



# HINDUPHOBIA IN SCOTLAND

Understanding, Addressing,  
and Overcoming Prejudice



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## ABOUT US

Gandhian Peace Society, SC052875 is a registered charity in the United Kingdom. One of the critical initiatives of the Gandhian Peace Society is to promote peace and understanding between different nations, communities and religions. The organisation believes that by fostering dialogue and cooperation, it is possible to create a more peaceful and harmonious society.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The society aims to raise awareness about Hinduphobia by examining specific incidents, societal attitudes, and the experiences of the Hindu community. They critically analyse existing legal frameworks and advocate for policy reform to create an inclusive environment that respects all religious and cultural communities. By amplifying the voices of the Hindu community and offering recommendations rooted in education, interfaith dialogue, community engagement, and policy reform, the society strives to foster positive change and build a Scotland that values diversity and upholds principles of nonviolence, social justice, and human dignity.



## CONTENTS

### 01 Scope and Objective

Analysis of specific incidents or examples

### 02 Introduction

Irrational aversion or hatred of Hindus

### 03 Hindus in Scotland

Positive contribution to many areas, economically and culturally

### 04 Evidence of Hinduphobia

Stats and facts that show the existence and impact of Hinduphobia

### 05 Hinduphobic words

Words and phrases commonly associated with Hinduphobia.

### 06 Pearn Kandola Report

Negative experiences of Hindu employees working

### 07 Challenges and Difficulties

Hate Crimes and incidents lists, misrepresentations.

### 08 Call for Actions, Conclusion

Legal Reforms, Education, Empowerment etc

## SCOPE & OBJECTIVES

This report authored by the Gandhian Peace Society offers a comprehensive examination of Hinduphobia in Scotland. The study delves into the various forms, root causes, and repercussions of Hinduphobia within the Hindu community. Specific incidents, such as hate crimes, discrimination, cultural insensitivity, and media misrepresentations, are analysed to shed light on the multifaceted nature of Hinduphobia in the Scottish context.

## KEY PURPOSE

The paper prioritizes capturing the perspectives and experiences of the Hindu community in Scotland, emphasizing their challenges and voices in the face of Hinduphobia. Legal and policy frameworks related to religious tolerance and discrimination are scrutinized to identify gaps and suggest potential improvements. The document puts forth practical recommendations to combat Hinduphobia, promoting interfaith understanding, challenging stereotypes, and fostering inclusivity.



## THE HIGHLIGHTS

At its core, the paper aims to raise awareness about Hinduphobia in Scotland within both the Hindu community and the broader public, including policymakers, educators, and community leaders. Additionally, it

- advocates for concrete changes in policies, educational programs, and public narratives to address and prevent this form of discrimination
- seeks to empower the Hindu community by validating their experiences, amplifying their voices, and providing a platform for their concerns to be acknowledged and remedied.
- engages with stakeholders and build a coalition of support to effectively address and combat Hinduphobia in Scotland, fostering a more inclusive and tolerant society.



## Introduction

Hinduphobia is a term that refers to an irrational aversion or hatred of Hindus or Hinduism. Some scholars and activists have argued that Hinduphobia is prevalent in the UK and other Western countries, where Hindus face discrimination, prejudice, and violence based on their religion, culture, or ethnicity.<sup>1</sup> Most Hindus come from India, but some come from other parts of the global-south, including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Fiji, Mauritius, Nepal, etc.

