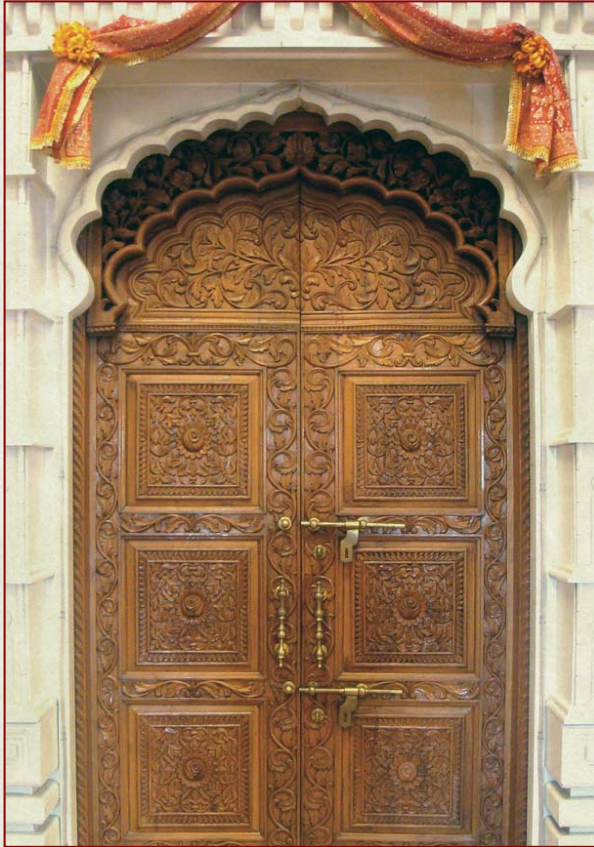


Hindu Jain Temple

Celebrating 25 Years
of Community, Service, and Devotion





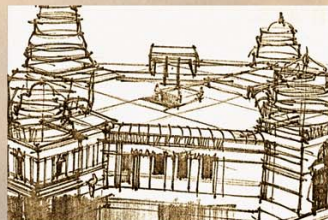


Hindu Jain Temple

Celebrating 25 Years
of Community, Service & Devotion



By Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati
Lovingly Sponsored by Smt. Krishna and Shri Om Sharma



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Preface

The seva of compiling a history of the Hindu-Jain temple has been a great joy and also a great challenge. To encapsulate the multi-faceted, multi-dimensional history of a project as great as this one, which involved the lives of so many dedicated individuals, which spanned more than a decade even before its sthapana ceremony and which has served as a testament to the power of truth and conviction is a daunting task in its own right. However, the task has been doubly daunting due to the unfortunate universal circumstance that had me, the author, in grade school thousands of miles away while the temple's entire history was unfolding. If only, somehow, I could have been divinely catapulted from the steps of my schoolhouse to the steps of the Hindu-Jain temple as it was taking birth...if only I could have had Pujya Swamiji's darshan before a precious quarter-century of my life had passed.

Alas, one must make due with the one's circumstances as they are dealt. For me, that entailed having my first darshan of Pujya Swamiji in 1996 and of the Hindu-Jain Temple in March 1997.

I walked, step by step, up to the magnificent front doors, as though ascending toward Heaven. As the great wooden door opened, I beheld not only a magnificent temple, not only a true masterpiece of architecture, carving and design, not

only an abode of the divine in such a wide variety of manifestations, but I also beheld the breath and the life of my Guru which were part and parcel of every brick, every stone, every carving, every inch of carpet. I had heard so much, from so many devotees, about the years Pujya Swamiji spent living in Pittsburgh, uniting the community and bringing the dream of a temple to reality. But to witness the physical fruit of those years, to witness the creation was a completely different experience. I fell to my knees in pranam. Pranam to the divine images of Lakshmi-Narayan who inhabit the center of the mandir, pranam to Radha-Krishna, Ram Parivar and Shiv Parivar who stand in their full glory around the circumference, pranam to the Swetambar and Digambar Jain deities. And pranam to the hours upon hours, days upon days and months upon months Pujya Swamiji and the founding members of the temple put into bringing it to life.

The establishment of a Hindu temple today is a completely different feat than it was twenty-five years ago. Today, Hindus find their place even in the inaugural address of America's president. The diaspora has spread out, across the world, with unprecedented achievements and success in professional, economic and academic arenas. Yet, twenty-five years ago Indians and Hindus were a tiny, relatively new and un-

established minority. Discrimination was widespread. In the midst of this, to climb hurdles of municipal bureaucracy, to overcome local prejudice and intolerance and to sail uncharted waters of unity between two divergent religious traditions was not an easy task. Yet, the task was undertaken and fulfilled by Pujya Swamiji and all those who served with tireless tenacity and dedication, bringing this divine Temple of Unity into fruition.

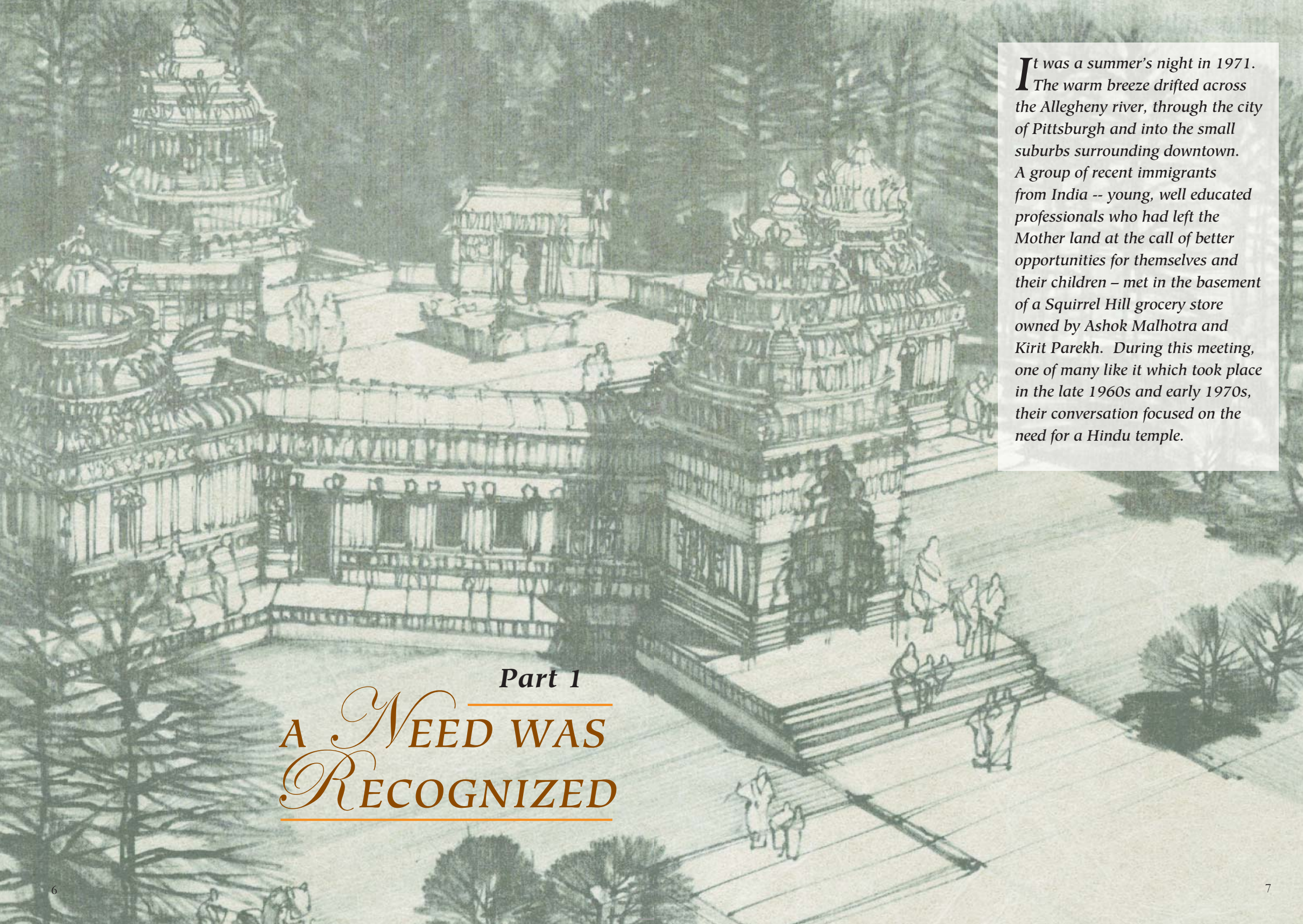
Writing this book has been a great opportunity for me to delve into the history of the temple, to speak with founding members and to hear personal stories how the temple has impacted people's lives. I would like to thank all of the devotees who came forward to share with me, verbally and in writing, experiences, memories, stories and historical details. It is your input which has made the book rich and deep, rather than simply dry history. I would especially like to thank Subhash Ahuja for providing me with answers to a wide variety and long list of specific questions which needed to be answered as I was writing, as well as with innumerable excellent photos of the early days of the temple. Shashibhai Patel has provided not only all the original drawings, but also copies of the earliest brochures as well as letters between the temple and Shri GD Birla. Raghu Nath graciously spent several hours with me during his visit to Rishikesh, giving a beautiful detailed history of the very early days and also his time as Chairman. Devyaniben & Inder Pandit, Vasviben Patel, Vinodbhai Doshi, Manu & Nilima Badlani,

Mohan Chhabra and Anita Vin have all shared their personal photos with me. Krishna Sharma generously and immediately organized for a professional photographer to go to the temple and take high resolution, professional images when my designer told me that the images I had snapped on my digital camera were not high enough resolution. Naval and Nila Kant lovingly sat with me for hours in my office going through album after album of photos (most of which had been taken by Navalji) telling me who was who and what was what. Navinbhai Kadakia has been an excellent source of details and information whenever required, and also lovingly organized the meeting in Pittsburgh for all the founding members and long-time devotees.

I offer very special thanks to Dr. Sudhakar Reddy who meticulously read every word of several drafts of the book, providing detailed line-by-line suggestions and corrections. He also traveled all the way to Rishikesh from Hyderabad where we spent two full days putting together a detailed correct history of the early years of the temple.

Most of all, I offer the deepest thanks and humblest pranams at Pujya Swamiji's holy feet for pouring His life and His breath into every brick and stone in the temple, as well as into every cell of my being. Without His presence, His grace and His blessings there would be neither a Hindu-Jain temple nor an author of this book.

Sadhvi Bhagawati
May 2009



It was a summer's night in 1971. The warm breeze drifted across the Allegheny river, through the city of Pittsburgh and into the small suburbs surrounding downtown. A group of recent immigrants from India -- young, well educated professionals who had left the Mother land at the call of better opportunities for themselves and their children -- met in the basement of a Squirrel Hill grocery store owned by Ashok Malhotra and Kirit Parekh. During this meeting, one of many like it which took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s, their conversation focused on the need for a Hindu temple.

Part 1

*A NEED WAS
RECOGNIZED*



Today, a decade into the 21st century, Indians and Hindus have become an integral part of America's patchwork culture. Nearly every city in America is sprinkled with Indian restaurants, and corner stores frequently carry Indian dals and spices. At last count there were more than 450 Hindu Temples spread across the country; Pennsylvania has at least twelve.

However, this is all a product of the wave of Indian immigrants over the last three decades. The 1970 census recorded only 51,000 foreign born people from India living in the United States. By 2006, the number of Indian immigrants had grown nearly thirty-fold to 1.5 million, making

them the fourth largest immigrant group in the United States. In 1980, out of the total population in Pittsburgh of 2,481,355, only 10,198 were Asian or Pacific Islander, a mere 0.4% of the population. Indians, themselves, were such a small group that the census bureau did not even record the numbers separately; rather they were simply grouped together into the subset of "Asians and Pacific Islanders." By 2006 Asians became 2.7% of the Pittsburgh population, owning 2.9% of businesses in the city. The number of Asians/Pacific Islanders in the state of Pennsylvania more than doubled between 1990 and 2006; a large percentage of this increase was in the Indian population.

The concept for the construction of a Hindu temple in Pittsburgh had originally come from Raj Gopal, a South Indian engineer, who was soon joined in his efforts by Bidut Niyogi and Sathu Somani. They realized that in order to be successful in their mission, they would have to gather a great deal of support from the entire Indian community of Pittsburgh and surrounding areas. The answer came in the form of Dr. Sudhakar Reddy, a colleague of Dr. Sathu's. Initially Sudhakarji was not inclined to get personally involved in the project, and politely refused Dr. Sathu's requests. He was a young physician with his own family to look after, and he was also eager to initiate charitable projects in India which appealed to his heart more than the construction of a temple. However, soon he was unable to resist the requests, particularly when Dr. Sathu emphasized the infinite possibilities of humanitarian work which could take birth through the temple. Thus, as Sudhakarji recalls, "I was drafted" into the temple movement and spearheaded the project for more than a decade.

Along with sharing recipes for quick-to-cook Indian meals that could be made from locally available ingredients and bonding together as they faced the stresses and strains of trying to raise young children in a foreign land, this initial group of friends continued to make plans for building a temple in which they and their children could worship. This group of friends included North Indians, South Indians, East and West Indians, Sikhs and Jains, and there was never any thought of NOT worshipping together. In order to further their aims of building a temple, they formed and registered a society called the "Hindu Temple Society of North America, Pittsburgh." The society

was registered in March 1973. Shortly thereafter, the Pittsburgh Baptist Association announced that it was no longer able to maintain and run its church at 615 Illini Drive, Monroeville and it would be prepared to sell the church and surrounding land at a low cost to any religious organization. Raj Gopal, suggested to the group that they should buy the church and the land, as it would be a suitable location for their temple; the quiet, hilly, verdant suburb of Monroeville lies approximately thirty minutes from downtown Pittsburgh. The temple society members were young, recent immigrants, and many were brand new parents. Financial resources were scarce, and all were concerned about even paying for their own children's education. Those who would later become renowned doctors and heads of international organizations were -- at the time -- merely completing their internship or residency. Thus, the \$60,000 asked by the church for the property was a daunting sum.

Tenaciously and with great resolve they undertook a door to door fund raising campaign. It was not easy, Sudhakarji remembers. One Saturday morning he drove with Raj Gopal more than fifty miles to meet an Indian surgeon from whom they hoped to secure a large donation. However, after waiting for two hours -- which were peppered with promises of "just a few more minutes" -- the duo was ultimately sent away without even a meeting. Sudhakarji approached some personal friends and requested their help. "I need \$200," he said to each of them and none refused. These included Prakash Srivastava, Indra Pandit, Rajender Wadhwa, Surender Sethi and Rishpal Singh. He assured them, for Surender Sethi is a Jain and Rishpal Singh is a Sikh, that the temple would be a place where

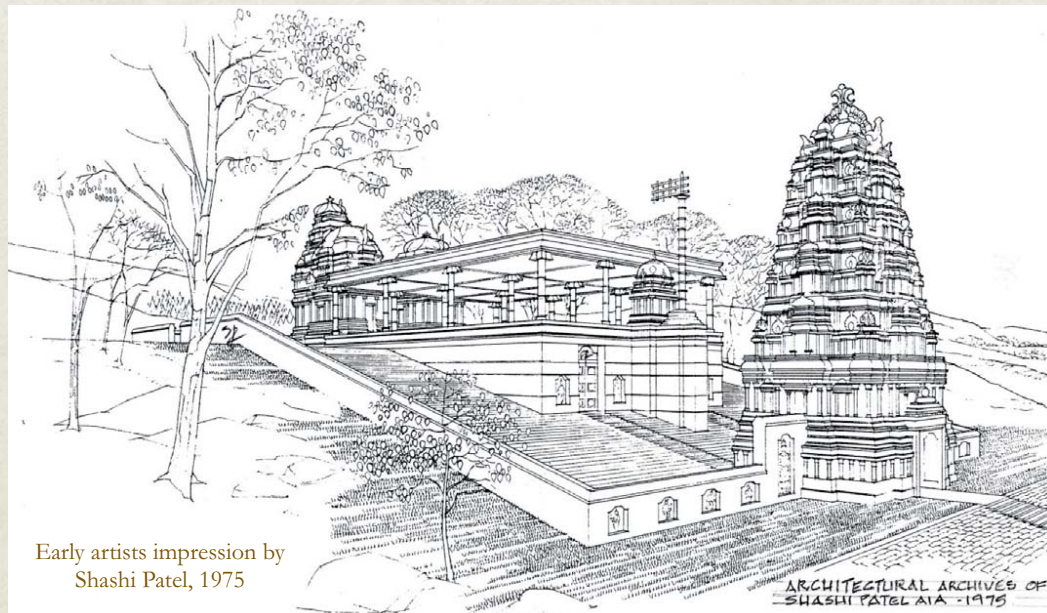


all could worship freely and equally. Finally, through the generosity of these and many other donors, they reached the target of \$10,000 required for a down payment, which they made, ecstatically, on April 4, 1973.

