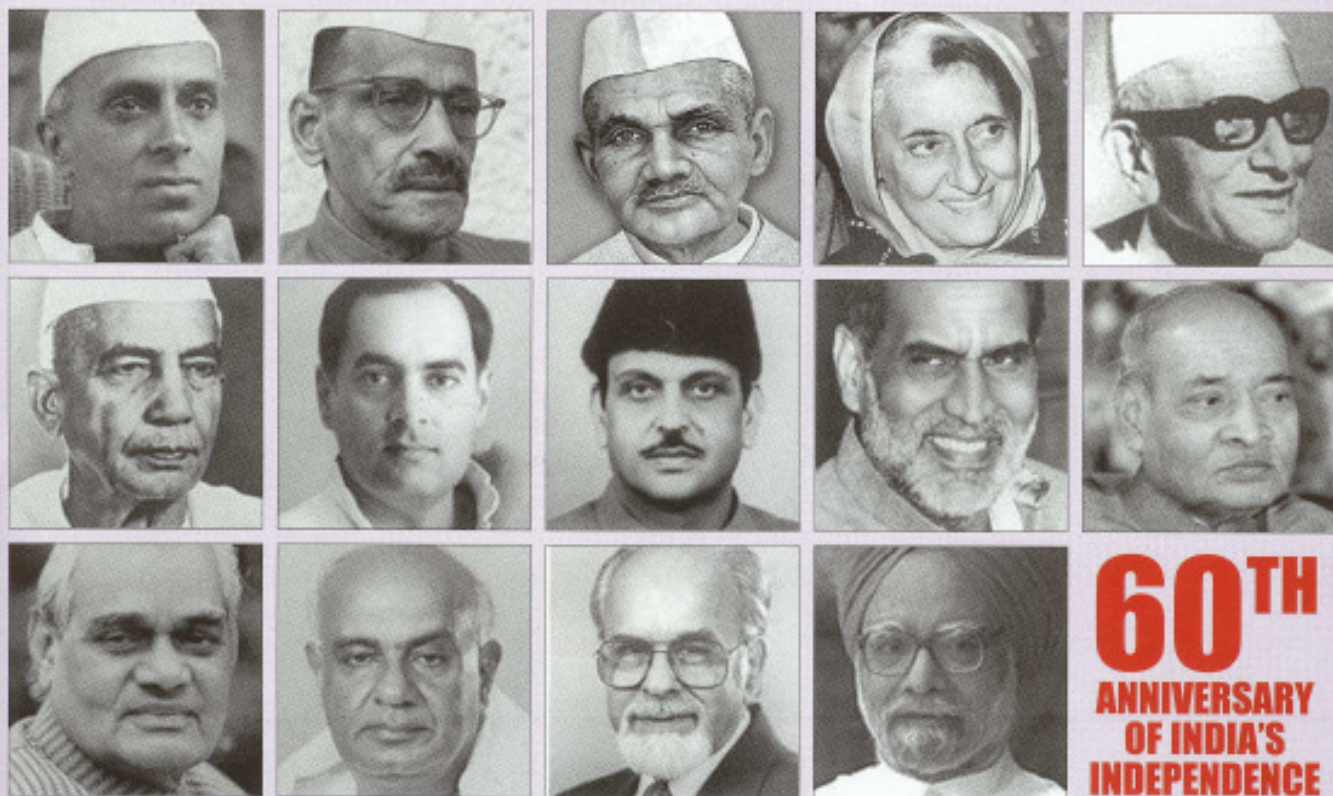


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It takes hundreds of years to build a culture, but just one generation to lose it.

IT is the stark reality that many within the Indian community in the west are faced with accepting the western values. The question of "how can we pass on to the younger generation the values and spiritual wisdom of our Indian heritage?" is one that was brought to focus by Sister Jayanti, European Director of the Brahma Kumaris at their annual Diwali public programme last year. It was a theme that many of the young British Indian members of the organisation decided to take up.

"We feel we are very privileged in having the support and sustenance of the spiritual teachings we get at the Brahma Kumaris, which are so indelibly linked with our Indian heritage," said Ravi Khanna, a director of a pensions company in central London.

"But the fact is that many of the younger generation of the British Indian community are trying to find their own truth about where their identity fits in and their connection to their Indian roots. They don't seem to be able to get a lot of answers from the older generation that has any resonance with them, but there is clearly much to be learned and benefited from having a true understanding of our Indian heritage. India is an ancient land with amazing spiritual wisdom that continues to have a very modern relevance to our lives in the West. We just don't hear enough about it".

