments of our community have been badly hurt on numerous occasions when provocative and derogatory remarks about holy Guru Bhagwan Valmiki Ji are openly broadcast on Asian Radio Stations. We always complain but get no resolution or apology. Once we lodged a complaint with Radio Authority against Radio XL (West Midlands) about inconsistent, discriminatory and damaging broadcast about religious beliefs. The campaign was spearheaded by Central Valmik Sabha UK and to our great relief, justice was done when our complaint was upheld by Radio Authority – (Copy Attached).

We were shocked to read a recent report published and released by Hindu Council UK in which they categorically deny that caste system exists in this country. It is more shocking to find a statement from one of our sister organization to support Hindu Council UK's argument that 'caste discrimination' is not being practiced in the UK. However, on investigation it has come to light that the statement included in Hindu Council's report on Page 6 was never agreed, approved or provided by Shri Guru Valmik Sabha (Southall). A copy of the letter from this Sabha to Hindu Council UK is attached for your information. No response has been received from Hindu Council UK. In this report, Hindu Council UK is talking about championing the elimination of caste discrimination in the UK. We would like to point out that they have never approached us or any of our affiliated organization to put an end to this social and unacceptable evil. During our bitter campaigns mentioned in this report, no Hindu organization ever offered any help.

On behalf of Valmiki community, which is one of victim groups in UK, we would like to strongly express that this problem of caste discrimination cannot be abolished without providing proper legal framework. We are aware that British Government is in process of bringing in a new legislation in form of Single Equality Bill that is aimed to provide protection to British Citizens against any form of discrimination. We are disappointed to find that in spite of valuable contribution provided by our sister organization CasteWatchUK during consultation process, their input has been totally ignored by the Government, coming up with the draft bill. We would like to urge you to persuade the Government to reconsider the seriousness of this issue and take necessary action to include "caste" in the Single Equality Bill and ensure dignity and equality for members of our community in the UK. We would also like to request you convince the Government to take appropriate action and stop Hindu Organisations from taking advantage of their status as an ethnic minority in this country and misguide, intimidate, patronise and bully other ethnic groups, Members of Parliament, Government agencies and other religious faiths, particularly Christians in the UK.

Regards

*GC Ghaiwal*

(Gian Chand Ghaiwal)  
Press Secretary

# WHAT'S ON . . .

A guide to tomorrow's events

## COVENTRY

- 9.45 Exercise and dance, Wyken Community Centre, Westmorland Road.
- 2.00 Coventry Area Health Authority meeting, The Birches, Tamworth Road, Keresley.
- 2.30 Health and Beauty, Coventry Sport and Recreation Centre.
- 7.00 Ladies' Keep Fit, Woodway Park School.
- 7.30 British Diabetics Society, social evening, St Christopher's Club, Spon End.
- 7.30 Women's League of Health and Beauty, Sidney Stringer School.
- 7.30 Ladies' keep fit, Southbank Road School.
- 7.30 Ladies' keep fit, Stoke Park School, Dane Road.
- 8.00 Coventry Coffee Pot, "What's my Line," Charters house.

**EXHIBITIONS:** Work by recreational students of Lanchester Polytechnic, architect's hall, Earl Street. Paintings by Jean Deakin, FRSA, Post House Hotel, Allesley; "Glencree Peace Project," Coventry Cathedral and Central Lending Library; Girls' Brigade Exhibition, Architect's Showcase, Earl Street.

## HINCKLEY

**FILMS:** Classic One, "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," Classic Two, "Alice in Wonderland," Classic Three, "Convoy."

## KENILWORTH

7.30 "The Family Dance," by Felicity Browne, Talisman Theatre and Arts Centre.

**EXHIBITION:** Paintings by Maurice Hatfield, Talisman Theatre and Arts Centre.

## LEAMINGTON

**FILMS:** Regal, "Heaven Can Wait," Clifton "Gymnastic Lovers."

## NUNEATON

**FILM:** Palace, "Kingdom of the Spiders."  
**EXHIBITIONS:** Paintings and Collage by Beryl Thompson, work by members of Coventry and Warwickshire Society of Artists, Museum and Art Gallery, Riversley Park.