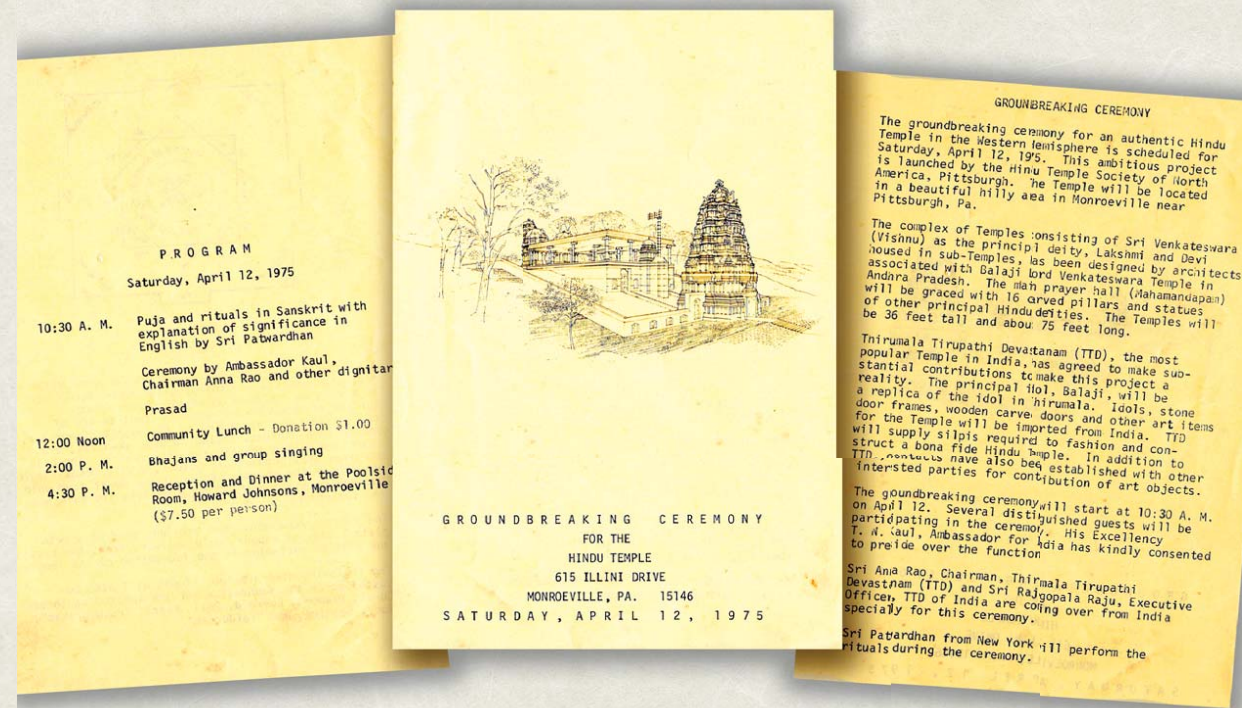
This is how, by mid-1973, a group of Hindus from North, South, East and West India, Sikhs and Jains, found themselves the owners of an abandoned church and seven acres of land. The plot sat on a hillside in a quiet, tree-lined, residential area. The only building on the seven acres was the single-story old church house, covering about 4000 sq. feet, including a multipurpose hall, four small adjoining rooms, a public bathroom and a kitchen. The Hindu Temple Society quickly turned this small church into a temple where Hindus, Sikhs and Jains could worship; the founding members considered themselves to be not merely creating a Hindu temple of one sampradaya or one parampara, but rather a place where Indians -- of many religions -- could come, worship and feel at home.

The early temple was simple, without any impressive marble or stone deities. Rather, a low stage quickly became filled with framed images of a wide variety of divine manifestations, along with all traditional puja paraphernalia -- simple brass and silver oil lamps, fruit piled onto round trays and laid in front of the photos, fresh homemade Indian sweets cut into squares or diamonds or rolled into balls for distribution at the end of prayers, and fragrant incense sticks. The newly formed temple didn't have a priest, however; thus prayers and pujas were conducted by members of the community who had received, along with their academic education, official or even unofficial training in Vedic rites and rituals.

The community of Hindus, Jains and Sikhs met regularly on Sundays in the make-shift temple, sharing traditional Indian vegetarian pot-luck lunches and discussing plans for the construction of a new, beautiful temple, high on the hillside. Havan/ yagna ceremonies and Sikh kirtans also took place monthly, on different Sundays.



Early artists impression by Shashi Patel, 1975



The Programme from the Groundbreaking ceremony on 12th April 1975

Slowly the old church building became a veritable -- albeit small and simple -- Hindu temple. The framed pictures of divine manifestations were replaced generously by small marble deities prepared specially in India. Ved Kapoor, of Hitkari Potteries, New Delhi generously donated the Radha-Krishna and Devi murtis, and the Bangur brothers of Calcutta donated Ram Parivar.

With the murtis installed in the make-shift temple, the members of the community began to feel more and more optimistic about their plans for a grand, beautiful mandir. On August 28, 1974 a conditional use application was filed with the planning commission, borough of Monroeville. The community eagerly awaited approval, as they were enthusiastic to build, despite the lack of funds or a concrete plan.

In November of the same year, Raj Gopal visited India and met with the board of the Thirumala Tirupathi Devasthanam (TTD) of Tirupathi, South India regarding their assistance in this temple project. A year prior, in June 1973, representatives from TTD had visited Pittsburgh and suggested that the Monroeville temple should be built as a Lord Venkateswara temple, in line with the regulations of the TTD. They had offered their full support in bringing this project to fruition. Thus, in November 1974 when Raj Gopal visited India and met with the Board of TTD, they officially and generously voted to donate four lakhs of rupees (400,000 rupees, approximately \$47,000), worth of materials and labor, and agreed to provide all of the shilpies, deities, architectural assistance, etc. There was also a tacit understanding that this assistance would be reciprocated by





the Pittsburgh Indian community in the form of donations for hospitals in India. Raj Gopal returned home full of enthusiasm and optimism.

As soon as the winter snow had melted and Spring began to fill the air, a large ground breaking ceremony was held for the new Lord Venkateswara temple, to be built in association with TTD as per their generous offer.

The April 1975 ceremony was a grand occasion; even the ambassador of India to USA, Shri TN Kaul, was present along with hundreds of devotees, some of whom had come from as far away as New York for the auspicious occasion of the ground breaking for the first Balaji temple in the West. However, the Hindu community of Pittsburgh was filled with ambivalence. On the one hand, here was an organization offering to provide crucially needed funds as well as assistance in building and designing. The Tirupathi mandir is one of India's most divine, beautiful, devotion-inspiring temples, and its organization is one of India's largest and most prominent. South Indians came from as far away as New York for the auspicious occasion of the ground breaking ceremony for the first Balaji temple in the West. However, the North, East and West Indian Hindus, Sikhs and Jains realized that, as grateful as they all were for TTD's active support and involvement, their vision was to create a mandir in which many different divine manifestations would be worshipped, and worshipped equally, rather than an exclusive and authentic Lord Venkateswara temple. They were unsure how to proceed. (side bar scanned copy of first groundbreaking brochure)

Following the ground-breaking ceremony, a general body meeting of the Hindu Temple Society was held on July 23, 1975 to address this issue,

in which resolutions were passed beginning with the following:

“The Hindu faith is essentially universal, permissive and non-dogmatic in its way of worship; and the Hindu temple of Pittsburgh is and shall remain nonsectarian and broad based, so as to meet the religious, spiritual, cultural, humanitarian, educational and social needs of all its members”

The resolutions stated that Lord Venkateshwara and Lakshmiiji would be placed in the center of the temple, and many other deities would also be prominently installed in the main hall of the temple. Further, the resolutions included provisions for the inclusion of other deities as and when deemed appropriate by the board members.

When a copy of these resolutions was sent to the board of TTD, they replied via a letter to Raj Gopal dated September 11, 1975, explaining that these resolutions were not in line with the terms and conditions outlined by them for the establishment of an authentic Lord Venkateshwar Mandir. They explained that if the Hindu Temple Society was committed to abiding by these resolutions, then their offer of support for the temple would, unfortunately, have to be rescinded.

For several months, myriad attempts at negotiation and compromise were attempted. Raj Gopal suggested that, in order to stay in line with the mandates of TTD, Lord Venkateshwara deity should be placed in the center of the main mandir and that all other deities could be housed in an adjacent “hall of sculptures.” A separate mandir could later be erected for these other deities.

As the Hindu Temple Society included Sikhs, Jains, and Hindus of traditions other than Venkateshwara,

this option was not something the others could abide by. “We were trying to create a temple of unity. The concept of unity was very important to us – unity of Hindus from various lineages as well as Jains and Sikhs.”

The inevitable could only be delayed, not averted. Dr. Rajan held a meeting shortly thereafter to work out a mutually acceptable arrangement between those in favor of the authentic Venkateswara Temple and those in favor of the unity temple. Dr. Indra Pandit and Dr. Sudhakar Reddy represented those in favor of the unity concept. As Sudhakarji remembers, “I could not accept the exclusionary clause of having only Venkateshwara as the main deity. Not that I was less loyal to Venkateshwara or my south Indian friends but I was more loyal to my words, and when we were fund raising we had been clear about the equal inclusion of all sects.” After all, the first donations for the down payment of the old church building which became their temple had come from not only Hindus but from Sikhs and Jains. They donated to the establishment of the temple with the faith that it would be a place where they and their children could also worship.

During the historic meeting it quickly became clear that there was no way to bridge the chasm between the wishes of the two groups. Those in favor of the authentic Venkateswara temple were certainly not against a temple of unity, but they were reluctant to abandon the association and support of the TTD. However, the conditions attached to association with TTD cut through the very foundational beliefs of many of the other members of the Hindu Temple Society. These other Hindus, Sikhs and Jains, were ardently committed to creating a place -- albeit without the generous funds and support of a prominent, prestigious Indian organization -- in which Indians

of many religious traditions could worship. The conflict tended to split along regional lines, with most from South India tending to favor the authentic Venkateswara mandir and those from other parts of India tending to favor the unity concept.

Ultimately, in December 1975, a separate body -- Sri Venkateswara temple INC -- was formed for the establishment of an exclusive and authentic Lord Venkateswara temple. A settlement was negotiated in which the SV temple Society would take the donation given by the TTD and build the Balaji temple elsewhere, following their devotion and dream to build the first Lord Venkateswara temple outside of India, and leaving the Hindu Temple Society to follow their dream of creating a multi-faith temple of Indian unity. Despite the ultimate separation, Raj Gopal, Bidyut Niyogi and Sathu Somani are still viewed today as founding members of the Hindu-Jain temple and are held with love, respect and gratitude in the hearts of all associated with it.

The Hindu Temple Society found themselves, then, back where they had been several years prior: in ownership of an old church-cum-temple building and seven acres of land, but with neither funding nor plans for progressing further. Symbolically, the bells which had hung in front of the temple, resounding loudly as each worshipper entered, had been given, as part of the settlement, to the SV Temple Society. Thus, the entrance to the Hindu Jain temple was silent.... The physical absence of the bells was not nearly as important as the symbolic silence upon the temple steps. Unable to call out to God according to their tradition, the community members were dejected and disheartened. Thus, Krishan Tarneja contacted his father in India who generously and expeditiously sent new, beautiful

The initial board of Trustees:

- SK Bansal
- SK Das
- Tappan Datta
- Raj Gopal (Secretary)
- N. Kalavathi
- Murali Mahidhara
- Ashok Malhotra
- Mainik Mazmudar
- G. Nagarajan
- Raghu Nath
- Bidyut Niyogi (Vice President)
- P. Nemani
- NG Nunna
- Indra Pandit
- G. Ramaswamy
- Sudhakar Reddy
- Shekharan
- Prakash Shrivastava
- Rishpal Singh
- Satu Somani (Treasurer)
- N. Srinivasagam (President)
- Krishan Tarneja
- Rajender Wadhwa





bells. When once again the sound of brass bells proclaimed the arrival of the worshippers to the Hindu Jain Temple, their spirits began to lift.

At this turning point in the history of the temple, Dr. Sudhakar Reddy found the responsibility and challenge of leading the community on his shoulders. He knew he would have to galvanize not only financial support but the commitment of the community to come together and build their dream temple, even if the dream seemed distant. Raghu Nath took on the role of Chairman, Dr. Jagdish Saluja served as treasurer, and Dr. Jaswant Sharma and Haribhai Patel assumed editorship of the monthly Temple Times newspaper. The publication was crucial at that difficult time because it kept people connected to the temple; it reminded them on a month to month basis that the project was still underway, that there WAS going to be a Hindu temple.

Despite the seemingly insurmountable setbacks, under Sudhakarji's leadership, the members of the Society determined to move forward. They had sacrificed the association of the famous Tirupathi mandir. They had sacrificed tens of thousands of dollars and expert labour, architects and craftsman. They had even lost members whom they considered their own kith and kin. However, they had not sacrificed the premise on which their dream was based, and they had not lost their commitment to unity.

That Diwali, Sudhakarji and the temple committee members organized a large, festive Diwali dinner to uplift the community's spirits and establish a sense of connection between them all. That dinner became an annual tradition. Regardless of how challenging the times, regardless of any turmoil or turbulence, come Diwali all tensions

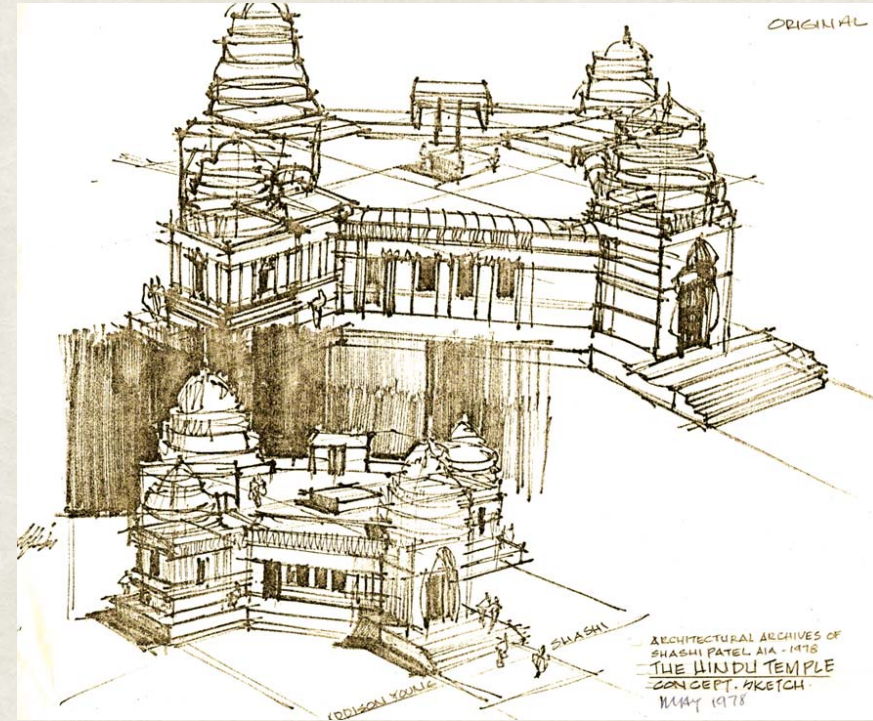
drop away and the entire community gathers together to celebrate the day that

The spirit of the community was significantly dampened, though, when, on December 19, 1975 they received the notice that the planning commission had ultimately denied their application for conditional use for construction of their new temple. Nine short months after the jubilant ground breaking ceremony took place, the planning commission had now denied their application for construction. The members were bereft. "Not only had many of our brothers and sisters who were in favor of the Venkateswara temple already left our fold, but now the municipality was refusing to let us bring our dream to fruition."

