

Respected councillors

On behalf of RadhaRaman Society, we approached to some of you already in relation to RadhaRaman Festival, a festival of Bengali secular folk music and folk dance. We are happy for the positive responses we received according to whatever capacity you have for last 4 years. We are proudly letting you know that this year in the first of December (5th and 6th) we will be celebrating half decade of RadhaRaman Festival. We started with a group based in Harehills attracting socially excluded people like Asian Women into dance and music. Last year we did a successful two day festival in Harehills which drew the attention of mainstream media too. Evening Post covered the festival as one of the top five cultural events of the month in the city. This is now shaping into a true Harehills Festival with significant audience from diverse background and from the remote part of the city as well as other neighboring towns e.g. Bradford, Rochdale, Manchester and even Birmingham and London. But this is not just a cultural festival we are intending to do. We have a serious political and social message for the local community against religious radicalization. We probably therefore faced stark labelling when we started about five years ago. We faced negative propaganda by even local mosques that being involved in music, dance and this sort of festival is unacceptable in religion. But we were the firm believer of the power of culture. Once any woman just somehow managed to join first, they automatically became the part of these happy moments wiping all negative propaganda out from mind, they spontaneously participate in dance and music. We knew these women and youngsters have a long heritage of rich progressive culture; dance music or poetry stirs in their blood in spite of having all these impositions. Among all these odd and adverse situations, we managed to attract significant local groups (mainly Asian youngsters and women) into festival. who are the ambassadors against continually developing radicalization in the community; who speaks for the beauty of cultural cohesion; who offer their flexibility to amalgamate their folk dances with Irish folk dance on the stage and they are performing all across the city with Irish and Ukrainian collaborations. Audience, distinguished guests sang with the praises; I can also quote from a detective senior Police officer who kindly wrote a comment last year that this event gave a very different scenario of Harehills; that seems a new Harehills that has so much positivity and so many multicultural beauty to contribute in stead of growing religious radicalization among young people.

We want to achieve more and position a different Harehills in media and community perception through this festival. We are craving for more support from all councilors; every corner of the community now on the eve of our half decade.

I would like to invite you all into the upcoming spectacular showcasing of Bengali folk music and dance by mainly groups of women and young Bengali diaspora through collaboration with other folk music and dance, too. (e.g. Irish dance, Jazz music etc.) happening mainly in Harehills but also in different parts of the city through flahmob style performance. If it was just a cultural festival, we could ignore and we may not have needed collective support in a way we are asking for. This is about contributing the best of a progressive culture in this multi-cultural ambience; this is about working to combat fanaticism in a vulnerable area with the most powerful and diplomatic way. This is also about positioning an area of the city at the utmost positive way to media and hundred of visitors coming from all around the country. Thank you very much.

Regards  
Ahmed