It was with that aim in mind that the Brahma Kumaris hosted: "Experience - spiritual secrets of an ancient land" at their international headquarters in London on 22nd July (2007). An event targeted specifically at young British Indians, aged 20-45, it brought together over 200 people from a wide range of professional backgrounds.

It also acted as the launch event for the Brahma Kumaris' contribution to the "India Now" series, an initiative of London's mayor Ken Livingstone and the Greater London Assembly to promote the richness of Indian culture and London's relationship with India.

Punam Halai, 21, is about to embark on a career in engineering as was among those who attended the event for young British Indians organised by the Brahma Kumaris: "As a Hindu, there are so many questions that I have about my faith as well as my Indian culture. I've never really felt I've got the answers I was looking for, but what this event allowed me to do is appreciate the value of knowing more about the wisdom that has been passed down through the generations. With

scriptures like the Gita, there is so much practical knowledge from it that I can implement in my life which I did not know about before".

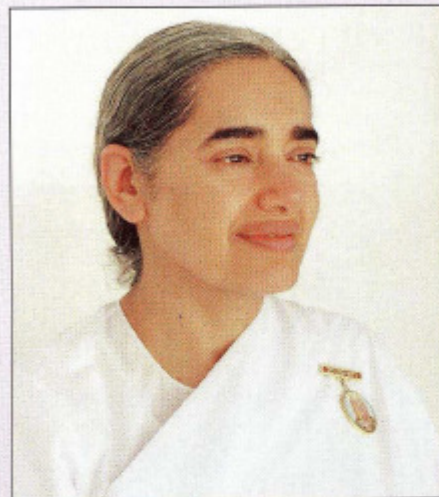
Sister Jayanti, who also addressed the audience as part of a question and answer session, said that the younger generation now had a lot of responsibility on its shoulders: "The world has changed so much and as someone who was brought up in the west myself, I know how challenging that environment can be in terms of maintaining traditional Indian values. But there is a lot to learn from the West too and the younger generation of British Indians have a unique opportunity to combine both cultures and really thrive. India has become an economic powerhouse over the past few years and it is this generation that will ensure that India's influence on the world stage spreads further.

London has the highest number of British Indians aged 20-45 of any city in the world outside India. This was a fact that was shared by Ken Livingstone himself at an event for young Indian professionals at City Hall in London earlier in the year. It is further evidence of how the younger generation are increasingly penetrating the top professions in the capital. But how can they maintain a link with India, a country many may never even have visited?

The answer lies in greater sharing of experiences between the younger and older generation, according to Daxa Shah, who runs the Brahma Kumaris' Inner Space Meditation centre at Wembley. They organised a special event for the two generations to talk more openly with each other, which was hosted at the Advait Centre in north west London on 28th July.

She explained what the event, entitled "Rituals, Rickshaws and Reality", was about: "When you ask people what comes to mind when they think of India, the answer you get tends to depend on how old they are. If you asked someone older, they would probably talk about India's temples, cultural landmarks, the rituals and festivals of the land. But if you asked a younger person, they are more likely to refer to the movies, rickshaws, food and call centres. So what's the reality between these two visions? That is where a conversation between the two generations becomes so fascinating".

In August, further events will open up the spiritual



By Sister Jayanti

core of India to a wider audience. Anthony Strano, author of the book "Eastern Thought for the Western mind", will share his own experiences as a westerner of the wisdom that he has learned from India. "India's heritage has a wisdom that transcends religion," he said. "In a world where we are increasingly busy and stressed, it is a truly liberating experience for the mind when one really understands the depth of that wisdom".

Sister Sudesh, who is a co-ordinator of the Brahma Kumaris centres in Europe and based in Germany, will be giving two talks on the spiritual messages in the Gita - one in Hindi and one in English.

Next month (September), Australian actor Robin Ramsay will perform his solo-theatre act "Borderland", about the life of Rabindranath Tagore. Closing the Brahma Kumaris' India Now series will be "God's DNA", a special evening with Dadi Janki, co-administrative head of the Brahma Kumaris. Even at the age of 91, she continues to travel the world sharing the vision and depth of wisdom she has gained from a lifetime's research into the nature of God - a journey that began in her early childhood.

For more information about these events, visit: www.bkwsu.org/uk/india, email: indianow@uk.bkwsu.org or call: 0208 727 3418