While the Lord Venkateswara temple (soon to become known as the SV temple) was receiving generous support and encouragement from India and from other nearby states, the Hindu Temple Society was still struggling. Further, even should the funds rain from Heaven, they had been refused permission to build. At one meeting at Kishan Tarneja's house a few people, dejected, began to question the very need for a temple. There was already going to be a Balaji temple nearby, what was the need for two temples? The tone of the meeting took a pessimistic turn, and the general feeling was that perhaps it was not in God's plan for this unity mandir to come into existence.

The community had neither funds nor know-how, and the several years since the Society's inception had not seen any remarkable progress. After much discussion, a vast majority of the members present agreed that the temple project should be abandoned. At that, Hari Mishra began suddenly to weep. "My dream was to sit and pray in my own temple. Now my

Concept sketches, 1978



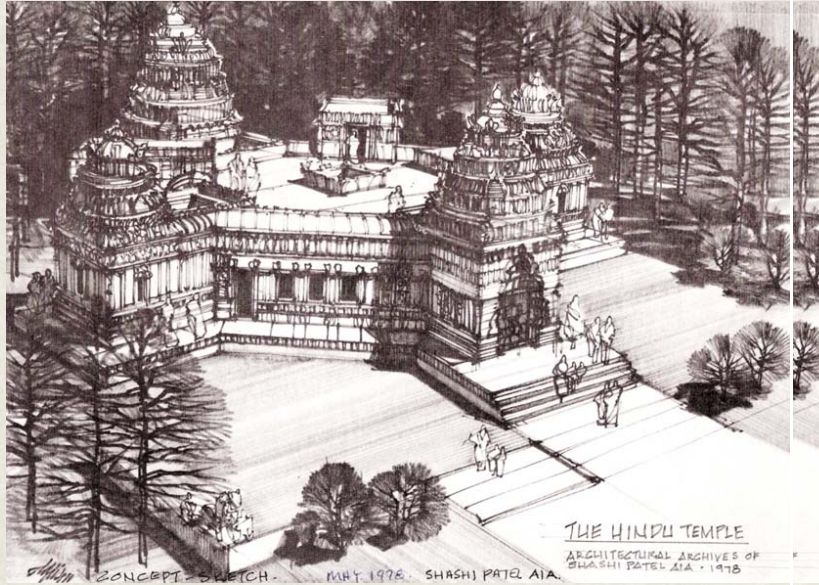
dream will never come true." Tears poured down his cheeks. Discouraged by the continuous set-backs, penniless and pessimistic, nonetheless no one could watch their beloved Hari Mishra cry. "Okay, okay. We'll build the temple. Just please don't cry," they comforted him, as though his request were as simple as a child wanting an apple or a cookie. Thus with renewed commitment, spurred on by Hari Misra's emotional attachment and Sudhakarji's relentless enthusiasm, the community forged ahead.

During 1975 and 1976, the members of the Hindu Temple Society of North America prepared a new constitution and bylaws, which were approved on January 16, 1977. Although the planning commission

and municipality had yet to give approval for construction, everyone's faith was strong that this temple, would in fact, be borne. Thus, as parents prepare tirelessly for the birth of a child who is nothing more than an embryo in utero, similarly the Hindu Temple Society continued to make plans for the construction of their dream temple.

1976 – 1979 were "lean years" according to Uma Shrivastava. She describes, "Not only was the very idea of building a new temple questioned, but the very survival of the Hindu temple was threatened. It took a great deal of courage and commitment to overcome the anguish of separation, to cast aside the doubts and move forward."





As Dr. Indra Pandit explains, “We were not very serious. We were all young, just starting out in jobs, trying to figure out how to make money and raise a family. We had no money, no time, no plans and no experience in how to build something. Although we loved the IDEA of creating the temple, I don’t think anyone really was able to commit fully to it except Sudhakar. He was the one who kept pushing us. Finally, I gave him my blank check book. He was a physician at the hospital where I was a resident. I told him, ‘Look you know how much I make, so you know it’s not much. But use whatever amount of it you want for the temple. The check book is yours.’”

Dr. Pandit continues: “The financial situation was so bad at that time. I remember our monthly expenses were approximately \$300. Our mortgage was about \$200, and our running expenses were about \$100. But we didn’t even have that. After Jagdish Saluja, I was the treasurer and I remember worrying about how we would pay the mortgage

every month.” Jitu Desai remembers that every month Hari Mishra and Saroj Bahl would call him for the \$234 mortgage payments. As a new doctor he was barely making enough for his family, but he was better off than many other members of the community. Therefore, each month the call would come for the mortgage check.

Up until that point the board membership commitment had been only \$200 a year. However, seeing the deepening financial woes, the board decided to increase the membership donation to \$300 in order to cover their expenses. Even if they only could find twelve willing board members, at least the full year’s worth of expenses could be covered.

Dr. Pandit recalls, “I remember one time Pujya Swami Chinmayanandji came to Pittsburgh and graced our community with his presence. He took me aside and starting guiding me on how to raise money. We were so naïve that even a Sanyasi from India could tell we needed help in fund raising.”



Dr. Sudhakar Reddy realized that until and unless there were concrete plans for a proper temple, and unless those plans could be brought to fruition quickly before the eyes of the community, the Hindu temple project would ultimately collapse as people would lose faith in ever seeing a temple. His first challenge was to develop architectural plans for the Temple that would meet the requirements of all the members.

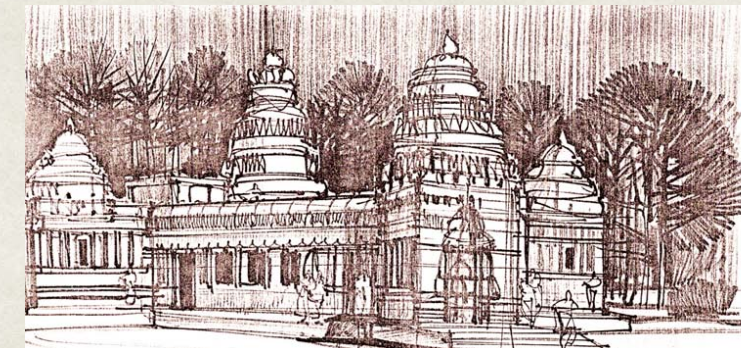
During a visit to India he approached the Minister for Endowments in Andhra Pradesh to request assistance in designing the Hindu temple of Pittsburgh. The Minister agreed and appointed Sthapathy Ganapathi, a renowned temple architect to the task. Sudhakarji explained to Ganapathi the community’s vision of a temple with Lakshmi-Narayan, Radha-Krishna, Ram Parivar, a Jain mandir and a Gurudwara along with a large hall.

This original drawing done by Ganapathi – with three main sides, one for Vishnu’s avatars, one for the Jain temple and one for the Sikh temple – is nearly the same plan that was ultimately constructed. Those plans needed to be adapted, however, to the physical location of 615 Illini Drive and they needed to be turned into actual structural designs.

Further, as Sudhakarji knew, no construction could be undertaken yet due to the dearth of funds.

Upon his return, he commissioned the architect who built his house to design some simple drawings for a basic square structure. He thought that if they could simply begin constructing the basic structure, at least people would see work underway and thereby remain enthusiastic and optimistic. However, when he got estimates for constructing this basic shell structure, including simply the foundation, four walls and the roof, with no decoration and no electricity, the cost came to \$800,000. He held a meeting in which he gave this news to the other board members. They were stunned. Eight hundred thousand dollars? At that time, thirty years ago, no one could fathom how such a large amount of money could possibly be raised.

Sudhakarji pondered over what the next step should be. Clearly \$800,000 was well beyond the immediate possibility for the Hindu Temple Society, yet they needed to begin building. Until and unless community members saw columns coming out of the ground they would not deeply believe that their temple was going to be built. Without deep belief, he would be unable to garner either



Concept sketch, 1978





enthusiasm or crucially needed financial support. This conundrum continued to occupy his mind. Finally, he had an idea: what if they simply constructed the five sanctum sanctoriums for the five main deities now and constructed the rest of the basic shell structure later, in phases, as and when funds became available? He reasoned that no one really worried about electricity at such an early stage. No one was deeply or immediately concerned about a hall or a proper elevation. What was important was to have a place where deity puja could be performed. Once the community started coming to perform pujas, they would connect deeply with the temple and would be more willing to support its construction.

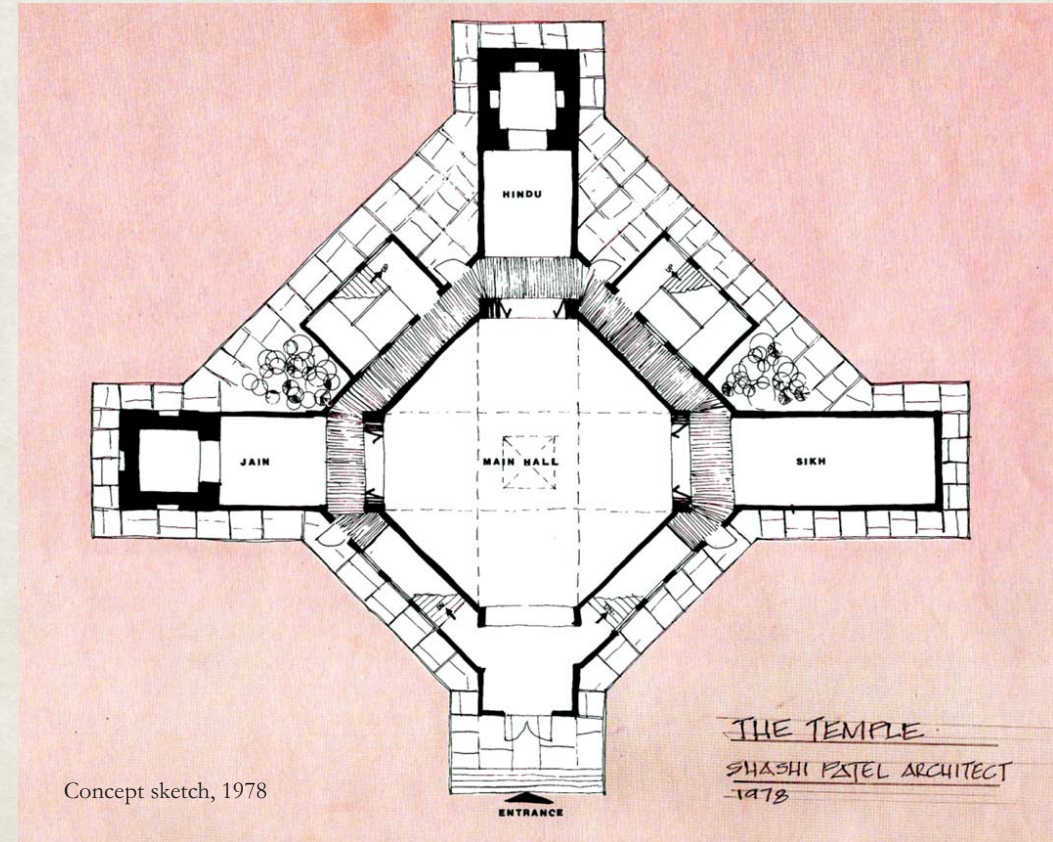
Sudhakarji met with Shashibhai Patel and they carved out a very simple design of five simple sanctuaries of ten feet by ten feet, twelve feet high, on a solid foundation. The structure would have neither main walls nor a roof nor anything else. However, it would have the most fundamental and essential aspect of a mandir: the sanctums for the deities. Shashibhai did the basic drawings and they found a builder who agreed to construct these five sanctuaries for \$125,000.

However, although \$125,000 was significantly less than \$800,000 it still was \$125,000 more than they had! Hari Misra used to tell the story of how, during a meeting in Rajinder Wadhwa's office at Magee women's Hospital, Sudhakarji suddenly announced to all present, including Rajinder Wadhawa, Kishen Tarnejs, Hari Misra, and Raghunath, that the temple could be built if all of the attendees at the meeting agreed to donate \$5000 each. The friends looked at each other in amazement. How could a temple, which they knew would cost several hundred thousand dollars at least, possibly be constructed by the total of \$25,000

raised from the five people present? Sudhakarji quickly polled his friends. Who would contribute their \$5000? The response was not unanimously positive, and Sudhakarji explained that he had made the statement simply to test the will and commitment of his friends. This meeting served, if not to gather funds, to at least make them all acutely aware of the formidable task ahead.

Another meeting was then arranged at Dr. Surender Sethi's house to discuss the situation. The purpose was to select people who were both positive and enthusiastic about the temple and also who could afford to commit financially, should they decide to begin building. Those present included Saryu & Jitu Desai, Usha & Sunil Mehta, Malati and Hari Mishra, Deviyani & Inder Pandit, Pushpa & Sudhakar Reddy, Hira & Surendra Sethi, and Kusum & Jaswant Sharma. Together they realized that if each of them did not personally come forward to help fund the construction of phase one of the temple, it would never happen. Sudhakarji encouraged them all: "You are the engine of the temple. If you pull, the bogies will follow. If you do not pull, the train will go nowhere." Therefore, each family pledged ten thousand dollars for the initial, foundation work, and Saryuben pledged an additional \$5000, bringing the total to \$75,000. Further, they promised Sudhakarji that if he could not raise the remaining \$45,000 from other members, they would come forward to complete the construction of the five sanctums themselves. As Sudhakarji says, "It was the most defining moment in the history of the temple. If the group faltered that evening there would have been no temple today. We agreed on the strategy and the next morning the contract was signed."

As they were, essentially, coming forward to lay the "foundation"





faith bore fruit and the difference between the \$75,000 raised at Sethiji's house, and the \$125,000 contract for the sanctoriums was made up by the following generous individuals:

Mohan Phanse
 Prabha and Surender Bansal
 Saroj and Ramesh Khurana
 Bharati and Praful Desai
 Subha and Hari Tayal
 Shashi and Dharamvir Batish
 Shakuntalala and Ajit modi
 Neelam and Ram Dhawan
 Darshan and Mohan Chhabra
 Saroj and Rajinder Wadhwa.

However, they still had to wait until the Monroeville Borough could be convinced to permit them to build.

On November 5, 1979 the core boring for geo-technical investigation was completed and details were again submitted to the municipal council. Yet, the years of tapasya were not yet over for the Hindu Temple Society. On January 8, 1980 the Municipal Council of Monroeville again denied their application for construction; on January 25 the planning commission denied their revised application for conditional use, and on February 12, the Municipal Council denied

(for the second time, after appeal and revisions) their application for construction of the Temple. On what grounds were the petitions denied? Tragically, at a time when laws of anti-discrimination were not nearly as strong as they are today, the construction of a Hindu temple was refused on vague and foundation-less health grounds!

The community was naturally disheartened by what seemed like continuous and insurmountable setbacks. However, due to Sudhakar Reddy's boundless enthusiasm and optimism and the steadfastness of many members, they knew they had to move forward and never relent.

It is said that when a plan is the Divine Plan, the Divine personally provides all necessary tools for implementation. So it was that after years of refusals by the Municipal Council and Planning Commission, Mrs. Joan Singh, an attorney at Feldstein, Grinberg, Stein and McKee, volunteered to take up the cause.

On March 11, 1980 she and her partners filed a petition on behalf of the Temple Society against the

borough of Monroeville. With Joan's diligence and expertise, the petition was granted, and on May 28, 1980 the Court granted approval of conditional use for construction of the new temple!