WHAT'S ON, a diary of coming events, is compiled from messages reaching our news desk and from entries in books held at all our advertisement offices. Inclusion of events in this column cannot be guaranteed and it is regretted that, in case of disappointment, news desk staff cannot engage in telephone conversation or correspondence.

## Late Chemists

**COVENTRY** — Chemists open today from 6 p.m. until the times states: Chauhan Ltd, 51-52, Spon End; R. A. Kenward, 445/447, Foleshill Road; Stennels Close Pharmacy Ltd, 45, Stennels Close, Keresley Road; W. Holmes, 204, Holbrook Lane (6.30); W. H. Green, 49, Hertford Street; R. B. Stephens, 935, Foleshill Road; M. J. and V. O. Duncan, 318, Walsgrave Road; P. Ford (Chemists) Ltd., 187, Blackberry Lane, Stoke Heath (7.0); H. D. Jardine, 175, Humber Avenue (7.30); E. G. O'Rourke, 16, Fairfax Street, Pool Meadow; Lloyd and Stevens, 23/25, City Arcade (8.30).

After these hours urgent prescriptions can be referred to chemists operating a 24-hour service as shown on the white notice on chemists' doors.

Chemists open this evening between 6 and 8 p.m.  
**LEAMINGTON:** Hutton and  
**WARWICK:** Mellor &  
**KENILWORTH:** D  
 Loggins L



Mr Harjeet Ram Mattu, a member of the sect in the new temple.

# New temple is first of kind in West

A TEMPLE which opened in Coventry yesterday is the first of its kind in the Western world.

Visitors from all over the country celebrated the opening of the temple for Coventry's 800 members of India's oppressed untouchable caste.

In India the Untouchables—now called harijans—are banned from many places of worship and subject to widespread maltreatment.

In Coventry the social barriers have largely been broken down, but the harijans have been worshipping as a caste for several years.

The 800 members, including women and children, have saved £20,000 over the past 16 years to buy the

former Post Office in Fisher Road, Foleshill, and convert it into a temple.

"We need the temple so we can worship in our own way," said Mr Gian Chan, (chaival) secretary of the Maharishi Valmik Sabha, a sect who represent many of the harijans.

"It is the first of such temples in the Western world, and we are very proud of it."

Among the 500 people at the opening were the High Commissioner for India, Mr N. G. Goray, the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Coventry, Councillor and Mrs Ken Benfield.

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## Press Release

### Radio Authority Officially recognizes Valmiki Community's Sensitivities

In an unprecedented adjudication in favour of the Valmiki Community, Members of the Radio Authority (the UK regulatory body for independent Radio) upheld a complaint brought by the Valmikis against Radio XL.

Lekh Raj Mandadria, Convenor of the action Committee that brought the complaint stated "The Community's complaint brought to the Authority's attention in April 2000 was finally resolved in October 2001, following an initiation of an application to the High Court for Judicial review, which was withdrawn when the Authority agreed to reconsider our Community's grievances. Now that our complaint has been upheld we hope programmers will be sensitive to the offence caused to any faith when its supreme spiritual figurehead is maligned."

The Valmikis complaint followed a broadcast by a Radio XL presenter who had inaccurately described Maharishi Valmiki Ji, the supreme spiritual figurehead of the Valmikis, as a 'dacoit' (robber) on 21 February. Whilst an apology was made for this the following day in response to a protest by Valmikis, the presenter caused further offence on 24 February by reneging on the apology and broadcasting in a manner that the Valmiki community considered to be divisive, and likely to lead to inter-faith disharmony.

Mr Manjedadria further commented: "Recent world events show how easily religion can be exploited to divide people. No religion teaches hatred or intolerance, we ought to be respectful and sensitive to people whose faiths and belief differ from ours." He added, "I have recently represented my Community at an inter-faith Seminar discussing the role of religious leaders in building a new Britain, put forward by the Inter Religious Federation for World Peace and Family Federation for World Peace and Unification at Lancaster Gate, where representatives of many faiths were present. At the meeting I explained that Valmiki philosophy is about the universal truth applicable to all beings, irrespective of culture, tradition colour of skin, or language spoken, that allows an individual to recognise the divinity within themselves and around them. True practice of one's faith in a godly mode does not allow individuals to cause pain suffering or hurt to any other being. Perhaps in these troubled times we ought to be mindful of this philosophy."

