

Hindus celebrate Holi festival

12:00pm Saturday 14th March 2009

By George Hamilton »

Oxfordshire's Hindu community has organised a Holi Festival celebration in the county for the first time.

Up to 100 people are expected at the Lake Street Community Centre in South Oxford for the festival — one of the main events in the religion's calendar.

In the past, the county's Hindus have had to travel to cities including London and Birmingham where there are Hindu temples.

Today, families will make their way to the community centre to mark the festival, which represents the coming of spring and the triumph of good over evil.

Kashmira Patel, a member of the Oxford Hindu Temple & Community Centre Project, said: "This is the first event of its kind in Oxfordshire. They do celebrate it in all the major cities where they have temples and community centres.

"We felt we needed to bring it to Oxfordshire, otherwise people would go to London or Birmingham to celebrate it.

"We want Oxfordshire Hindus to feel there is a place in the county for them to celebrate such festivals."

Families will be offered a range of attractions including face and henna painting once the event is under way from 4pm.

Traditional songs and dances performed by Bollywood stars will be shown in the background and traditional dishes from Indian states will also be on offer at the celebration.

There are an estimated 2,000 Hindus living in Oxfordshire.

The Holi Festival traditionally runs for two days, with bonfires on the first night and spraying colour water on the second day.

Mrs Patel said that because they had no temple of their own, local Hindus would not be able to light a bonfire or throw coloured water over each other, as they would do if they were celebrating the occasion in India.

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Tharamaraja Gupte has gulal applied by Padma Ramachandrapa, Kashmira Patel, Sumi Patel, Kanta Gopal, Chinta Kallie and Gargi Pandit

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