The summer of 1980 was a time of renewed optimism for the members of the Temple Society and they prepared for a bhoomi puja (ground breaking ceremony) on the auspicious day of Dusshera, October 19..

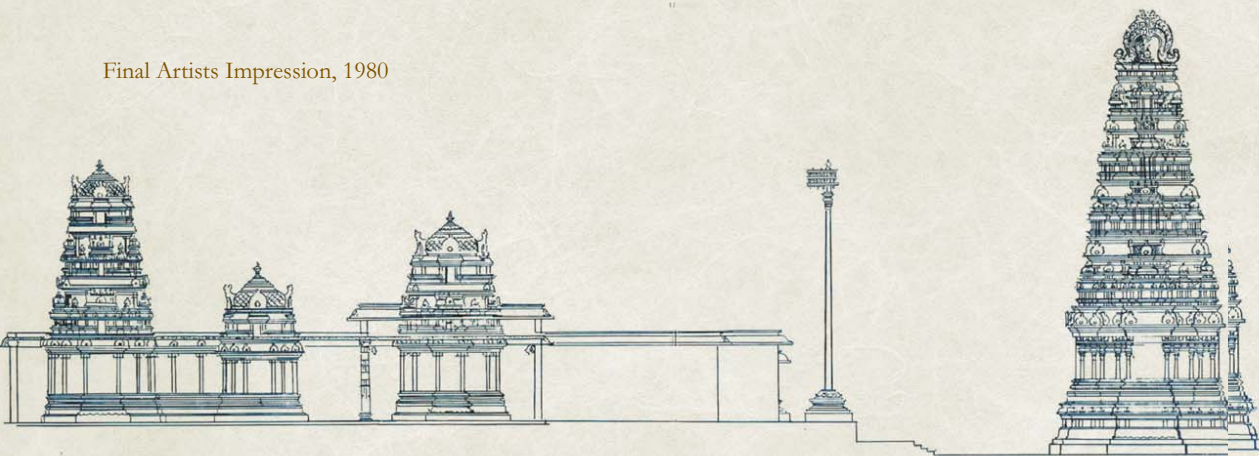
There was, however, a distinct and conspicuous lack of a priest at the temple. Since the inception, community members had conducted basic yagnas and pujas themselves. However, early one morning Dr. Indra Pandit received a call from Ashok Kumar saying that his father had passed away in the night and he needed a priest to perform the final rites. According to Hindu tradition, a cremation must take place prior to sunset which was around 5 pm at that time of year. Therefore, Dr. Pandit

called the SV temple to request them to provide a priest; however, coincidentally that same day was a large function at the SV temple and the priest would be occupied all day in the function and unable to come prior to sunset. The only other option was to call a priest from New York who would drive to Pittsburgh, perform the puja and drive back, a distance of nearly 400 miles and more than six non-stop hours each way.

At the next Board meeting at President Prakash Srivastava's house, Dr. Pandit raised the issue of needing a priest at the temple. It was unanimously agreed that a priest should be sought. Further, the committee realized, they needed not only a priest but a spiritual head, a Swamiji, to guide and lead them in building the temple and creating a true temple of unity. Prakashji was requested – through his connections with ashrams in Rishikesh and Haridwar – to find someone who could fulfill this role.

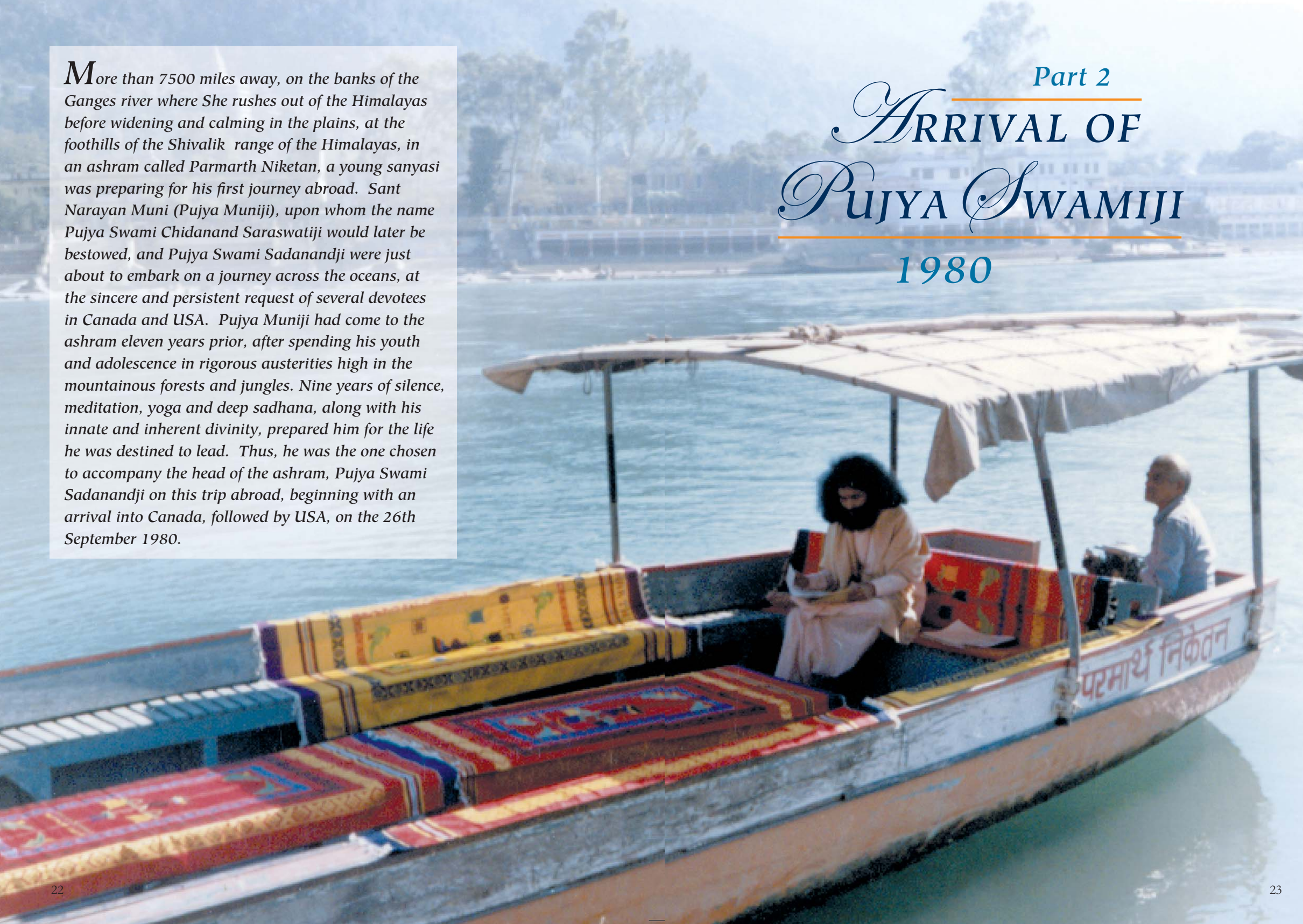
HINDU TEMPLE SOCIETY
 invites
 you with family and friends
 on the occasion of the
GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY
 for the New Temple
 on Dasserah Day
 Sunday, October 19, 1980
 at two o'clock in the afternoon
 615 Illini Drive • Monroeville, Pennsylvania

Final Artists Impression, 1980



More than 7500 miles away, on the banks of the Ganges river where She rushes out of the Himalayas before widening and calming in the plains, at the foothills of the Shivalik range of the Himalayas, in an ashram called Parmarth Niketan, a young sanyasi was preparing for his first journey abroad. Sant Narayan Muni (Pujya Muniji), upon whom the name Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji would later be bestowed, and Pujya Swami Sadanandji were just about to embark on a journey across the oceans, at the sincere and persistent request of several devotees in Canada and USA. Pujya Muniji had come to the ashram eleven years prior, after spending his youth and adolescence in rigorous austerities high in the mountainous forests and jungles. Nine years of silence, meditation, yoga and deep sadhana, along with his innate and inherent divinity, prepared him for the life he was destined to lead. Thus, he was the one chosen to accompany the head of the ashram, Pujya Swami Sadanandji on this trip abroad, beginning with an arrival into Canada, followed by USA, on the 26th September 1980.

Part 2
ARRIVAL OF
PUJYA SWAMIJI
1980





Scenes of Rishikesh and Parmarth Niketan, 1975



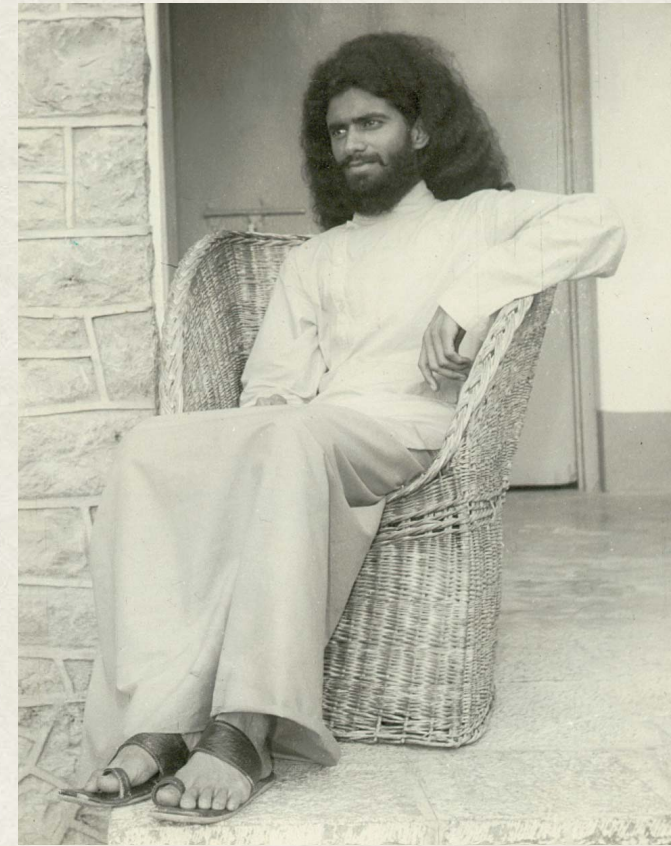
The first place in America the saints visited was Malibu, a luxurious oceanfront community of California's wealthiest businessmen and Hollywood stars. Their purpose, of course, was unrelated to sightseeing or vacationing. They had been called by a prominent Indian living in the area, Dr. Amarjit Singh Marwah, a successful doctor filled with piety and humility. Dr. Marwah was eager to have his home, his family and the Sikh/Punjabi community blessed by enlightened saints from India.

The days of mobile phones were still far off, and calls between India and America had to be connected by an operator. A "Lightening Call," implying faster service at ten times the cost, still required a wait of at least several minutes and occasionally hours. In spite of the delays and innumerable minutes spent shouting, "Hello, hello, hello" with sevaks in the office at Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh, India, Prakash Srivastava, tenacious as always, managed to locate the saints in Malibu. He had been to Rishikesh, earlier in the year during his trip to India, and he had gone to Parmarth Niketan. Although he had not met Pujya Muniji personally on that visit, he had been told that this was the saint who would be perfect for the role of inspiring and uniting the community as well as guiding the creation of the temple. When Prakashji found out that Pujya Muniji was in America with Pujya Swami Sadanandji he decided they must come to Pittsburgh.

Pujya Swami Sadanandji refused Prakashji's requests on the grounds that their itinerary had already been

finalized and there was no time available to add an extra program in Pittsburgh. He assured Prakashji, however, that his blessings were with the entire community and that on the next trip they would try to include Pittsburgh. Prakashji was not satisfied with the distance-blessings and called again a few days later to try to persuade Swami Sadanandji to amend his itinerary. For the second time his request was refused. Yet, destiny was on the side of the soon-to-become Hindu Jain Temple, and fortuitously Swami Sadanandji was not available when Prakashji called for the third time. Thus, Amarjitji gave the phone to Pujya Muniji, whose mantra has always been "no problem". Prakashji's request was simple and sincere: the bhoomi puja for the Hindu temple was about to take place and they needed the saints' blessings. He didn't mention at the time their desire for Pujya Muniji to stay permanently with the community. He also described the temple's struggle to unite all Indians, from all spiritual traditions, in their temple community; Pujya Muniji was touched. His religion has always been one of unity, and he immediately felt compelled to offer whatever support possible to this community. Serendipitously, the Pittsburgh temple also included a gurudwara for the Sikhs; thus when the discussion arose later in the day, Amarjitji helped Pujya Muniji convince Pujya Swami Sadanandji that the community needed the saints' help and support.

Thus, tickets were cancelled and re-booked, itineraries were changed, and plans were made to spend a few hours in Pittsburgh en route from New York to Washington DC.



Pujya Muniji

The arrival of Pooja Muniji provided the spark and ignited so much enthusiasm in us that the temple progressed beyond our imagination.

~ Dr. Inder Pandit





Pujya Swami Sadanandji and Pujya Muniji



Pujya Swami Sadanandji and Pujya Muniji attending the ground breaking ceremony in Pittsburgh, 1980



That is how it came to pass that on the auspicious day of Dusshera, the day symbolizing the vanquishing of evil by good, the ground was prepared, literally and figuratively, for the birth of the Hindu-Jain Temple. At the time, however, it was still called the Hindu Temple of North America. The name change would come later. The bhoomi puja was graced by the presence of the saints as well as Consul General of India, Palacio DeSoza.

Although the saints stayed only a few hours, the impact was profound. After ceremoniously breaking the earth for the temple and laying the foundation stone, the saints spoke a few words of blessings. Pujya Muniji also sang three bhajans on the occasion. As the sound of his angelic voice floated across the grounds in the brisk Autumn air, stirring the hearts and souls of all present, Prakash Srivastava and other temple officers immediately recognized in Pujya Muniji the spiritual leadership they were lacking. “We knew, instantly, after he spoke a few minutes and sang some bhajans that he was the one we needed.”

Following the bhoomi puja, the saints and temple committee members went to Dr. Jaswant Sharma’s house for lunch. When Pujya Swami Sadanandji noticed the concerned look on Sudhakarji’s face, he asked the reason. “Aap pareshan kyon dikhte ho?” Sudhakarji shared: “Swamiji, I am worried about how to build the temple.” Swami Sadanandji then gave a lesson which Sudhakarji remembers to this date. He said, “Don’t worry. The mandir will be built, but with one

condition. You must not think that you are building it.”

For the next twenty-one months Prakash Srivastava and Raghu Nath communicated with Swami Sadanandji and Swami Dharmanandji (Pujya Swamiji’s Gurudev), ardently requesting them to send the young, vibrant sanyasi back to Pittsburgh. In addition to writing numerous letters to Pujya Muniji, humbly yet sincerely requesting him to make Pittsburgh his temporary home, Prakash traveled back to Rishikesh to formally request Pujya Swami Sadanandji and Pujya Swami Dharmanandji to send him. Raghunath also recalls taking a special trip to Rishikesh in order to convince them. “I wasn’t sure if I’d be able to do it alone,” he said. “So I brought my father-in-law, Shri AP Dewan, who was a very well respected person in the community.” When they requested Pujya Swami Sadanandji to please spare Pujya Muniji for the Pittsburgh temple, he replied emphatically, “You may take anyone but him. He does everything and I cannot spare him.”

The next day, Raghunath requested his father in law to meet alone with Swamiji and request him again. Coupled with Prakash’s tenacious efforts, and with the grace of God, this second meeting bore fruit and Swami Sadanandji agreed. However, he agreed with three conditions. First, that Pujya Muniji would spend six months in Pittsburgh and then six months in Rishikesh, back and forth, and that his trips would be paid for by the Pittsburgh community. Second, if he were ever required back in Rishikesh, even prior to the



Pujya Swami Dharmanandji and Pujya Muniji

end of the six months in Pittsburgh, he would be sent immediately, up to three times per year. Lastly, Pujya Muniji would be given a separate, private telephone line so he could be reached at any moment. Raghu Nath agreed. However, Pujya Swami Sadanandji said that Pujya Swami Dharmanandji’s permission would also be required as he was Pujya Muniji’s Guru.

