



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Message to the Jain Community from Gareth Thomas MP

I am writing to you following the celebration of Lord Mahavir's birth anniversary.

I hope that you were blessed to be able to spend time with loved ones on this most auspicious of days, even if that was via 'Zoom' or 'Skype' or "old style" phone calls because of our current Covid-19 lockdown.

We are all learning to adapt as we live through a public health crisis which seemed somewhat unimaginable until quite recently.

Our understanding of this virus is increasing day by day and I have hope that science will be able to provide a vaccine to save lives and render this disease an awful memory. We will, of course, come through this and we are beginning to see the decline of cases of Covid-19 in some of the parts the world which were affected earliest.

The Queen

On Sunday evening the Queen underlined how "those that come after us will say the Britons of this generation were as strong as any". I sincerely believe that we are seeing some of the very best of our society as we work together against this common enemy. Her speech was particularly poignant coming as the Prime Minister Boris Johnson was admitted to hospital. I'm sure we all wish him a speedy recovery.

Northwick Park Hospital

If ever a hospital could be said to be on the frontline, it's Northwick Park which I know is the local hospital to many in the Jain community. Its staff are doing a remarkable job battling to help some very ill people and not always with the right equipment. I raised some of these pressures at Prime Minister's Questions just recently as well as paying tribute to the staff there.

Supporting our NHS

The brave doctors, nurses, porters, cleaners and wider hospital staff at Northwick Park and other hospitals are and will be for the foreseeable future on the front and centre of the fight against this virus. To support them in their work saving the lives of our loved ones we must do the following:

Stay at home

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- Stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

I have and will continue to use the avenues I can to fight to ensure that those working in our NHS have the personal protective equipment they need to keep themselves, their loved ones and their patients safe.

A message of hope

It is often all too easy to focus on the darkness and fear of the unprecedented situation we all now face, but I have been heartened by the acts of kindness, compassion and courage I have been honoured to witness as our communities pull together and embrace our common humanity.

In particular I have been struck by the large amount of correspondence I have received from members of the public offering to help and support others throughout this difficult time. Volunteer associations have popped up in Harrow, and around the UK, to look out for the most vulnerable in our communities and to support the heroes who make up our National Health Service at this most challenging of times.

Volunteering to fight Cov-19

Below I share some details of the fantastic response we have seen across my community of Harrow, but I understand similar groups have been set up in communities across the length and breadth of the United Kingdom.

- Voluntary Action Harrow, Young Harrow foundation and Harrow Community Action are working with Harrow Council to help coordinate a Harrow wide response to the Coronavirus outbreak and a database is being compiled of people who are willing to volunteer. Voluntary Action Harrow are using this database to inform people of organisations looking for volunteers. Please sign up here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CoronavirusHarrow>

- This emergency collaboration of voluntary groups delivered over 300 food deliveries last week to families currently self-isolating and Feeding Harrow will continue to provide more meals and food for people in isolation across Harrow in the weeks to come.

- A group of friends in Harrow started raising money to fund small acts of kindness in support of London's NHS staff. They asked nurses, doctors and NHS trusts what the public could do to help, and they replied by asking for coffee and snacks to help keep morale high.

These are just three examples of many, of the generosity and resilience of the people of our country as our nation pulls together to fight this invisible and indiscriminate disease.

I believe and hope that the innumerable acts of kindness, compassion and courage which are commonplace in our communities at the moment will lay the foundations for a society which will be spiritually healthier when this awful disease is finally eradicated.

We will come through this and I look forward to meeting with my Jain friends from around the UK when we do. Until then please stay at home, look after yourselves, look out for your loved ones and if you can please look out for the vulnerable in our society.

Yours sincerely



Gareth Thomas MP
Chair All Party Parliamentary Group for Jains

P.S. Many of you very generously supported a fundraising drive by Earlsmead Primary School, in South Harrow, for key IT equipment and books as the new Headteacher began to turn what had been a failing school around. Thanks to you a cheque for £5,000 was handed over this time last year by our APPG and just before the lockdown took effect, I had confirmation from Ofsted and the school that they had passed their most recent inspection and were officially rated a "Good" school. It is a remarkable turnaround and one the Jain community's generosity helped to achieve.