

# HINDU GROUP REPEATS CALL FOR NEW TEMPLE PRAYER SPACE

By George Hamilton

HINDUS have renewed calls for a new £2m temple in Oxford following the religion's most important festival – as many were forced to travel miles to mark the occasion.

Community leaders reasserted the need for a communal place of worship after celebrating Diwali this week.

They estimated more than 2,000 people in Oxfordshire will have been forced to worship the festival of light without a local religious building.

Instead, they said, families were forced to travel to a temple in Neasden, north-west London, to mark the festival – which celebrates the triumph of good over evil.

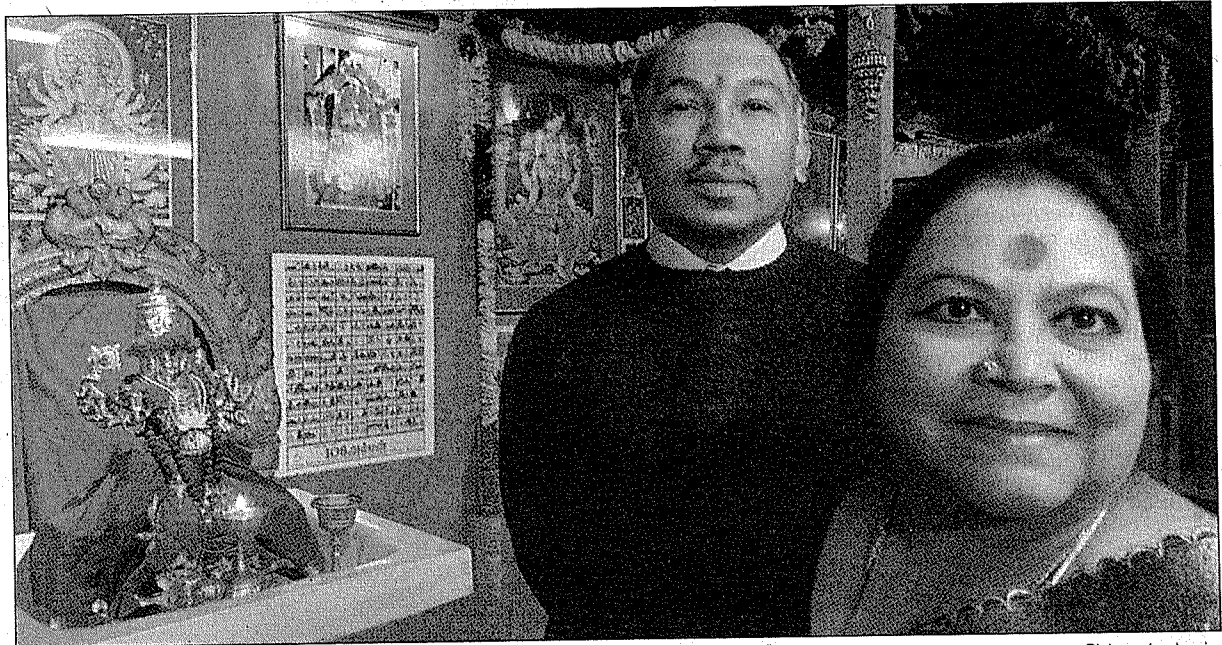
In July, the *Oxford Mail* revealed that members of the Hindu community had set up a committee to find a site for the city's first temple.

Dr Gyan Gopal, committee chairman, said: "Diwali reminds us every year that we haven't got a temple.

"A temple is very much needed. The Jewish community in Oxfordshire, which is similar in size to the Hindu community, has got two synagogues."

Another committee member, Jagruti Bhuvra, said: "Everybody is so busy with their lives. Having a temple locally would give them a kind of flexibility. They could pray and still take part in their daily activities."

Dr Gopal said the project team hoped to create a temple with enough



**ROOM TO WORSHIP: Chandra and Athis Vadivale in their own temple**

Picture: Jon Lewis

space for 200 people to pray, with an adjoining communal area capable of holding up to 500 people.

Initially, project leaders focused their search on Headington, but are now searching the whole city.

Chandra Vadivale, who set up a small private temple in the back garden of his home in Middleton Stoney, said: "There is certainly a need for a

temple in Oxford.

"But I would like to see more detail as to how it is going to be structured.

"Flexibility and freedom of worship is the cornerstone of Hinduism."

Community leaders involved in the project have been holding monthly prayer meetings to gauge the Hindu community's interest in the temple..

Up to 200 people prayed at the meet-

ings in Kennington and Abingdon.

Dr Gopal said: "They have all been very keen on the temple."

The next meeting will be held on Sunday, November 9 from 3-6pm at the North Oxford Community Centre in Summertown.

For details, visit [oxfordhindutempleproject.org](http://oxfordhindutempleproject.org).

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