Pujya Swami Dharmanandji knew that, although Pujya Muniji was ready, capable and definitely the right one for the role, a special kind of shakti (power) would also be required to unite this community and see the temple project through to fruition. Thus, he agreed to Raghunath’s request, but would not let Pujya Muniji go immediately. Rather, he instructed his disciple to undergo a severe and strict seventeen-month Gayatri anusthan (special meditation). Pujya Muniji’s next year and a half was spent in complete silence, eating only once a day, days and nights filled solely with Gayatri japa, meditation, yoga and evening walks on the banks of Ganga.

Pujya Muniji’s arrival was tantamount to infusion of life into an otherwise lifeless temple.

~ Dr. Sudhakar Reddy



Finally, in the late summer of 1982 their prayers were answered and Pujya Muniji returned to Pittsburgh. Jitu Desai describes his impact on the community: "The lack of a powerful leader among the self-made professional immigrants did not help matters. This led to arguments and ill feelings among the community. Instead of remaining a cohesive minority dedicated to build an authentic Hindu temple... divisive forces gained momentum.... Two groups of Indians left the fold. This was a low point in our minority Hindu community.....The arrival of Shri Swami Chidanandji gave a great boost to the religious activities in the temple as well as raising funds for the construction. His unwavering belief in the unique multi-denominational temple encouraged everyone, even those who had lingering doubts and misgivings about the temple. The community responded vigorously and redoubled its efforts in supporting the construction."

Dr. Sudhakar Reddy described Pujya Muniji's arrival as "tantamount to infusion of life into an otherwise lifeless temple." Dr. Inder Pandit agreed: "The arrival of Pooja Muniji provided the spark and ignited so much enthusiasm in us that the temple progressed beyond our imagination."

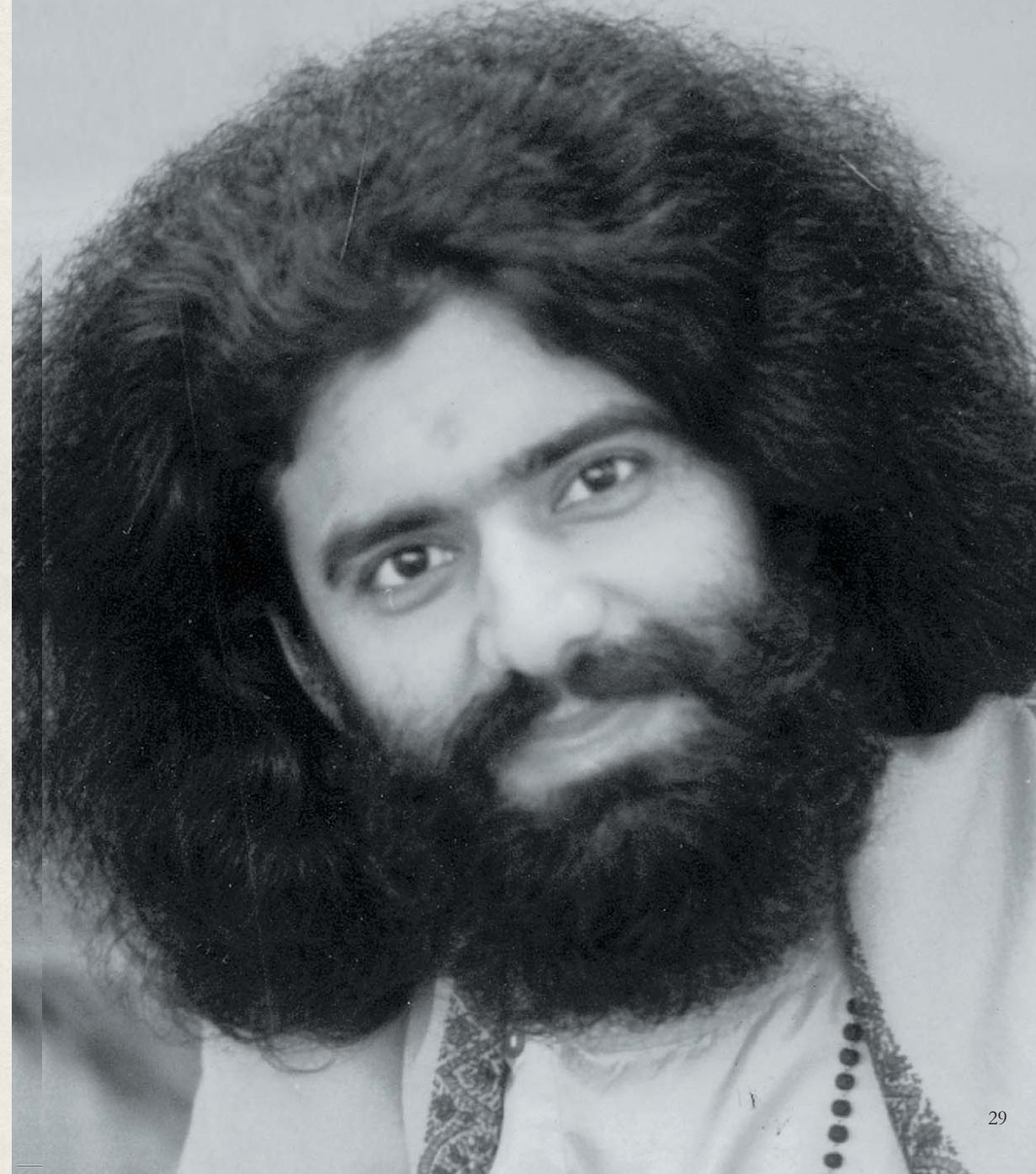
However, long before he had any impact on the community, long before he met, taught and touched so many, long before he had created the temple, on the very first day of

his arrival, an event took place which many remember nearly three decades later. "I remember," Raghu Nath recalls. "I received a call one day from an Indian in Pittsburgh whom I knew but who was not a close member of the community. This person asked me whether our temple was expecting any swami to come. I told him, 'Yes, of course. Our Swamiji from Rishikesh is arriving today. Why?' The man replied, 'Because he's here in front of me and it doesn't seem like he knows where to go or what to do.'" When Pujya Swamiji got on the phone he said that he was waiting in the arrival area but there was no one to pick him up. Somehow, due to a miscommunication, the person who was supposed to receive him at the airport was not there. "How long have you been waiting?" Raghu Nath asked. "About 4 hours." Raghu Nath was stunned. "Why didn't you call sooner?" The reply came simply, "I don't have any money."

As per traditional laws of sanyas, Pujya Swamiji does not carry money. Thus, he had traveled from Rishikesh to Delhi, from Delhi to London and from London to Pittsburgh without even a dollar in his bag. Not wanting to approach a random American and ask for money, he had waited until a fellow Indian passed by in whom he could confide his dilemma. It was, actually, fortunate that the wait had been merely a matter of hours. Given the tiny population of Indians in the area at the time, it conceivably could have been days.

"It is only through Pujya Swamiji and this temple that I have been able to stay connected to our culture, and for my children this is all they have! Typically, one is supposed to go to the Guru, but we were specially and uniquely blessed. The Guru came to us..."

~ Vasviben Patel



As soon as the bhoomi puja was performed by the hand of the saints, construction began on the five sanctuaries. Jitu Desai served tirelessly as the construction chairman, frequently even paying the contractor or builder out of his personal account. One time, in fact, when discussion regarding payment of a sub-contractor arose, Sudhakarji asked Jitubhai to show him not only the temple's checkbook, but his personal checkbook. There, in Jitubhai's personal checkbook was evidence of payments to the subcontractor. Not wanting to further tap the temple's dwindling resources, but also not prepared to let construction stop, Jitubhai had simply written checks from his personal account.



SOUTH ELEVATION scale 1/8" = 1'-0"



Part 3

CONSTRUCTION

1980 - 1982



Once the community saw the ground being leveled, cement pouring into the deeply dug earth, and steel rods beginning to poke out of the foundation, they knew their dream was becoming a reality. Day by day as the foundation grew larger, as more and more steel rods reached up toward the sky, as five distinct sanctorium areas began to form out of the formless earth, enthusiasm and optimism sprouted in everyone's hearts. Surety and conviction replaced ambivalence and apprehension. Eventually, five sanctoriums stood on the grassy Monroeville hillside, marking not only the birth of the temple but the rebirth of dedication and commitment in the community. However, without walls or a roof, a temple is not really a temple. The construction of five, simple ten-by-ten cubicle sanctoriums served to reawaken belief and fervor within the community, but they could not serve as a temple. Everyone knew that. Thus, discussions once again returned to the subject of a full, shell structure, prior to which, they

realized, no proper murti sthavana could take place.

Sthapathi Ganapathi, of Andhra Pradesh, had generously provided initial, basic plans for the temple at no cost upon the earlier request of Sudhakarji to the government of Andhra Pradesh. However, the temple board members wanted a unique design to the temple. The SV temple was a traditional South Indian style temple with traditional South Indian style architecture. The Hindu Temple Society wanted to construct something different. Rather than have two temples in the same city both with South Indian style architecture, they felt it would be better to have a variety, showcasing India's diverse and vast architectural prowess.

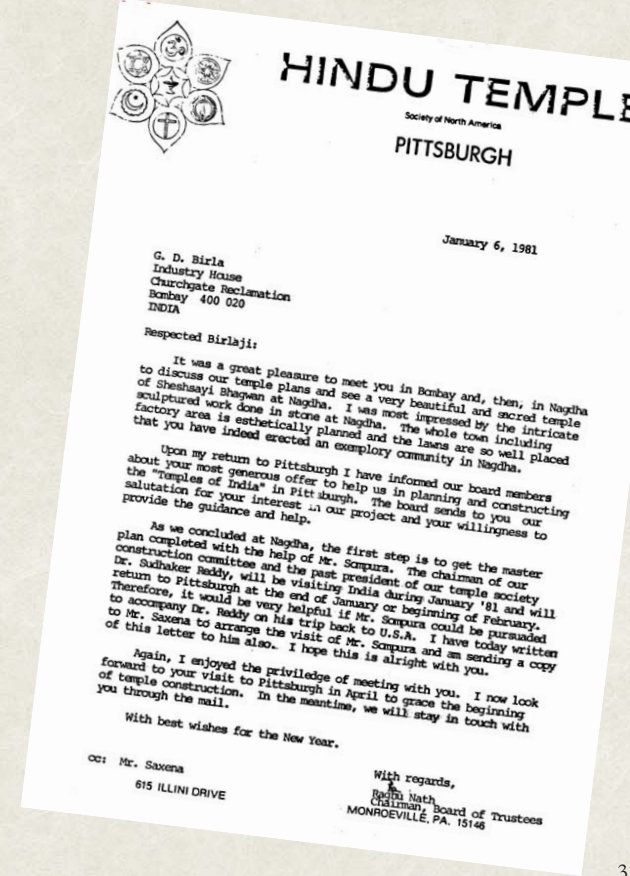
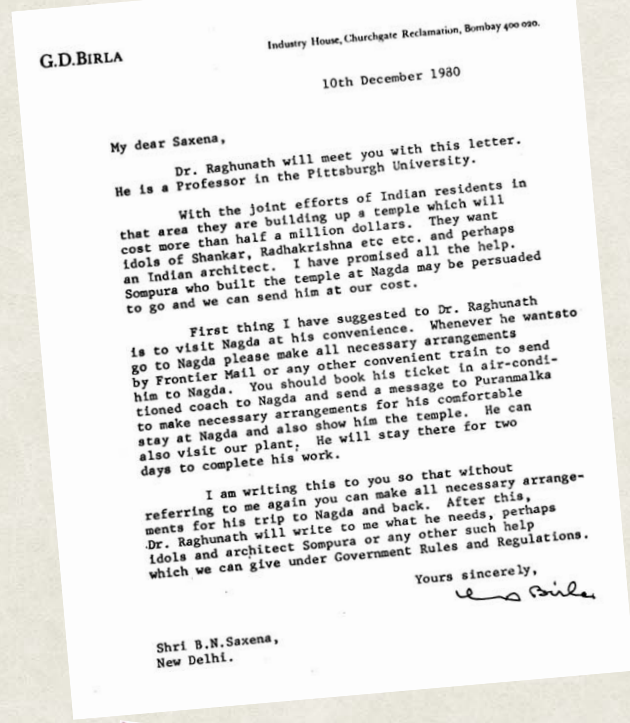
When the temple members spoke to Sudhakarji about this he explained that the idea was excellent but he personally only had contacts in his native South India. Therefore, he encouraged other board members to use their resources and find contacts in other parts of India for assistance

in architecture and design. Thus, Jagdish Bhatnagar, temple secretary and Harilal Patel contacted Shri GD Birla in India, a man world renowned as not only a fabulously successful industrialist, but also as a boundless philanthropist and deeply spiritual person. They requested him to assist the temple with architectural services, design, shilpies and murtis. This initial contact was followed up by Raghu Nath when he went to India.

Raghu Nath tells the story: "I was taking annual trips to India at that point and I was asked to follow up with Birlaji as there had been no response to the letters. I stayed in Bombay with Ram Tarneja, chairman of the Times of India and a very powerful man. I told him that I needed to meet Shri GD Birla and he replied 'I can get you an appointment with the Prime Minister of India, but not with GD Birla.' He did get me on the phone with Birlaji's secretary, though, who informed me that Birlaji did not meet people and that there was no knowledge of such a letter from Pittsburgh. However, I knew that the meeting was destined to take place so I simply asked the secretary to please, at least, ask Birlaji if he'd meet with me, that I had come all the way from Pittsburgh, and that I would meet at any time convenient to him. Shortly thereafter I received a call that he would see me for five minutes at noon the following day. When I went to meet him he asked, "So you want to build a temple?" "No," I replied, "God wants to build a temple." I told him that I was not there to ask for his money, but rather for his help in sending architects, shilpies and murtis. He generously agreed to help, and it was decided that our temple would follow in the design of a 3rd century Nagradi-style temple he had built in Madhya Pradesh. The temple had been designed by Chandrakant B. Sompura, a temple architect from Gujarat.



Before Construction





Early stages of construction



Birlaji pledged to fully help the “Temples of India” project in Pittsburgh and in the Spring of 1981, he sent Chandrakant B. Sompura to Pittsburgh to work out a preliminary design. Chandrakant Sompura continued to visit Pittsburgh and prepared beautiful Nagradi-style designs for the exterior of the temple, which was already under construction based upon ganapati’s plans, including five temples around a central hall (mandapam). On the main axis would be Laxmi-Narayan with Radha-Krishna and Shri Rama Parivar. On the cross axis would be a Jain temple and a Gurudwara. Next to the Jain temple would be a yagna shala, the traditional form of worship for Arya Samajis.

Pujya Swamiji’s early days – Sadhana in the hills of Monroeville

At the time that Pujya Swamiji arrived back in Pittsburgh in 1982, the temple still consisted only of the single church-cum-temple building. Construction was underway for the new temple on the hill, but progress was slow. Thus, Pujya Swamiji made his residence in one of the small, spare miscellaneous rooms in the temple building. Initially when he arrived, the devotees all requested him to stay at their homes. Thus, he spent his first week at Prakash & Uma Shrivastava’s house and his second week at Madhu & Lalit Marwah’s house. After that, arrangements had been made for him to spend the third week at Mohinder & Saroj Bahl’s house, the fourth week somewhere else, and on and on. However, Pujya Swamiji refused to continue to stay in the comforts of private homes any more. As he explains, “I realized that I had come to serve the temple, to get the temple

built. In order to do that, I needed to live on site, to become one -- twenty four hours a day -- with the temple.” This decision was met with much dismay and concern on the part of the temple members and devotees. “We were always worried about Pujya Swamiji,” says Dr. Radhu Agarwal. “We used to worry about his safety every night.” Dr. Vijai Singh adds.

However, Pujya Swamiji was not worried: “I had lived in the Himalayan jungles. I had lived amidst wild animals, snakes and scorpions. I knew when I came to Pittsburgh, as I had known in the jungles, that God’s protection was with me, that I was fulfilling His mission and nothing would injure me.”