## Religious Prejudice

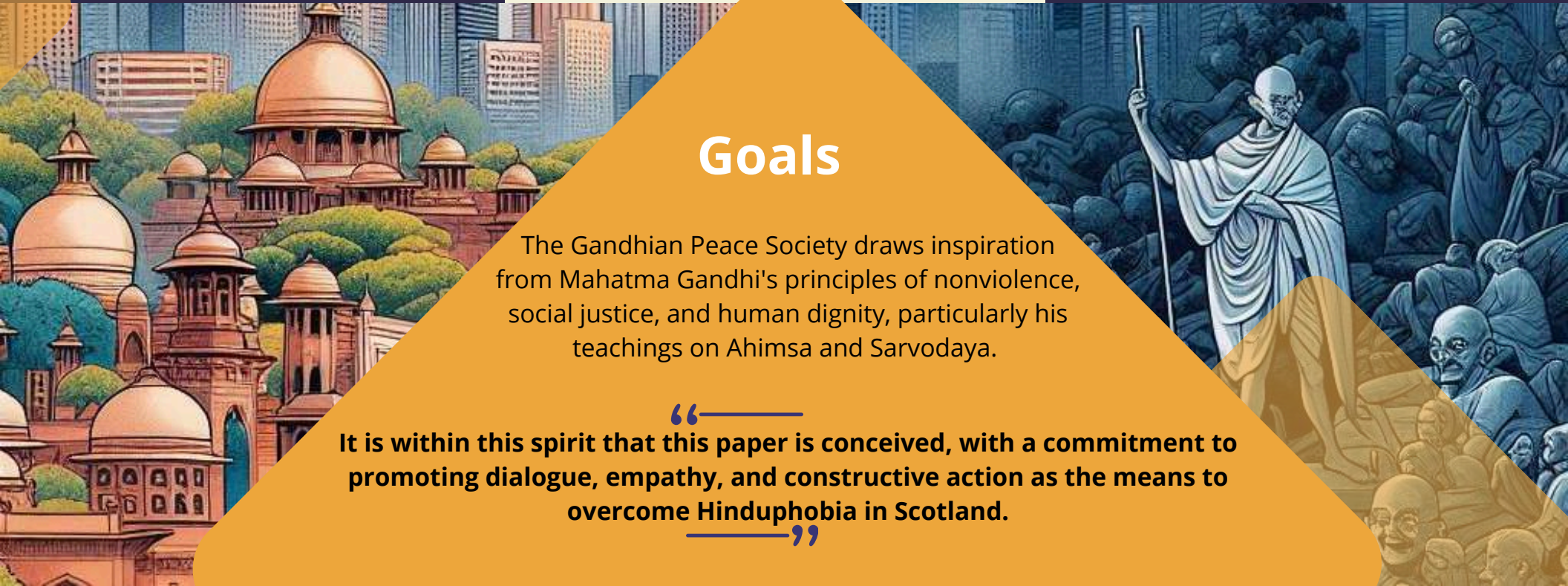
Hinduphobia, as a form of religious prejudice and discrimination, has been a subject of growing concern, not only within the Hindu community but also among advocates for interfaith understanding and social harmony. The growth of Hinduphobic sentiments manifested through various forms of intolerance, cultural insensitivity, and misrepresentation has been a pressing issue in many parts of the world, including Scotland. Within this context, the Gandhian Peace Society presents this, aimed at comprehensively examining the phenomenon and its impact and proposing solutions to foster a more inclusive and respectful society.

In recent years, instances of Hinduphobia in Scotland have garnered attention, raising important questions about the treatment of the Hindu community and the challenges they face in maintaining their religious and cultural identity. From reported hate crimes to subtle biases in public discourse, the manifestations of Hinduphobia have created a climate that necessitates urgent attention and action. Such prejudices not only affect the well-being of individuals within the Hindu community but also undermine the principles of pluralism, tolerance, and diversity that are fundamental to a cohesive and harmonious society.<sup>3</sup>

## Goals

The Gandhian Peace Society draws inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi's principles of nonviolence, social justice, and human dignity, particularly his teachings on Ahimsa and Sarvodaya.

**“It is within this spirit that this paper is conceived, with a commitment to promoting dialogue, empathy, and constructive action as the means to overcome Hinduphobia in Scotland.”**





## GOVERNMENT SURVEYS

- **Rise in Hate Crimes**

Scottish Government, there were \*14\* charges reported containing a religious aggravation related to Hinduism in 2020-21, which was 0.3% of all religiously aggravated offences in Scotland. This increased from \*9\* charges reported in 2019-20, which was 0.2% of all religiously aggravated crimes in Scotland.<sup>7</sup>