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. The Radio Authority is the UK regulatory body for independent Radio for more info see [www.Radioauthority.Org.uk](http://www.Radioauthority.Org.uk)

2. The BVAC Bhagavan Valmiki Action Committee was set up specifically to deal with this complaint the Committee's Convenor Mr. Lekh Raj Manjdarria may be contacted on 0208 552 2731/ 07802 949 625, the Committee's Regulatory Affairs advisor Mr. Sukh Gill may be contacted on 0208 970 3786

3. For Local press enquiries the following people may be contacted for comments/quotes:

**\*List of individuals at each Sabha to be added, with addresses and telephone numbers**

4. Full text of adjudication follows:

### **REVISED ADJUDICATION**

**P022/38 — Radio XL**

#### **Complaint**

We received a report from leaders of the UK Valmiki community, supported by a petition and letters from many other organisations, who alleged that a presenter had inaccurately described Maharishi Valmiki Ji as a 'dacoit' (robber) on 21 February and that, having apologised the following day, he caused further offence and appeared to renege on the apology on 24 February.

**Reply.**

Rule 1.1 of the Radio Authority Programming Code requires that the Authority do all it can to ensure that "nothing shall be included in programmes which offends against good taste or decency or is likely to encourage or incite to crime or lead to disorder or be offensive to public feeling." We read the translations and sought views from the station and an expert. We told the complainants that our remit was not to judge the validity of ancient texts, but to adjudicate on matters of offence. It seemed to us that the presenter's attention had been with a listener's problem, and he had been unaware that his brief comment, made in passing with the intention of applauding Valmiki Ji in the context of trying to help the listener feel better about himself, was likely to be interpreted as offensive by members of the Valmiki community. We believed, therefore, that any offence caused on 21 February was totally unintentional, and that Radio XL's reverent apology, broadcast the following day in response to an initial complaint from the local Valmiki community, should have been sufficient to satisfy all parties.

Radio XL told us that on 22 February, the same day as the apology had been broadcast, however, there had been a demonstration outside their studios by some community members.

In response to further callers, on Thursday 24 February the presenter gave vent to the hurt he had clearly felt about the reaction to his original remarks. He had expressed his upset

about the threats that he alleged he had received in the last few days, his dismay about the protest outside the studio two days earlier and had asked whether it was right that such things were done in the name of religion. He had pleaded that he was not a liar but had simply repeated a story found in several ancient texts. He had wondered why, then, he had had to apologise. Nevertheless, whatever the legitimacy of his own distress, we believed that the result of this broadcast had effectively been to undo the force of the original apology. We told the station that we expected it to exercise more caution and take steps to ensure that any future matters of this kind would be handled more sensitively. We considered, however, that a return to the matter by way of further ~~apology~~ on air would have been inadvisable, given the ~~impasse between members of the Valmiki community and Radio XL~~.

Rule 7.1 of the Authority Programme Code reads: "The Broadcasting Act 1990 (Section 90(2)(c)) requires the Authority to do all that it can to ensure that due responsibility is exercised with respect to the content of any of its programmes which are religious programmes, and that in particular any such programmes do not involve: - (i) any improper exploitation of any susceptibilities of those listening to the programmes, or (ii) any abusive treatment of the religious views and beliefs of those belonging to a particular religion or religious denomination."

The question of "due responsibility" is a major factor in the second broadcast. At that point the presenter was without any doubt aware of the sensitivities involved. That in itself is no reason to stifle debate on a perfectly relevant, albeit controversial, topic. It is, however, reason to take extra care in the way the issue is handled within a live broadcast. Discussion about the reason for, or validity of, the apology already issued makes it difficult to conclude that "due responsibility" was being exercised. In the Authority's view, the station and the presenter, having already been alerted to the likelihood of offence on this topic, did not exercise the due responsibility demanded by Rule 7.1 in its second broadcast.

Upheld