In fact, the difficulties he had to face in the early days were not those of violence or crime. Rather they were simple issues such as where to take a shower! In Pujya Swamiji’s room in the temple, there was no bathroom. The building, which had previously been the church and now served as a multi-faith temple had public toilets for men and women; the planning committee naturally assumed he would use those. They innocently overlooked the fact that in addition to a toilet and sink, he also needed a place to bathe.

Pujya Swamiji -- born in a wealthy home in Northern India, raised in the jungles and mountains of the Himalayas, head of a huge, elaborate ashram on the banks of the Ganga -- has lived by the lifelong motto of “Accept whatever God gives you as prasad, be happy with whatever you get, and never ask for more.” Thus he told no one of his predicament, and lived in the small temple-community center for more than six months before anyone realized he had no shower or bathtub. Each morning, he would lock the main door of the temple building and fill a bucket from the sink in the communal kitchen.

Then, he would stand on the floor of the kitchen, bathing Himself ever so carefully with water poured delicately from the bucket, jugful by jugful. After his morning bath, he would mop up the floor of the kitchen, lest anyone discover his method of bathing.

“Sometimes I would even have my bath in the kitchen sink. I’d scrub it out until it sparkled and then I could sort-of sit down into it and pour the water over myself directly from the tap with a jug.”

One morning, however, Pujya Swamiji forgot to lock the door and Subhash Ahuja arrived just as he had finished bathing. He found Pujya Swamiji, draped only in a towel, mopping up the floor of the kitchen. Thus, inadvertently and much too late, the community came to realize the one thing they had forgotten in planning the accommodations for their Divine Guide. Subhashji spoke with Dr. Vijai Singh. A proper, attached bathroom with shower was immediately constructed.

“They did it in only a few days,” Pujya Swamiji says. “I remember the incredible love of the community, with them all coming over and personally breaking walls and installing a sink, toilet and tub. We had no money, then, at the mandir, so we couldn’t simply call in a contractor and have a bathroom built. Everything had to be done by our own hands in those early days. So, Balbhadradass, Jayendrabhai Mehta, Mahendra Bhalakia, Bhimjibhai Patel, Rajubhai, Haribhai, and Hiroobhai broke down walls, drilled holes for plumbing, and made me a proper bathroom in just a weekend!”

Another thing forgotten at the beginning was someone to help with cleaning the temple. There were frequent meetings and events in the evenings and especially on the



“We were fortunate to have the presence of Pujya Swamiji who -- with his vision and leadership -- was the guiding light for the community and the driving force in establishing the first temple in USA where diverse groups came together promoting ‘unity in diversity’”

~ Manu & Nilima Badlani



weekends. During or following the events, there was always a service of tea and coffee and sometimes even snacks. When everyone left the premises -- with dirty cups and plates strewn about -- they assumed, understandably, that someone would come in after them and clear away their cups, dishes and napkins, wipe the tables, and sweep the floors. That assumption was true; however, they never imagined that the person who did it all was their revered and beloved Pujya Swamiji.

Taking this as just another sadhana, another brick in the temple of his own spiritual tapasya, he would clean up each Saturday night after the meetings in order to ensure that the hall was impeccable for the morning yoga classes he led. "It wouldn't look nice to have people come in, fresh for yoga on Sunday morning and see dirty cups or dishes lying around." So, either before sitting for his nightly meditation, or long before dawn, after having bathed and completed his morning meditation, he would clear away all the dishes, sweep the floors and tidy up the room before the yoga students arrived.

This aspect of his sadhana was discovered, again coincidentally, by a devotee who caught a glimpse of Pujya Swamiji -- his saffron dhoti pulled up to his waist -- carrying a large, black hefty bag of trash out to the dumpster in the parking lot. "Maharajji," Jaswant Sharma exclaimed. "What are you doing? Isn't there a cleaning person?" "Mein hoon na? [I am here]" Pujya Swamiji said. "I am the Swamiji. I am also the yoga teacher. I am also the cleaning people." Jaswant Sharma's eyes filled with tears, and the temple committee immediately hired a cleaning person.

More than two decades of intense sadhana including extended periods of fasting prepared Pujya Swamiji to graciously accept whatever food

arrived, or didn't arrive, for him at the temple. One day when Nila Kant examined the printed schedule which listed who was to bring Pujya Swamiji's food each lunch and dinner, she noticed something particular. On seemingly random occasions, random days of the week, Pujya Swamiji had crossed out the name of the meal provider and had written "Upwas" [fast]. Nilaben stared at the calendar, trying to figure out the meaning of when he observed fast. It was not every Monday, nor every Tuesday, nor every Ekadashi, nor every full moon. There seemed to be no sense to his fasting system at all. When she asked Pujya Swamiji he answered, evasively, "I fast whenever God tells me to fast." However, she pressed and pressed him until he finally admitted that he fasted on those days when the people forgot to bring his food. He knew that when they finally did come and saw their names on the calendar they would be overcome with guilt for having forgotten their duty. To prevent any feelings of despair on the part of the negligent meal-providers, he wrote "fast" on the calendar; hence they would be relieved to know that the day they forgot to bring his food had, anyway, been his fasting day.

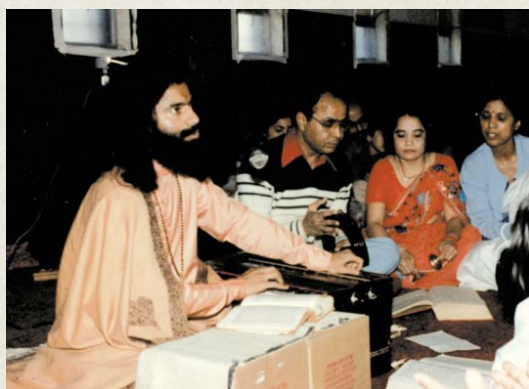
Despite these difficulties, whenever Pujya Swami Sadanandaji or Pujya Swami Dharmanandji would call to find out how everything was going, he always told them, "It's wonderful." He never even insinuated, let alone actually say, that the arrangements were anything less than first class. Further, as one listens to Pujya Swamiji describe the early days of building the Hindu-Jain Temple, these details are not the memories which come to his mind. Rather, he recalls only glorious days of erecting an Abode for the Lord. He recalls only bringing together a scattered community into one cohesive whole. He recalls only turning intolerance and aggression into understanding and love.

These stories of forgotten bathrooms and missing cleaning people are found only by speaking with people who were there in the early days. Only then, when one confronts Pujya Swamiji with the details of such a story does he say, "Oh, yes, that was also there. But it was no problem. The Saints come to Earth to clean out the minds, hearts and souls of the people. If we also have to clean out a room occasionally, it is no problem. We are sent here to dispose of people's ego, greed, lust, attachments and obstacles. If we also have to dispose of a trash bag, it is no problem. We are sent here to sweep out the hearts of the devotees, so that their hearts become pure homes for the Lord to come and sit. If we must also sweep out a hall, it is no problem. It is all sadhana; it is all Prabhu seva."



Further stages of construction





Pujya Swamiji led regular bhajan, kirtan and spiritual programs at the temple and at people's homes to bring feelings of inspiration and unity amongst the community.

His impact in the Community

Harilal Patel, in the official inauguration souvenir book describes the impact of Pujya Swamiji on the community: "The news of Pujya Muniji's arrival back to Pittsburgh in 1982 spread in the community like wildfire. Everyone was very enthusiastic to have his darshan and soon people were packed in his room from early morning to late night. What used to be a deserted place now became a throng of life....He united the entire Indian community in the Pittsburgh area. The community became very vibrant, and everyone was talking with joy about him. ... Even though Pujya Swamiji came to serve the community in the Pittsburgh area, the news of his good nature and devotion started spreading in the neighboring communities. Soon he was being invited to almost every state in the USA and in Canada. He realized the needs of Indian communities in various cities and helped them build temples....Shri Swamiji became an instrument in bringing out unity among various sampradaya. Now he was not limited only to USA and Canada but was sought for by many communities abroad..."

Pujya Swamiji was adamant in His commitment to not only build a temple but also to unite the community. "Community means," He would remind everyone, "Come unity. Community is come unity. We cannot be a community until unity has come. We must be united."

Where the temple had previously been used only on weekends, he began a program of bringing it to life seven days a week. After moving permanently into one of the small rooms in the building, he began making phone calls every day to various members of the community, inquiring as to how they and their

families were and inviting them to come to the temple for aarti, bhajans or puja. Slowly, slowly, drawn by the call of the Divine and pulled by Pujya Swamiji's magnetism, people began to pour into the temple on a regular basis.

Kalpana Jambusaria remembers one time, "Shortly after Swamiji came to America, I remember coming to the Temple for Navratri. My husband and I brought along our two daughters, Anokhi and Aneri, who at the time were two years and just a few months old. Swamiji, knowing that many of the attendees were Gujarati, took out his harmonium and invited us to do garba while he played and sang. This was an unusual offer by a Swamiji, but we nonetheless were excited about the opportunity. As many of the other young men and women began to dance, I initially declined, explaining to Swamiji that I had to watch my baby daughter. He offered to keep an eye on her instead, if I would just move her rocker next to him on stage. Needless to say, I took Swamiji up on his offer and danced with the others while he watched my daughter in her rocker on the stage."

It was so important to Pujya Swamiji for the community to reconnect with their Indian culture and heritage that a little babysitting was a small price to

pay for people's involvement in the temple activities.

Additionally, to reach those whose phone numbers he didn't have or who were not already associated with and attached to the temple, Pujya Swamiji gave regular bhajan/kirtan and satsang programs at people's homes throughout the area. Singing the name of God and listening to uplifting and inspiring spiritual discourses re-ignited the sparks of piety in many of the community members.

As Vasviben Patel says, "We don't go regularly to India and don't take our children there. It is only through Pujya Swamiji and this temple that I have been able to stay connected to our culture, and for my children this is all they have! Typically, one is supposed to go to the Guru, but we were especially and uniquely blessed. The Guru came to us."

Shortly after his arrival, Pujya Swamiji led a special Gayatri yagna for the community, to restore their optimism and to seek the blessings of the Divine Mother in bringing the temple to fruition. He personally conducted all of the yagnas and pujas. According to Dr. Radhu Agarwal, "He did everything. He was a swami but he worked as a priest, as a yoga teacher, as everything."



Devotees brought prasadam (meals) from home to the temple to feed Pujya Swamiji. Frequently the entire family would come along to have Pujya Swamiji's darshan and share prasadam with him.





Prejudice

The local community of the area was not enthusiastic about having a Hindu temple built in its residential area, even though the Monroeville borough had finally granted permission. Those were days when there were still few Indians living in America and prejudice was common. The Indian temple was opposed vehemently by many members of the community.

In February 1983, when their attempts to block the temple through legal recourse failed, a few of the more racially prejudiced people of the local community took to vandalizing the temple and its grounds. Windows were smashed, tar was smeared on the walls, murtis were defaced and broken, defamatory slogans were scrawled everywhere. The vandalism was, however, a dark cloud with a silver lining. While it filled temple members with despair, desperation and discouragement, it also brought them together. As Uma Shrivastava writes, "The vandalism produced a new sense of urgency and the construction effort was stepped up with renewed zeal and firm resolve."

Concerned for Pujya Swamiji's safety as well as the security of the temple property, the committee hired a security guard for a few days, but funds were not sufficient to keep him for long, and Pujya Swamiji adamantly refused the continued protection. "We are here in the home of the Lord. He will protect us."

Thus, later when the new temple was built, before the strong doors had arrived from India, nights found Pujya Swamiji asleep at the door of the temple, using his feet to hold the doors closed from inside. "I was not afraid," He says. "I knew I was sent on a mission and I had to protect God. Once, as a young child living

in the jungle, I had dropped His image on the ground out of fear of the ghosts and monsters. I knew I could not let fear of vandals make me forsake Him again."

The fact that he slept with his feet holding the temple doors closed remained a well-guarded secret, as he did not want anyone to know that there was any possibility of violence from the local community.

His goal was single-pointedly to keep spirits high and hearts filled with devotion. "If I told everyone that vandals came at night to try to spray-paint the walls or to break the building, people would become afraid and disheartened and their faith would suffer." However, one day, a family of devotees came in the very early hours of the morning. "For some reason I could not sleep. I just had to see Swamiji," the wife said. So they came and when he was not in his room in the lower temple, they began to search the grounds of the new temple, on the hillside. As they pushed open the doors, they felt a slight resistance. That's when they saw him, outstretched, asleep with his feet pushing the temple door, oblivious to the howling wind and the potential of danger, with only a flashlight by his blanket.

"I took it all as just a bouquet of sadhana that God gave me. Just as a flower garden would not be as beautiful if all the flowers were the same type, so He was giving me a vast variety of different experiences in order to make the fragrance of my sadhana even sweeter." Not only was there a threat of physical violence against himself and the temple he was giving birth to, but Pujya Swamiji was also the target of occasional verbal violence and harassment. "I learned so many new types of

English words," He says laughingly of the profanities hurled at him over the telephone by people prejudiced against anyone non-white or non-Christian.

"One night in the middle of the night I received a phone call. The youth must have been out drinking and enjoying themselves. They called the temple's phone number, and when I answered they started saying such amazing things on the phone. I had never heard most of the words they used, but I understood the gist. On and on they went, first one boy, then another, then another until they had all said every profane word in their vocabularies. Finally they stopped their litany, perhaps they thought I had hung up, and they said, "Hello?" They wanted to know if I was still on the line. I answered, very sweetly, "Sorry, wrong number." They hung up immediately.

This "Sorry, wrong number" has become a beautiful mantra Pujya Swamiji teaches people across the world. He explains that we do not have to accept or allow into our hearts the insults that others may throw our way. Just as an incorrectly addressed letter may reach our doorstep but bears no relation to our wellbeing, so an insult hurled at us by those filled with anger, fear and misunderstanding should fall on deaf ears.

"We are not like light-bulbs," he teaches. "We should not allow ourselves to be switched on and off at the whim of another. Many times I hear people say, "Oh, I was in such a good mood, but then Robert called and told me what Julie said about me," or "Oh, that phone call just ruined my day." And the same works the other way. Sometimes we are sad or depressed and we get a nice phone call or letter in the mail or we eat some good cookies. Then we feel better. How is that? How can one phone call

or one rude comment from a person have so much control over us? Are our emotions so volatile and are we so impotent over them that others have more power to control our moods than we, ourselves, do?

It should not be like this. We, as humans on the spiritual path, are bigger, more divine and deeper than this. There is so much more to this human existence than the law of action and reaction. We must learn to keep that light switch in our own hands and to give it only to God.



Pujya Swamiji led puja and prayers in the original temple in the old church building, before the construction of the new Temple.





Otherwise we are switched on and off, on and off, all day long and the only effect is that the light bulb burns out! Instead, let us take whatever comes as prasad (a blessing), and as a gift from God. Let us remain calm and steady in the face of both prosperity and misfortune. We must not lose our vital energy in this constant action and reaction to everyone around us.

However, despite Pujya Swamiji's personal, internal peace and equanimity, the prejudice and negativity in the local community continued to spread. As the community had earlier prevented the Monroeville borough from granting permission, now -- despite the legal permission to build -- several of the neighbors continued vehemently to try and thwart the construction. The local church as well as local furniture stores which had previously allowed the temple to use their parking lots for overflow parking suddenly rescinded their standing offers.

Realizing the severity of the situation, Pujya Swamiji, whose motto in life is, "If someone is nasty to you, be nice to them; if someone tries to hurt you, heal them," embarked on a friendship campaign with the neighbors. That Christmas, he and Shukdev Grover prepared beautiful fruit baskets which they carried, personally, door to door. They invited local people to take part in the temple events, distributing extra sweets when the events finished. They hired local, neighborhood youth to cut the grass, mow the lawn and perform other odd jobs at the mandir. A devout, sincere Jewish woman was hired as the temple secretary. Sylvie had a personality that made everyone love her. Although she was Jewish and not Christian, simply having a white, non-Hindu face in the main office also made the local people realize that there was nothing to fear in this new community of worshippers.