- **Scottish Crime and Justice Survey**

According to the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey, 2.4% of Hindus in Scotland reported experiencing discrimination or harassment in 2019-20, compared to 1.6% of the general population. The most common reasons for discrimination or harassment were race, ethnicity, or nationality (67.3%), religion, or beliefs (32.7%).<sup>7</sup>

## HATE CRIMES

- **October 2021**

Hindu temple in Dundee was vandalised with graffiti that read "F\*\*\* Hindu".<sup>4</sup>

- **July 2021**

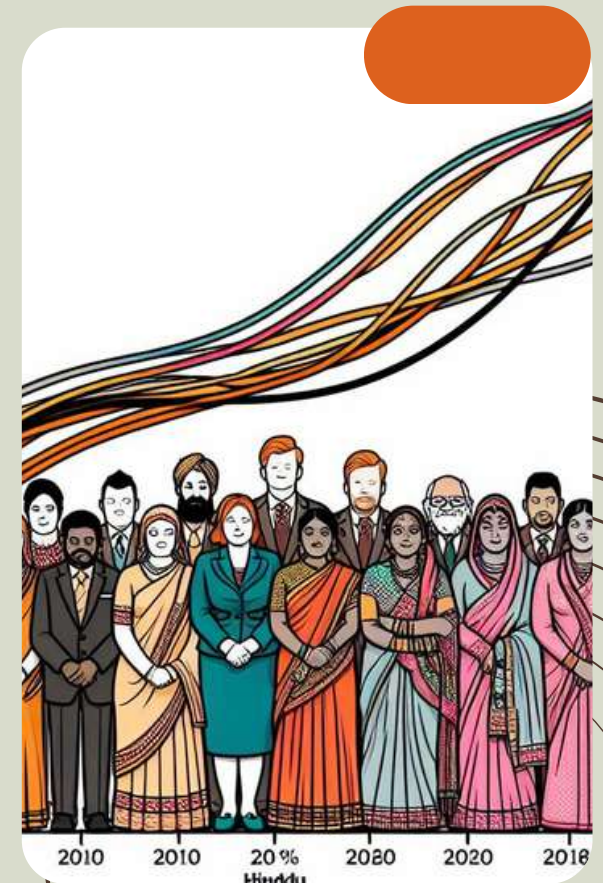
Hindu family in Glasgow was attacked by a gang of masked men who threw bricks and stones at their home and car.<sup>5</sup>

- **June 2021**

Scottish university lecturer was criticised for using derogatory and offensive terms to describe Hindu gods and goddesses in his course materials.<sup>6</sup>

## EVIDENCE OF HINDUPHOBIA IN SCOTLAND

These are some of the stats and facts that show the existence and impact of Hinduphobia at workplace and schools in Scotland. Some recent examples of Hinduphobia in Scotland are:



## EVIDENCE OF HINDUPHOBIA IN SCOTLAND

These examples represent only a fraction of the hate crimes committed against Hindus, highlighting the magnitude of the issue.



## Discrimination and harassment HATE CRIMES

- **2016, 2019**

**Hindu temple in Edinburgh** was set on fire by a group of youths who shouted anti-Hindu slogans. In 2019, a **Hindu family in Glasgow** was attacked by a gang of masked men who threw bricks and stones at their home and car. <sup>11 12 13</sup>

- **2013, 2017**

**2013- Employment Tribunal**<sup>15</sup> **2017-Hindu teacher** in Glasgow was subjected to racist and sexist comments by her colleagues and students. She was also accused of being a terrorist and a child abuser.

- **2018, 2019**

Hindu nurse in Edinburgh was denied a promotion because of her religion and was told to remove her **bindi** and bangles. Hindu couple in Aberdeen was refused a **marriage certificate** by a registrar who said that their Hindu wedding ceremony was not valid.

