

APNI GAP SHAP

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The 2nd issue of Apni Gap Shap awaits you!



2015 seems like a distant memory already!

It was another bumper year for the AV Family, with so much taking place that it has been impossible to squeeze it all in! Highlight of the year has to be Apna Virsa's Queen's Award for Voluntary Service!

Grab a cuppa, get comfy and catch up with the highlights for Apna Virsa during 2015.

Enjoy!

Billy

A Message from Bobbi & Seema.....

Wow, 2015 was a great year to remember, so much happened! We recall writing our message this time last year when we thought we were on the cusp of bigger and better things, and we certainly were! We have picked out a few highlights below but more details and pictures are inside:-

The year started with a 'BANG' with an awesome Lohri celebration organised and managed by our lovely volunteer event committee of Billy, Mandy, Rosie & Ruby.



Thank you to our AV Family who took us by surprise when they seized the Lohri event as an opportunity to acknowledge our efforts to date, and presented us with beautiful bouquets and Spa Day passes!

This was followed by the stunning news that Apna Virsa had been awarded a Queens Award for Voluntary Service ... What an honour!

It is with huge thanks to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) that we were able to bring another exciting project to our community in 2015. We kick-started the 'Khaana Khajana – Wealth of Food' project in Slough towards the end of the year with the support of some great volunteers from Aik Saath. We hope many of you will participate in some of the cooking demos and food tasting sessions we are planning.

The success of the 50 plus Community Ambassadors project was of particular interest to us and we were delighted to be asked to continue this great work at our current venue in Slough, the Singh Sabha Sports & Community Centre. We are also really pleased to announce that in January 2016 we will commence a similar project in Langley, specifically for our Langley residents.

What a way to end 2015! Opening item at the Annual Volunteer Awards Ceremony, Slough. The Advanced Bhangra Class delighted guests with a bhangra fusion performance full of swag & pzaaz at the event held at Langley Marriott.

Finally, a massive thank you to all of our Partners, Funders, Tutors, Volunteers and Supporters over the year. We look forward to another successful year with you.

QUEEN'S AWARD 2015



Apna Virsa are incredibly honoured and so very proud to have been awarded the Queens Award for Voluntary Service.

The Queens Award for Voluntary Service was created in 2002 in celebration of her Majesty's Golden Jubilee and announced on the anniversary of the Queen's Coronation. Its purpose is to recognise groups of individuals who give their time freely for the benefit of others. It is the highest honour that can be bestowed upon groups of this kind and is equivalent in status to the MBE.

Winners of the award are presented with a certificate signed by Her Majesty The Queen and a domed glass crystal. Representatives from the winning groups are also invited to attend a Royal Garden Party.



Apna Virsa
Project Co-ordinators
Bobbi and Seema
pictured here with some
of the Queens Guards
at the Royal Garden
Party held at
Buckingham Palace.

The Awards Ceremony took place in October at the very beautiful Easthampstead Park, during which The Countess Howe DL, who had previously met with Apna Virsa representatives and some members of the Slough Community Ambassadors group, read a short citation:-

"Apna Virsa meaning "Our Heritage", celebrates and promotes tradition and contemporary South Asian culture amongst Slough communities. It encourages the sharing of rich traditions across generations and cultural backgrounds. Courses and activities develop learning skills, promote health and well-being, and alleviate isolation, enabling many learners to become economically active.

The group has grown considerably reaching up to 500 beneficiaries over a 12 month period. New initiatives are greeted with an overwhelming response.

Events are supported in large numbers, especially those linked to the dance classes. The Advanced dance group performs regularly at charity events.

The enthusiasm and dedication of the volunteers is infectious and the professionalism with which the projects are run is impressive. The impact of the work of this group is far reaching, helping tackle issues of poor health, depression, family friction, all of which have a wider impact on the local community.

Mr James Puxley, Lord Lieutenant of the Royal County of Berkshire, officially presented the award to Bobbi Johal and Seema Kamboj. Myself and Kusham Nijjar also attended the ceremony on behalf of all the volunteers.



Outside Easthampstead Park, looking very pleased with ourselves!

Left to right—Seema, Bobbi, Billy and Kusham.

A **MASSIVE** congratulations to Bobbi and Seema and all our volunteers on winning this award, and for all the hard work they have put into making the organisation the success it is. A well-deserved recognition of your efforts to date and an excellent platform from which to springboard to greater things!



Bobbi and Seema with The Countess Howe DL at the Queens Award for Voluntary Service Awards Ceremony 2015



**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**

The MBE for volunteer groups

THROWBACK-LOHRI 2015

Part of the Apna Virsa philosophy is to engage the community in celebrating cultural events. This being the case, a group of volunteers decided that it would be wonderful to bring a special sparkle to Lohri 2015 and to celebrate it Apna Virsa style! A Lohri events committee quickly fell into place and set to work organising an event that the Apna Virsa founders would be proud of! The committee members:- myself, Mandy Powar, Rosie Cheema and Ruby Mahli, were up for a challenge and with the support of AV family and friends, pulled together to deliver the event within 6 weeks!