Further, as Indian doctors established themselves as first rate professionals in Pittsburgh, many of the temple's neighbors found themselves seeing temple members as physicians! Slowly yet inevitably, the neighborhood came around, and today the neighborhood is a harmonious blend of American and Indian, Christian, Jew, Hindu and Jain.

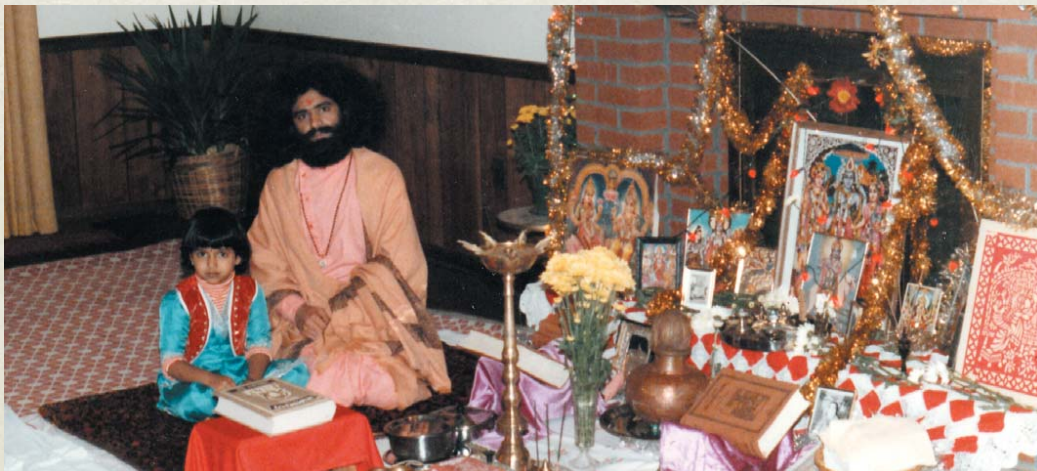
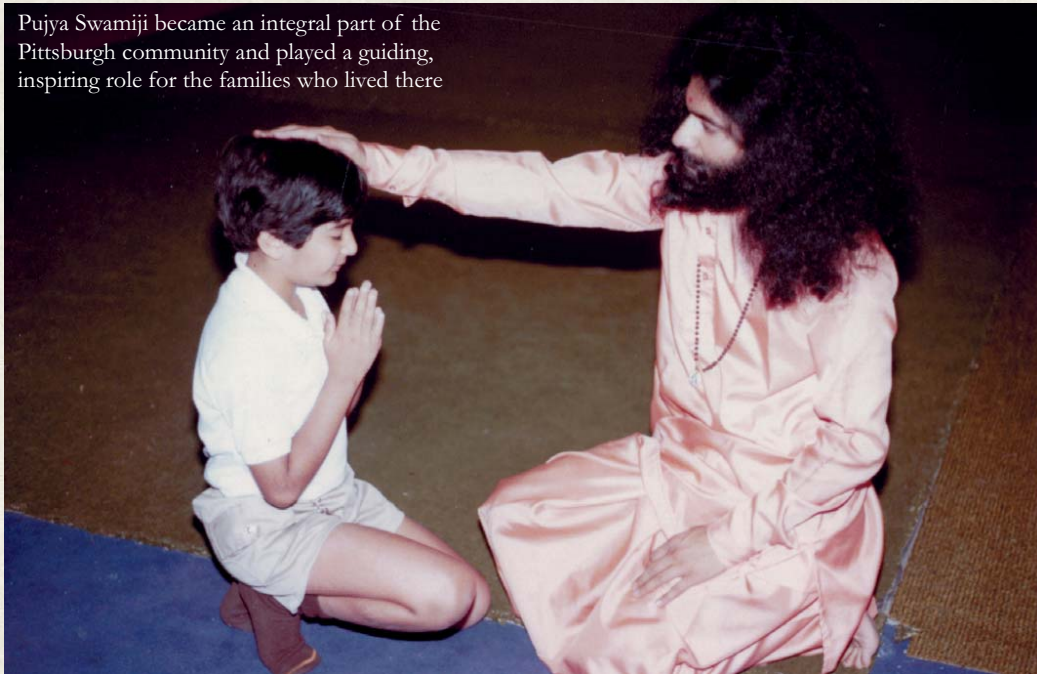
Departure of the Sikhs

The vandalism had tragic events beyond the tarred walls, broken marble deities and disheartened spirit of the community. It led ultimately to the departure of the Sikhs brothers and sisters from the temple. The vandals had ripped apart the most sacred Holy book of the Sikhs, the Guru Granth Sahib. This served as a catalyst for the Sikhs to solidify amongst themselves and consider the need for a Gurdwara of their own. Several devout Sikhs took the lead and were able to collect enough funds to purchase a property in Monroeville, a few miles away from the temple, and their Gurudwara was completed in 1984, the same year as the Hindu Temple Sthapana ceremony. The Hindu-Jain temple decided, upon the departure of their Sikh brothers and sisters, to have a Shiv temple in the place originally designated as a Gurudwara.

Sad in many ways though the departure of many South Indian Venkateswara followers and the Sikhs may have been, it has laid the ground for Monroeville to become a confluence of not only three rivers, but also a divine sangam of three places and traditions of worship -- the Hindu-Jain Temple, the SV Temple and the Gurudwara.

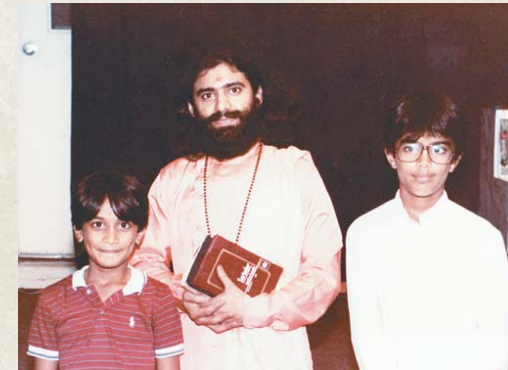


Pujya Swamiji became an integral part of the Pittsburgh community and played a guiding, inspiring role for the families who lived there



“There really was a strong camaraderie between everyone that centered around and was due to the Temple. It was a chance to grow up and bond with kids who shared our background and culture.

~ Devanshi Patel



“It is hard to imagine my growth into the person I am today without the Hindu-Jain Temple and the uncles and aunts who worked so hard to make it what it is today.

~ Anita Vin



ॐ HINDU TEMPLE ॐ

Om Jaya Jagadīśa Hare, Swāmi Jaya Jagdīśa Hare.
Bhakta janam ke samkṛta kṣāṇa me dura Kare. -- OM Jaya----

To dhyaṁve phala pāve, dukha Vinaśe mana Ka.
Sukha sampati ghara āve Kṣṭa mite tana Ka. --- OM Jaya---

Māt Pitā Tum Inese Śarana padhu (mai) Kisakī.
Tum line oure na dūjā, āśa karū mai kisakī, --- OM Jaya---

Tum Purana Parmātmā Tum Antaryāmī, - Swami Tum Antaryami ----
Para Brahma Parmeśvara Tum Sab Ke Swāmi, OM Jaya -----

Tum Karūṇa Ke Sāgara Tum Pālana Kartā,
Mai Sewaka Tum Swāmi, Kṛpa Karo Bhartā, --- Om Jaya----

Tum Ho Eka Agochara Sab Ke Pranapati.
Kisa Vidha Milu Dayamaya Tum ko Mai Kumati, --- OM Jaya--

Dina Bandhu Dukha Hartā Jhākura Tum Mere.
Apne Hātha Badhō (uthāo) Dhāra Padma Mai Tere. ---- Om Jaya--

Viśya Vikāra Mitāo Pāpa Haro Deva,
Śraddha Bhakti Badhō Santan Ki Sewā. ----- Om Jaya--

Tan Man Dhan Sab Kuchha Hai Terā.
Terā Tujha ko Arapan Kayā Lage Mera. ----- OM Jaya

OM JAYA JAGDISH HARE SWAMI JAYA -----

In order to teach the ancient, essential prayers -- such as aarti -- to Indian children born and raised in America, Pujya Swamiji personally used to hand write the English transliteration so they could follow along and learn the word.

—: ॐ FOR HINDU TEMPLE ॐ :—

ओम् जय जगदीश हरे, स्वामी जय जगदीश हरे ।
भक्त जनों के संकट, क्षण में दूर करे ॥ -----ओम् जय जगदीश हरे--

जो ध्यावे फल पावे, दुःख विनशे मन का ।
सुख सम्पत्ति घर आवे, कष्ट मिटे तन का ॥ ----- ओम् जय जगदीश

मात पित्त तुम मेरे शरण गहूँ मैं किसकी ।
तुम बिन और न दूजा, आस करूँ मैं जिसकी ॥ ----- ओम् जय---

तुम पूरण परमात्मा तुम अन्तर्यामी ।
पार ब्रह्म परमेश्वर तुम सबके स्वामी ॥ ----- ओम् जय जगदीश

तुम करुणा के सागर, तुम पालन कर्ता ।
मैं सेवक तुम स्वामी, कृपा करो भर्ता ॥ ----- ओम् जय---

तुम हो एक अगोचर, सबके प्राणपति ।
किस विधा मिलहुँ दयामय, तुमको मैं कुमति ॥ ----- ओम् जय---

दीन-बन्धु दुःखहर्ता, तुम रक्षक मेरे ।
अपने हाथ बढाओ, द्वार पड़ा मैं तेरे ॥ ----- ओम् जय--

विषय विकार मिटाओ, पाप हरो देवा ।
श्रद्धा भक्ति बढाओ, सन्तन की सेवा ॥ ----- ओम् जय--

तन मन धन सब कुछ है तेरा, स्वामी सब कुछ है तेरा ।
तेरा तुमको सौंपत, क्या लगे मेरा ॥ ----- ओम् जय---

Sant Narayan Muni

Part 4

STHAPANA

The first phase of construction of the five sanctoriums had been completed, fueled by the generosity of the initial founding members. However, following the foundational first phase of building, funds ran out. The second phase, which would include four walls, a basement and the roof, turning the five separate sanctoriums into a cohesive two-storied temple with a main hall was going to cost approximately \$150,000.



Preparations for a New Temple

Drawings and plans had been generously prepared first by Sthapathi Ganapathi and then by the Sompuras, but there were no funds to build according to the plans. Thus, temple committee members, with the inspiration and guidance provided by Pujya Swamiji, and under the leadership of Chaitanya Swaroop the President, decided to take a loan from the bank in order to complete the second, crucial phase. Only then could the temple actually take birth. Hari Misra took Sudhakar Reddy and Surender Sethi to his bank, the Pittsburgh National Bank in Latrobe where they agreed to loan the funds, on the condition that at least six doctors who owned their houses would co-guarantee the loan.

Six families generously came forwarded and mortgaged their own homes to ensure that the deities would have a proper home in which to be installed. These families were Kusum & Radhu Agrawal, Saryu & Jitu Desai, Urmila & Jaswant Modi, Deviyani & Inder Pandit, Pushpa & Sudhakar Reddy and Hira & Surendra Sethi.

Watching the walls come up on their temple filled the community members with not only piety and devotion but also with conviction that the temple project was truly on the verge of coming to fruition. Thus, inspired and optimistic, and now with a veritable spiritual head at the helm of the project, more and more people came forward with support, and donations began to flood in.

To raise funds for construction, Pujya Swamiji used to travel throughout Pittsburgh as well as to neighboring cities including Morgantown and Erie. R.D. Kapoor, Shiv Sharma, Balbhadradass, Jayendra Mehta and Ravi Sharma would travel with Pujya Swamiji on the wee weekends, as he led bhajans, kirtan, prayers and sacred puja in order to raise consciousness, awareness and funds for the temple.

Due to the increase in donations, even more work than anticipated was able to be completed. Architect Devanagar designed and was even able to complete the exterior of the Sanctum Sanctoriums, inside the temple.

As plans and designs were underway for the exterior and interior of the new hillside temple, the committee realized that – in addition to five elaborate, individual temples, sturdy walls, exquisite ornate doors and traditionally crafted pillars – new murtis would also be required. The murtis generously donated for the old temple were too small for the new spaces being designed. Further, during the vandalism, many had been broken irreparably.

Birlaji had generously agreed to arrange for not only the temple architecture but he also agreed to commission the sculpting of several murtis – Lakshmi-Narayan, Ma Durga, Shiv Parivar and the Jain murtis. Ram Parivar was lovingly donated by Shri Mohanlal Chopra, close devotees of Pujya Swamiji's from New Delhi, and Radha-Krishna was donated by the Saluja family and Uma-Prakash Shrivastava.

When the time came to order the murtis for the temple, Dr. Sudkakar Reddy asked Dr. Surender Sethi which murti to commission for the Jain mandir, the Digambar or Shwetambar murti. Sethiji replied, "I am Digambar, but people who are Swatambar will come here as well, so we should have both." Sudkakar conveyed this to Shri Birlaji who in turn consulted with religious experts in Bombay. The Jains of Bombay were shocked and said that both Shwetambar and Digambar could not be installed in the same temple. When Birlaji's letter arrived, reporting what the Jain experts had said and expressing his inability to provide the Jain murtis in light of the inevitable controversy, Sethiji replied, "No problem. Tell Birlaji not to worry about the Jain murtis. He can send the others and we'll arrange the Jain murtis ourselves." The community was committed to unity; even if it meant sourcing funds for murtis elsewhere, they were unprepared to sacrifice the very foundation on which

the temple was built. Ultimately, unable to convince the Pittsburgh community to choose one or the other, Birlaji agreed to send both Digambar and Shwetambar murtis.

Pujya Swamiji has always been a pastor of unity, non-violence, inclusiveness and acceptance. He explains this, in part, by the example he saw in his childhood. In the neighborhood where he spent his early pre-jungle childhood, there was a Hindu mandir which had a gurudwara on the first floor. The ground floor was for Hindus and just above it was for Sikhs. Just next door was a Jain temple. Thus, this concept of unity had been with him since childhood.

He led and guided the Hindu-Jain Temple with this firm commitment, and it has served not only the Pittsburgh community but the world community. As Dr. Sethi explains, "Ours was the first Jain temple in the whole world to give equal status to Shwetambar and Digambar, but now our example has been taken up, and all the new temples have both. We became a leader in the Jain community. Our temple was written up in England, India, everywhere."

Has there been any criticism? Have any of the Jain communities around the world felt that some sin has been committed? "No, not at all," both Dr. Sethi and Vinod Doshi are quick to explain. "There has been absolutely no dissention, no criticism at all, from anyone."

In fact, when Pujya Sushil Muniji and Pujya Chitrabhanuji came later, in May 1984 for the Prana Pratishtha, they had tears in their eyes. During the program they said, "We had this dream and you came and made this dream come true. Pittsburgh is a small community, compared to New York, Chicago or Los Angeles, but in this small community, you are the first to realize this dream of ours."

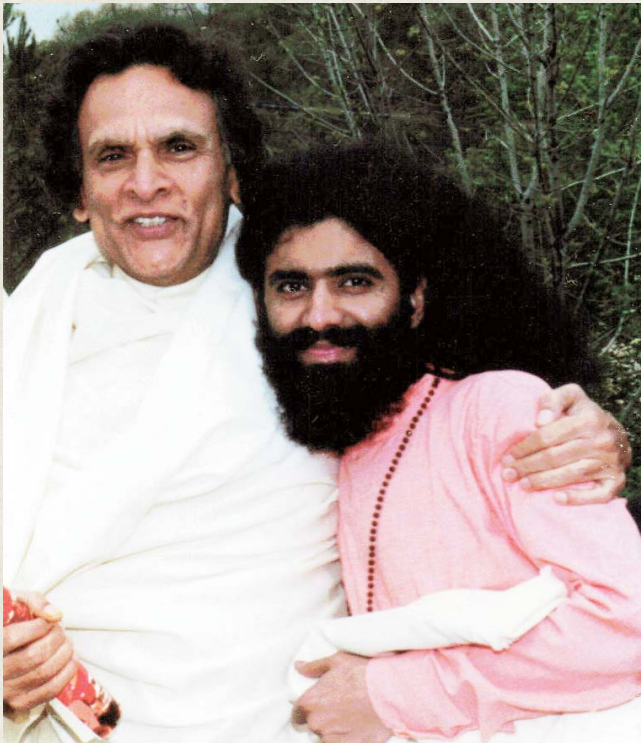


"When Pujya Swamiji came to Pittsburgh I was not a temple architect, but he made me one! Night after night, day after day we would review and revise the sketches – I have hundreds of them – until it was right. Since then I have designed more than sixty temples all over the world. The inspiration was definitely Him."