## Stereotyping and misrepresentation

### GOVERNMENT SURVEYS

- **Scottish Social Attitudes Survey**

16% of Scots said they would be unhappy if a close relative married a Hindu in 2019, compared to 10% in 2010. This is higher than the percentage of Scots who said they would be unhappy if a close relative married a Muslim (14%), a Jew (11%), or a Buddhist (9%).<sup>7</sup>

- **Pearns Kandola's Religion at work**

Hinduism is considered by many to be the world's oldest and third-largest religion (Wangu, 2009). However, very little research has explored the specific experiences of Hindu employees at work.<sup>10</sup>

- **BBC Documentary**

The Story of the Swastika" failed to acknowledge the positive and sacred meaning of the swastika for Hindus and other religions.<sup>2</sup>





Hinduphobia is the irrational fear of, hostility towards, or discrimination against Hindus and Hinduism. The following are some words and phrases that are commonly associated with Hinduphobia

05

# HINDUPHOBIC WORDS

**Infidel:** A term used to describe Hindus as non-believers in the Abrahamic God.

**Malaun:** A term used to describe Hindus as cursed or impure.

**Pajeet:** A derogatory term used to describe Hindus.

**Exotic:** A term used to describe Hindus as foreign, strange, or unusual.

**Heathen:** A term used to describe Hindus as uncivilised, barbaric, or unenlightened.

## Impact on Hindu Community

It's important to note that the use of these terms and tropes can lead to the perception of Hindus as grotesque, untrustworthy, bigoted, evil, or violent, which can generate more significant levels of danger to Hindus' lives and well-being.



**Savarna:** A term used to describe Hindus as belonging to the upper castes.

**Unreached Bhakt:** A term used to describe Hindus who have not yet been reached by Christian missionaries.



# Findings

## Key Stats and facts

- 38% of UK-based Hindu employees stated that they had rejected a request to take annual leave to celebrate a religious festival.
- Only 5% of UK-based Hindu employees felt that their organisation was happy for them to take time off for religious festivals.
- Only 5% of UK-based Hindu employees felt that their line manager was happy for them to take time off for religious festivals.
- 32% of UK-based Hindu employees did not feel comfortable discussing religious festivals at work.
- 93% of UK-based Hindu employees who wear religious dress chose not to do so at work.
- Only 5% of UK-based Hindu employees felt that their organisation was doing enough to make employees feel comfortable wearing religious dress.

# Qualitative survey responses

- Any sort of looking down or bullying must be discouraged, and strict action must be taken. There should be a committee to investigate any possible religious attacks.
- My organisation could take discriminatory comments made by my clients more seriously. For example, when I reported a bigoted comment made about my religion by a client to my manager, they brushed it off.
- They often are not interested in letting me take off days for my own religious holidays, However, when it comes to their religion, they expect me to bend over backwards for them.
- I cannot wear a Bindi at work although I am Hindu, and it is part of my religious practices to apply Bhasma/Vibhuti [holy ash] on the forehead and Kumkum [processed turmeric] between the eyebrows. I can't do that at work.

06

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Pearn Kandola's **Religion At Work Report (2023)** surveyed over 6,300 employees of faith across six major religions



“ A report published in October 2022 by the business psychologists firm, Pearn Kandola, provided the following negative experiences of Hindu employees working in the UK. ”<sup>16</sup>

# Qualitative survey responses

- My organisation could support my religious identity by celebrating some of the religious festivals like Diwali and making it more of an occasion. Maybe they could organise a lunchtime event with food and music and raise money for charity.
- There can also be some type of bring-and-share in the office where people can prepare and share food related to their religions. In that way, everybody will get to talk about their religions so that to decrease the awkwardness between co-workers, if any.
- I have had people make up assumptions about me without choosing to ask me. If people had cultural awareness or religious awareness training, many individuals like myself would not be put in this type of situation.
- The upper-level management and human resources is not taking better steps into educating themselves about cultural diversity and religious beliefs.

Findings suggest that UK-based Hindu employees feel less supported by their organisation in relation to celebrating religious festivals. UK participants were more likely to have requests to take time off for religious festivals rejected and were less likely to feel that their organisation or line manager was happy for them to make such requests. However, despite feeling less supported, UK participants felt more comfortable discussing the religious festivals that they celebrate at work than US participants. Women in both countries were less likely to feel that their line manager or organisation was happy for them to take time off to celebrate religious festivals and more likely to feel uncomfortable discussing religious festivals at work. However, in the UK, men were more likely to have had an annual leave request rejected. Therefore, whilst women may experience poorer outcomes in celebrating religious festivals at work overall, there may be exceptions that are influenced by an individual's country of residence.

