

REPORT TO BARNET SACRE – INSIGHT REPORT on HINDUISM IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION in UK

I have been asked to bring to attention of Barnet SACRE the recent report by INSIGHT UK ORGANISATION on Hinduism in Religious Education in UK.

In 2020, INSIGHT UK conducted a project with a team comprised of highly experienced members of the Hindu community, amongst which are well-known academics, including professors and teachers.

The project goal was to assess the current state of Hinduism in RE in UK schools and recommend changes to improve it

In January 2021 INSIGHT UK published a report on HINDUISM in RELIGIOUS EDUCATION in UK.

Who are Insight UK?

INSIGHT UK is a social movement of British Hindu and Indian (BHI) communities. It works on the issues affecting BHI communities through awareness, advocacy and campaign. INSIGHT UK has strong grass root presence in more than 100 towns or cities of the United Kingdom and is growing fast.

The aims of INSIGHT UK are:

- Act as a humble messenger for the delivery of accurate information on the issues that affect British Hindu and Indian (BHI) communities.
- Encourage the BHI communities to be positively and politically active and assertive.
- Create awareness and attempt to address the issues concerning the BHI Communities
- Guide, represent and work for the unity of the BHI Communities and tackle issues concerning it.
- Facilitate cooperation between various like-minded groups and organisations.

Who initiated the project?

This project of INSIGHT UK is supported and guided by: Hindu Forum of Britain, Hindu Council UK, National Council of Hindu Temples (UK), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK), Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (UK)

What led this report to be produced?

Many concerns had been raised across the country by parents and educationalists about the reduction in the availability, content and quality of teaching Hinduism in Religious Education in UK schools. Grave errors in resource content, lack of understanding among RE teachers and incorrect references can create a lot of harm. This has an adverse impact on the UK's youth, and this will impact many more future generations to come.

Why?

The lack of awareness amongst Hindu students about their religion is leading to issues related to forced conversion, an inferiority complex, bullying, psychological harm and even suicide.

At the same time, the lack of awareness about the Hindu religion among non-Hindu students deprives them of a worldview, as well as the religion and culture of one of the largest and most contributing minority communities in the country. This results in ignorance and insensitivity towards Hindu people and their beliefs. This can even lead to racial hate crime.

What were the reasons behind this Report?

To substantiate the opinions formulated around Hinduism with hard facts and data. The survey proved to be one of the most successful Hindu surveys in the history of the UK, based on the number of responses received and good distribution of responses from all 4 countries in the UK.

Did Barnet Council take part in your survey?

Not directly but many from the area took part in the survey. The survey was open for Hindu parents and students to share their findings.

KEY FINDINGS

Hinduism is the third largest religion practised in the UK, yet this report finds that the teaching of Hinduism in mainstream UK schools is very limited, flawed and often ignored. This imbalance has led to an inaccurate portrayal of Hinduism and can result in feelings of negativity and ignorance when meeting UK citizens belonging to the Hindu faith

The main findings from the survey concluded

- 97% of survey respondents say it is important and paramount for their child to learn about Hinduism.
- 98% of survey respondents say the study of Hinduism in RE is low quality and deficient.
- 75% of respondents feel that Hinduism is not taught in a positive light.
- 86% of the respondents are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the teaching of Hinduism in schools within the United Kingdom.
- 76% of primary school parents are unhappy about RE teachers' knowledge of Hinduism.
- 81% of Key Stage 3 and 87% of Key Stage 4 parents are discontented about RE teachers' knowledge of Hinduism.

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

- There is growing evidence of inaccurate resources used by classroom teachers for teaching Hinduism.
- Hindu parents and pupils feel they do not have a choice to study Hinduism at GCSE level.

It found that the lack of awareness and an incorrect portrayal of Hinduism in RE results in:

1. Depriving students of a world view and understanding of the nature, diversity and impact of religion and belief in the contemporary world.
2. Depriving the knowledge of the world's third-largest religion which is followed by one of the most contributing minority communities in the UK.
3. Insensitivity towards Hindu people and their beliefs resulting in bullying and hate crimes.

IN CONCLUSION

The research, consultations and survey evidence reveal that pupils leave school with a wrong and sparse understanding of Hinduism. Many inaccuracies of severe gravity were found in the teaching of Hinduism in RE. In the majority of schools, Hinduism is not taught at all for GCSE. All maintained schools have a statutory duty to teach RE.

This report provides evidence of the views on how Hinduism is currently taught as part of the RE curriculum.

As a result in the formation of an independent organisation, the Hindu Education Board (HEB) UK.

Arising from this InsightUK.org Project led to the formation of an independent organisation, the Hindu Education Board (HEB) UK; who are in the process of establishing itself as a Charity.

The Hindu Education Board UK would like to work with SACRE to assess and support the delivery of teaching and learning of Hinduism in Barnet. HEB request that we ensure that Hinduism is fairly and accurately represented in the locally agreed RE syllabus.

HEB are willing to offer support and have requested our Agreed Syllabus document, and this has been sent, to gauge the quality of teaching Hinduism in RE in Barnet.

A copy of the full Insight UK Report will be uploaded to Barnet SACRE Website.

Sury Khatri

Barnet SACRE
(Hindu Representative)