Mandy's stunning creations, Lohri Favours.

We were mindful of incorporating authentic Lohri traditions and did our utmost to ensure that we got this right! Heaps of conversations with mums and aunties, along with research into the reasons why Lohri is celebrated and how. Lohri is very much a cultural festival and is linked to the winter solstice, harvest festival and also a new member joining the family, be that through the birth of a baby or a marriage .

Following Tradition, Lohri Rituals



AV Gidha Team braved the cold to perform Gidha by the Lohri Fire

On the night, the Lohri bonfire was ablaze as guests entered the venue and were given the opportunity to throw Till (sesame seeds), peanuts, popcorn and other food items into the fire. The warmth of the fire was welcomed as it was indeed a very chilly night! Well done to our amazing dhol players and the AV Gidha Team who braved the cold to ensure our guests were entertained as they joined in singing and dancing around the fire.

Vasda Panjab doing their thang...!



Once inside our amazing venue the evening got underway with a 'Live Set' performed by non other than the award winning Vasda Punjab Bhangra Group! The adrenaline and excitement causing one of their dancers to well and truly smash that saap! Vasda Punjab ended their performance with a rendition of Sundar Mundriye, which lead straight into a breath-taking performance by our very own AV Gidha Team.

The AV Gidha Team had worked hard preparing for this event, and it certainly paid off! The dance floor was an array of gorgeous vibrant colours, traditional Gidha to beautiful Lohri boliyaan. Some of the children from our Kids Bhangra classes also joined in the ronak shonak! WOW! Well done to our Gidha tutor Balbir and the AV Gidha team on such an awesome performance. It certainly got the crowd going, and before we knew it, the dance floor was amass with our guests joining in, showing us what they were made of! It has to be said, they are made of some pretty amazing stuff!

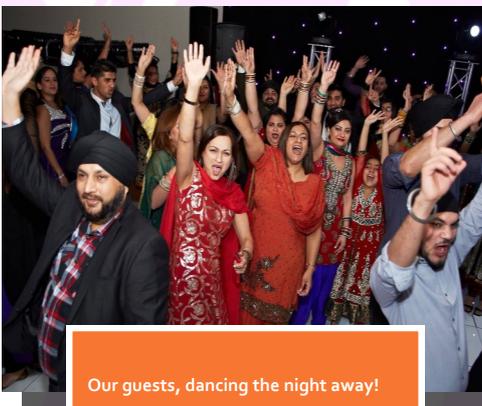


Bhangraholics Dance Group—a simply stunning performance!

Bhangraholics Dance Group were our final performance, and they gave the crowd a flawless routine of high energy meticulous bhangra. Phateh were most definitely Chak de! Chak de! Needless to say, by this point it was hard to keep our guests off the dance floor, and with a Balle balle and Bruuuah they hit the dance floor, which is where they stayed well into the night!

The food on the night was super scrummy and enjoyed by all, with the traditional Lohri fare of Sarson Ka Saag, Makki di Roti and Kheer making an appearance on the menu.

The final touch to the night, a little parting gift to our guests was a traditional Lohri favour, expertly prepared by Mandy.



Our guests, dancing the night away!

This event would not have been possible without the generous contributions of time, money and expertise made by **Property Bank, Paragon Road Show, Riverside Venue, Photographer-Manjeet Matharoo and Magic Video**. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!

The biggest thank you to **Rosie, Ruby and Mandy!**

More pictures & video clips from this event and others available on AV facebook page

KHAANA KHAJANA

Khaana Khajana – Wealth of Food Project has been designed to include research, documentation and raising awareness sessions about the important cultural heritage of South Asian food. The project will explore the significance of food in British Asian culture, from its importance in cultural traditions to its evolution in Britain. We aim to record traditional recipes, cooking methods and the stories behind specific ingredients and dishes before they are lost.

Food is integral to British Asian culture, bringing families and communities together and connecting 2nd and 3rd generation British Asians with their rich heritage. Within Asian culture, recipes are traditionally passed on orally between generations within families. There is a feeling that the fast pace of modern society and breakdown of extended families has impacted on these traditions and important recipes and understanding of their significance are at risk of being lost.



Bringing the different generations together—working in collaboration with Aik Saath on Khaana Khajana project.

Preliminary work has been carried out with project volunteers to capture and share this important knowledge through oral history interviews and community activities. These will in turn lead to some practical activities including cooking demonstrations and food tasting sessions, which we are certainly looking forwards to!



Young people from Aik Saath conducting research on the journey of Asian Cuisines with our older generations so that their stories may be captured.

If you would like to participate or help with this project please keep an eye on our Facebook page or email us with your details.

50+ GROUP-GOING FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH!

Last year's big project was Community Ambassadors for Slough supported by the People's Health Trust. The regulars continued to enjoy their physical activity sessions interspersed with other activities. One of the most popular was the series of Healthy Eating & Wellbeing sessions with tutor Rodney Mallinson. The discussions on good and bad fats, reading labels on food and drinks packaging, the 'Eat Well' plate for the Indian diet, along with portion sizes generated some really excellent debates.