PEARN | HANDOLA

Pearn Kandola's **Religion At Work Report (2023)** surveyed over 6,300 employees of faith across six major religions



“As we are encouraged to wear more professional and non-offensive clothing, wearing very religious clothing day to day isn't very common as a result”

# CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES



## FACTS AND STATS

The report<sup>14</sup> has found that the readily available hate crime reporting support leaflets excluded the national Indian language, Hindi, at both Glasgow and Renfrewshire Council. They are available in Arabic, English, Farsi, Mandarin, Punjabi, Polish, Romanian, Russian and Urdu.

It also found that those who practice Hinduism had the lowest recruitment success rate at Glasgow City Council (2.7 per cent), Renfrewshire Council (1.39 per cent) and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHS GGC) (1.99 per cent) among all religious groups. The following stats support the existence of Hinduphobia in Scotland: Hindus have the lowest recruitment success rate in the more significant Glasgow areas for NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Glasgow City Council and Renfrewshire Council.<sup>17</sup>

Recruitment Success rates disclosed by Religion or Belief:

	NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde 2020	Glasgow City Council 2021	Renfrewshire Council 2020
Religion or Belief	%	%	%
No Religion	4.92%	-	5.99%
Other Religion	5.53%	2.7%	4.65%
Buddhist	2.98%	0.0%	3.45%
Church of Scotland	5.54%	7.9%	6.06%
Roman Catholic	5.24%	6.0%	6.44%
Other Christian	4.07%	6.7%	4.93%
<b>Hindu</b>	<b>1.99%</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>1.39%</b>
Humanist	-	-	4.95%
Jewish	2.91%	10.5%	8.70%
<b>Muslim</b>	<b>2.68%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<b>2.64%</b>
Pagan	-	-	5.00%
<b>Sikh</b>	<b>2.11%</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>8.64%</b>

Source: 1-<https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/your-health/equalities-in-health/meeting-the-requirements-of-equality-legislation/a-fairer-nhsggc/workforce-equality/> <https://www.nhsfife.org/about-us/equality-and-human-rights/>

# CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES



## FACTS AND STATS

Employees by Asian Ethnicity (inc. Scottish/British) - reduction of Indian staff:

Asian Ethnicity	Glasgow City Council March 2021 & 2023 (exc. teachers)	
	Total	%
<b>2021</b>	<b>371</b>	
<b>2023</b>	<b>419</b>	
Asian – Bangladeshi 2021	3	0.8%
Asian – Bangladeshi 2023	7	1.8%
Asian – Chinese 2021	41	11.0%
Asian – Chinese 2023	37	8.8%
<b>Asian – Indian 2021</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>30.2%</b>
<b>Asian – Indian 2023</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>25.8%</b>
Asian – Other 2021	38	10.2%
Asian – Other 2023	47	11.2%
Asian – Pakistani 2021	177	47.7%
Asian – Pakistani 2023	220	52.5%

Employees disclosed by Religion or Belief – Hindu staff not increasing:

Religion or Belief	Glasgow City Council 2021 & 2023	
	Total	%
No Religion 2021	4,423	15.8%
No Religion 2023	5,092	18.3%
Other Religion 2021	158	0.6%
Other Religion 2023	180	0.6%
Buddhist 2021	27	0.1%
Buddhist 2023	25	0.1%
Church of Scotland 2021	1,334	4.8%
Church of Scotland 2023	1,453	5.2%
Roman Catholic 2021	3,507	12.5%
Roman Catholic 2023	3,801	13.6%
Other Christian 2021	1,378	4.9%
Other Christian 2023	1,263	4.5%
<b>Hindu 2021</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>0.1%</b>
<b>Hindu 2023</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>0.1%</b>
Jewish 2021	8	0.0%
Jewish 2023	-	-
Muslim 2021	248	0.9%
Muslim 2023	302	1.1%
Pagan 2021	-	-
Pagan 2023	-	-
Sikh 2021	66	0.2%
Sikh 2023	70	0.3%

17

Source: 1-<https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/your-health/equalities-in-health/meeting-the-requirements-of-equality-legislation/a-fairer-nhsggc/workforce-equality/>  
<https://www.nhsfife.org/about-us/equality-and-human-rights/>



**The Gandhian Peace Society acknowledges the challenges faced by Hindus in Scotland and urges a collective effort to address and eliminate these issues. To foster a Scotland that values diversity and ensures the rights and dignity of every individual, the Gandhian Peace Society recommends the following actions:**

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CALL FOR ACTIONS

- **Legal Reforms:** Advocate for strengthened hate crime legislation that addresses explicitly religious-based crimes, ensuring robust penalties for those involved in hate crimes against Hindus.
- **Education and Awareness:** Collaborate with educational institutions to develop curriculum materials promoting accurate and respectful representations of Hinduism. Encourage inclusive education that highlights the diversity and richness of Hindu culture and beliefs.
- **Community Empowerment:** Establish support networks for victims of hate crimes and discrimination within the Hindu community. Provide resources and guidance for reporting incidents, seeking legal assistance, and accessing support services.
- **Workplace Sensitisation:** Collaborate with employers and organisations to implement diversity and sensitivity training programs focusing on Hindu culture, traditions, and religious practices. Ensure a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination in the workplace.





## Conclusion

# Hinduphobia in Scotland

## Understanding, Addressing, and Overcoming Prejudice

In conclusion, the instances of Hinduphobia outlined in Scotland are profoundly concerning and highlight the challenges faced by the Hindu community in various aspects of life, including workplaces and schools. The reported cases of vandalism, physical attacks, discriminatory teaching, and harassment underscore the need for concerted efforts to address and eradicate Hinduphobia. These incidents impact individuals and families directly and contribute to a broader atmosphere of discrimination.

The increase in reported charges related to Hinduism, along with the higher percentage of discrimination and negative attitudes reported by Hindus compared to the general population, points to the urgency of addressing these issues at both the institutional and societal levels.

A multifaceted approach involving education, legal interventions, and community engagement is essential to combat Hinduphobia effectively. Creating awareness about Hinduism, fostering inclusivity, and holding perpetrators accountable are critical steps toward building a Scotland where diversity is celebrated and every individual, regardless of their religious identity, is treated with respect and dignity. It is imperative that authorities, educational institutions, and communities collaborate to create a society where Hinduphobia has no place and individuals can practice their beliefs without fear of prejudice or discrimination.

“**The statistical data, including charges reported, survey results, and societal attitudes, provides a quantitative perspective on the prevalence of Hinduphobia in Scotland.**”



# About Authors



## Gandhi's Teachings: A Beacon Of Hope In A World Of Chaos



**Dhruva Kumar's** mission is multifaceted, driven by a deep commitment to uplifting the downtrodden. He champions causes ranging from alleviating poverty and empowering women to fostering religious harmony, eradicating untouchability, and promoting environmental sustainability. His vision for a just and equitable society, reminiscent of Gandhi's ideal "Ram Rajya," fuels his tireless efforts.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Dhruva actively bridges cultural and social divides. He serves as Head Convener for the Ganga UK Chapter, fostering connections between the UK and India. He leads the Indo-UK Defence forum, promoting understanding and cooperation on critical issues.



### Mr Neil Lal

**Chairman and President of 'The Indian Council of Scotland and United Kingdom' which is the leading Indian organisation representing the Indian community in the UK.**



### Ajit Trivedi, Former University of Dundee, EDI Manager, Former President of Dundee Temple

A committed voice for religious tolerance and understanding, contributes valuable insights to the impactful paper on Hinduphobia



### Sukhi Singh Bains, Diversity Consultant

A dedicated advocate, auditor and trainer for equality, brings insightful perspectives to the comprehensive paper on Hinduphobia

## Endnotes



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## Gandhi's Teachings: A Beacon Of Hope In A World Of Chaos

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