Learners mentioned how interactive, informative and fun the sessions were and how they enjoyed the little quizzes, meeting new friends and having the opportunity to improve individual and family health and wellbeing on an everyday basis. The possibility of creating Indian meals with 1500kcal, 1800kcal and 2000kcal using the knowledge they gained was of immense interest, as was how many calories one could burn doing various bits of housework!

It was good to see the 50 plus group get involved with Apna Virsa's other activities, one of which was fundraising for Red Nose Day, where they devoted their Yoga session for some fun & fundraising with tutors.



The project ended with a celebration of learning and sharing stories with presentation of certificates by the Mayor of Slough pictured here with the group.

Going forwards, we were very pleased to receive some additional funding from People's Health Trust to enable us to continue regular activities for those over 50 in Slough until 2017. The group meet every Thursday morning at the Singh Sabha Sports & Community Centre in Slough.

NEW IN 2016 - 50 PLUS CLASSES FOR LANGLEY RESIDENTS

Exercise, Make Friends & Keep Fit in Langley.

After the success of the 50 plus sessions in Slough, Apna Virsa are very pleased to be expanding the free exercise & activity classes for those of 50 years and over into the Langley area. These are specifically for Langley residents, so if this is you or you know someone who would benefit please forward the information to them.

Sessions start: Wednesday, 27th January and then every Wednesday

Venue: Horsemoor Green Community Centre, Spitfire Close, Langley. SL3 8JU.

Timing: 10am to 12.00 mid-day

AV IN THE COMMUNITY

The Apna Virsa family have been out and about in the community supporting charity events and raising awareness of our culture and heritage within the community.

Here are some of the events that you may have spotted us at in 2015!

When	Who	Where
January	AV Advanced Bhangra Class	Performance at Pongal Celebration hosted by Slough Tamil Sangamam
March	AV Tutors Neha & Veena	Bhangra workshops in Peascod Street, Windsor as part of WAM Get Involved's Big Society Day event
March	AV Kids Class	Performance at Age Link charity event.
April	AV Intermediate Bhangra Class	Performance at Vaisakhi celebration for Milan Arts Group
August	AV Advanced Bhangra Class	Performance at fundraising event for England's Kickboxing team
October	AV Advanced Bhangra Class	Performance at Meet & Mingle's Celebration Event
November	AV Advanced Bhangra Class	Performance at Slough Volunteer Awards evening. Opening item at the annual prestigious awards ceremony held at Langley Marriott
December	AV Advanced Bhangra Class	Performance at Age Link charity Christmas party



WHAT'S GOING ON?!

AV BHANGRA COURSES

The popularity of our bhangra classes knows no bounds! 2015 saw us add two more classes to our regular termly sessions: the introduction of the Adult Improvers level to bridge the gap between Beginners & Intermediates, and the very popular Sunday Funday sessions for families and friends. It has been fabulous to see several families and groups of friends regularly taking part and having fun together. Timetable for January term:-

Children's classes – Mondays, 6.00pm to 7.00pm. Singh Sabha Sports & Community Centre, Slough

Adult Beginners – Thursdays 7.30 pm to 8.30pm, Langley Grammar Sports Centre, Slough

Adult Improvers – Thursdays 8.30 to 9.30pm, Langley Grammar Sports Centre, Slough

Adult Intermediates – Thursdays 7.30pm to 8.30pm, Ramgarhia Educational & Cultural Centre, Slough

Adult Advanced – Thursdays 8.30pm to 9.30pm, Ramgarhia Educational & Cultural Centre, Slough

Sunday Funday – starts 7th February. Mixed class for friends and families 10.00am to 11.00am, Singh Sabha Sports & Community Centre, Slough.

50 PLUS COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS PROJECT – SLOUGH

Keeping fit, making friends and having fun with the 50 plus crowd at Singh Sabha Sports & Community Centre, Slough:-

Wednesdays – 10.00am to 11.00am

Thursdays – 9.30am to 11.30am

50 PLUS COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS PROJECT – LANGLEY RESIDENTS

Keeping fit, making friends and having fun with the 50 plus crowd at Horsemoor Green Community Centre, Spitfire Close, Langley:-

Wednesdays – 10.00am to 12.00 mid-day

KHAANA KHAJANA PROJECT

Cooking classes to start in February – dates to be confirmed

CAN YOU HELP?

A MASSIVE Thank you to everyone who has contacted us and given their input and support to our events and opportunities last year! We could not have done it without you!

As a voluntary organisation we appreciate all the help that we can get! We are currently looking for volunteers in the following areas:-

- Co-editing Newsletter
- Reporting/writing articles
- Workshop/course assistance
- Marketing/promotion assistance
- Event Organisation
- Activity Tutors

If you would like to get involved please do not hesitate to contact us.

We look forward to seeing you at our events, classes, and project launches as volunteers, participants or guests!

Please do check out our website & like us on Facebook!
Contact Info:-



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