~ Shashi Patel



The temple during the Sthapana in May 1984



Pujya Swamiji and Pujya Acharya Chitrabhanuji



Children helping in the Sthapana preparations

It was not easy in the beginning. From 1980, when he performed the bhoomi puja with Pujya Swami Sadanandji, until long after both the sthapana and the inauguration of the final building, Pujya Swamiji ardently preached the importance of unity within the Jain tradition and between Hindus and Jains. Wherever he traveled in the world he shared, with great joy, the courageous step toward unity taken by the Monroeville temple. His courage, conviction and dedication turned dissenters into believers. Slowly, due to Pujya Swamiji's tenacity and resolve, and with the assistance and great support of Pujya Acharya Sushil Muniji Maharaj and Pujya Shri Chitrabhanuji and others, Jain communities around the world began to accept a newfound unity amongst themselves as well as with their Hindu brothers and sisters.

In October 1983, after successfully uniting and mobilizing the community as well as leading and guiding the planning for the new temple, Pujya Swami Chidanandji was supposed to return to India. However, the community was not ready to let him go. Sudhakar Reddy and Prakash Shrivastava wrote pleading letters to Pujya Swami Dharmanandji and Pujya Swami Sadanandji sincerely and humbly requesting them to let him stay on longer. Permission was granted and Pujya Swamiji extended his stay until December 1983 when he had to return for a couple of months to India, as per his promise to Pujya Swami Sadanandji.

Sthapana

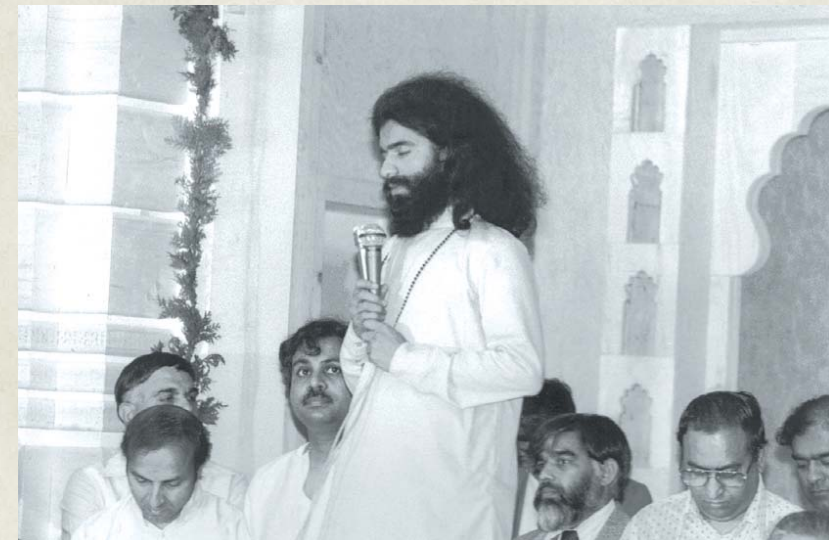
By late 1983, enthusiasm was at its peak. All could see that their dream of bringing forth a temple of unity was manifesting into reality. After the foundational phase of the five sanctuaries had been completed and the second phase of walls and a roof was well underway, the trustees knew they were nearing the moment when the temple would be ready for deity installation and they began to make plans for a sthapana ceremony.

In addition to those who came forward for the foundational and second phases of building, generous donations to the construction and decoration of the five individual temples were made by: Nila and Naval Kant Minaxi and Gautam Patel Molli and Rup Dua Kusum and Radhu Agarwal Chandra and Prem Sharma

Under Pujya Swamiji's leadership, the Hindu Temple Society began preparations for the grand Sthapana celebrations. The murtis had arrived, their special garments and accessories were carried from India personally by

Pujya Swamiji, and final touches were made to the individual temples which would house them. Excitement and piety filled the air as the community readied themselves and their temple to house the divine deities. The temple would be a home to not only framed images, conch shells, incense sticks, oil lamps and the devotion of hundreds, but it would be a home for actual deities, images carved from stone by India's best sculptors after deep meditation, images brought to life by the forthcoming prana pratishtha ceremony.

However, there were still a few minor hurdles to be overcome. Vinod Doshi recalls that the murtis, once they arrived from Jaipur, were being stored at Shukdev Grover's warehouse, and one day in the pouring rain he went over with Prem Shah to check them. Upon seeing the Shwetamber murti Parshwanath, he realized that the murti was supposed to have chakshus (glass eyes), but this murti did not have any. The Digambar murtis are portrayed with eyes closed, in meditation, yet the eyes are an indispensable part of the Shwetamber murtis.



With the sthapana ceremony only a week away, no place in America to obtain puja or mandir items other than the most basic, and a murti that was not complete, they panicked. However, the divine grace was upon them and within less than a week, safely in time for the sthapana ceremony the chakshus arrived from India, and with Shashibhai's help they were properly glued onto the murti just in time.

Sthapana celebrations began officially on Ram Navami day of 1984. For nine days during the most sacred days of the Hindu calendar, Pujya Swamiji led the community in the recitation of 125,000 japas of each yantra for each deity. Children from the temple's Sunday school filled notebooks with tens of thousands of mantras – lovingly and devotedly written over ever so many hours and days. These notebooks, carrying the piety of the

temple's children, were later placed in the foundation below each murti.

The actual sthapana celebrations also took place over nine days and nine nights, from May 5 – May 13, 1984. Each day was filled with sacred, ancient Vedic rites and rituals, an essential and inherent part of the prana pratishtha ceremony; each night was filled with joyous music from different parts of India. One night was Bengali music, one night Gujarati, one night Hindi, one night Marathi, etc.

On May 5, to officially inaugurate the celebrations, the women of the community, draped in a rainbow of brightly colored sarees, traditional pots of water with leaves and coconuts balanced atop their heads, joined Pujya Swamiji in leading the procession of the murtis to the new temple.

Devotees in procession, carrying the deities to the temple



Hindu and Jain leaders in Unity



Dr. Sudhakar Reddy with Acharya Chitrabhanuji

May 12-13 were the actual Prana Pratishtha ceremony days, the days in which the "Divine Breath" was brought into the beautiful stone statues, transforming them from murtis to deities. Over two thousand people attended from several neighboring states and even from India! The sthapana ceremony was graced by the presence of Pujya Swami Sadanandji, Pujya Sant Keshavdasji, Pujya Acharya Sushil Muniji, Pujya Acharya Chitrabhanuji, Pujya Swami Balyogi Arjun Puriji and of course Pujya Swami Chidanandji (Pujya Muniji).

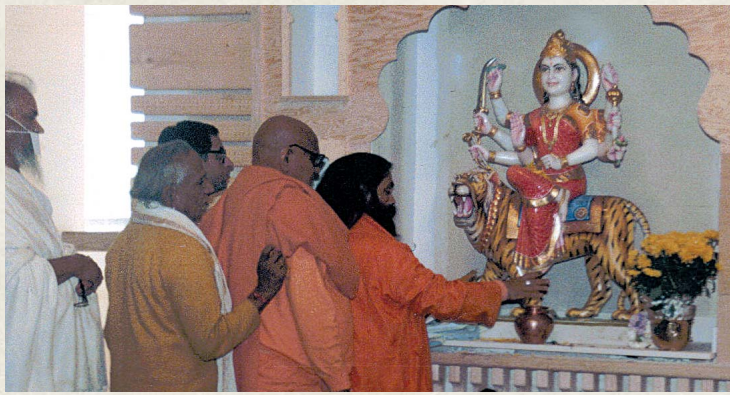
However, saints give more than their blessings to us. They give us, through their words, through their teachings and through their example, lessons in how to live. The day of the sthapana ceremony, all of the special, triangular flags had been prepared by the ladies of the community with the various

symbols for each temple. The flags were then filled carefully with flower petals and rolled so they would open with one pull, showering their flowers upon the deities. Shashibhai had made arrangements for the special hooks required above each temple from which the flags would hang.

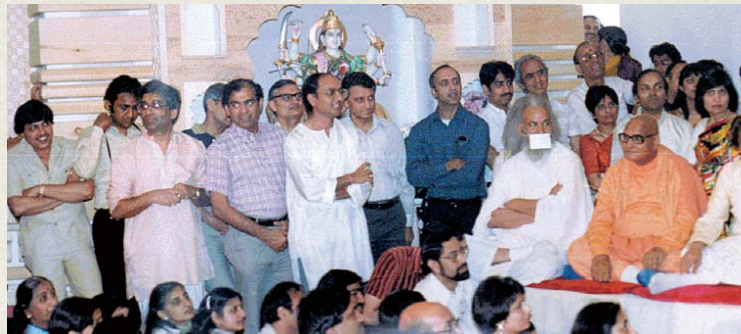
However, on the day of the sthapana. Vinodbhai came to Shashibhai with a special flag, brought personally from India by Acharya Sushil Muniji Maharaj which was to go above the Jain mandir. This flag was of a different shape, quite long and would require a special t-shaped pole and hook to hold it in place which was not possible on such short notice. The sthapana committee was in a quandary about how to proceed. How could one not use the specially blessed flag, carried from the motherland by a great saint? Yet, how to use it, logistically? So they

went downstairs to Pujya Swamiji's room where Pujya Sushil Muniji and many other swamis were sitting. They explained the situation to Pujya Sushil Muniji and he looked at Shashibhai and asked, "Is the other flag already up there, on the pole, already?" When Shashibhai answered in the affirmative, Pujya Sushil Muniji quickly said, "No problem. We will go out and do a special puja for that flag too, so it, also, becomes blessed. Then, that one can stay where it is and this one from India can be used later."

As Shashibhai remarks, "It was such a touchy, delicate situation that seemed to have no good solution. Yet, within barely a moment he solved it, so matter-of-factly, teaching us that there is always a simple and practical solution to every problem if we can just keep our minds open."



The sthapana celebration included, not only inspiring and uplifting discourses from the saints but also beautiful bhajans from Bhajan Samarat Shri Anup Jalota who flew in especially from India for the occasion. Anupji recounts the event as follows: "I was contacted first by Dr. Jaswant Sharma and then by the temple committee. They requested me to come and perform for the Sthapana celebration. Typically I have conditions attached to performing somewhere, but as soon as I heard that Pujya Muniji was involved I dropped all the conditions and I told them I'm coming. For me, Pujya Muniji is my guide and also my brother. We have a very special relationship."



The councilman for the local area, Thomas Schuerger also came and conveyed personal congratulations from the Mayor of Pittsburgh Michael Lynch. The event was also covered gracefully and appreciatively in the May 15th edition of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Clark Thomas, writing on behalf of the Post-Gazette, reported: "The dedication Sunday of the new Hindu Temple of Pittsburgh, located in Monroeville, is a milestone in a unique experiment in bringing different religions of India together under one roof. It also represents a triumph in human relations within the larger community... It is a valuable message not only for the many groups involved in the Hindu Temple but also for other divided religious communities as well." Thomas also specifically mentioned the resistance which been felt by the entire Monroeville community to the establishment of the temple, and how that resistance was overcome, leading ultimately to the creation of not only a beautiful mandir but also to harmony within the community. He wrote: "Significant, too, was the participation in the ceremonies of Monroeville government officials. Resistance by that community ten years ago to the establishment of a Hindu temple required court action by temple officials. But the healing of those wounds was signified by a congratulatory letter from Mayor Michael Lynch and a personal presentation by Councilman Thoman Schuerger conveying Monroeville's best wishes."

Prakash Shrivastava and Deviyani Pandit, the Sthapana chairpersons concluded their report on the celebrations by expressing great gratitude to all who had contributed in making the event a beautiful, inspiring and uplifting success. "The success of the program was due to the united support we received from the entire community. We are certain that as we enter a new place, these

devotees and others will continue to come forward to make this temple and this Sarveshwarapuri, the land of all divine manifestations, a success beyond our dreams."

The sthapana celebrations were made possible due to the generosity of tan, man and dhan by the following individuals:

- Kusum and Radheshyam Agrawal
- Veena and Amrit Agrawal
- Suman and Subhash Ahuja
- Rashmiben and Mahendra Bhalakia
- Ushaben and Jagdish Bhatnagar
- Bhanuben and Balabhadra Das
- Saryuben and Jitendra Desai
- Induben and Vinod Doshi
- Nilaben and Naval Kant
- Nirja and R.D. Kapoor
- Minaben and Jayendra Mehta
- Laxmiben and Jayant Mirani
- Deviyaniben and Indravadan Pandit
- Ranjanben and Harilal Patel
- Taruben and Rajani Patel
- Pushpa and Sudhakar Reddy
- Hira and Surendra Sethi
- Sarita and Vijai Singh
- Prakash and Uma Srivastava
- Kavita and Jamnadas Thakkar

Speeches by Councilman Thomas Shuerger, Prakash Srivastava, Jitubhai Desai and Deviyani Pandit





Prana Pratishtha Ceremony: Its Meaning

By
H.H. Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji

A Hindu Temple is a sacred place, endowed with divine energies and powers. At the heart of each temple lie the deities, to whom we bow and pray in worship. Why is it, though, that these statues, these “idols” are worshipped as God? How did they come to be infused with divine characteristics? The answer is the Prana Pratishtha ceremony. Prana is the sacred breath, the force by which we are kept alive. What is it that escapes in the last moment of our life, turning us from a person to a “body”? The prana. On our deathbed, we are still a man, or a woman, or father or mother. But the moment the prana has departed, we become a “body.” Pratishtha means to establish. So, prana pratishtha is the sacred ceremony through which life force is established into a statue, bringing it alive.

Puja Swamiji conducting the Prana Pratishtha ceremony



People say that Hindus are idol worshippers. We are not. We are ideal worshippers. It is not the plaster and marble and stone we revere; rather it is the presence of God which has been transmitted into these otherwise lifeless statues. Our human eyes cannot behold the image of the Divine; thus, God is kind and merciful enough to infuse our deities with His Divine Presence and allow Himself to be worshipped through these deities.

The deities in the temple serve as a window to the Divine. Through fixing our eyes upon the image, we are able to catch a glimpse of the

Supreme Reality. Just as looking through a telescope we are able to behold planets in outer-space, similarly through looking at the deity, we are able to behold the Divine.

The rites and rituals of Prana Pratishtha are followed strictly according to the Agamic texts. Prior to installation, priests who have been well trained in vedic rituals, perform specific mantras and pujas which have been shown to endow an inanimate object with divine life and energy.

One may wonder how it is possible that the Divine could enter into a slab of marble or stone or clay. However,

even if the entirety of the Supreme Reality doesn't inhabit the statue, even if only a tiny, infinitesimal fraction of the Supreme Reality gets established in the stone, it still becomes Divine. A fraction of infinity is infinity. Thus, even a tiny fraction of the infinite divine is still infinitely divine.

These mantras and rites begin with the simple man who sculpts the stone. He is not an ordinary artist. Rather, he is one who has been blessed with the ability to create a physical manifestation of God. He performs puja and prayer prior to and during the sculpting. He maintains, in his mind, the vision of the deity he is sculpting. He meditates upon the image of the Divine. He prays for God to come to life in his statue. His work area looks more like a temple than an art studio. So, from the very first moment, the stone is treated with reverence and piety, preparing it to carry the force of God.

Then, when the murtis are finished and taken to the temple, the special Prana Pratishtha ceremony typically lasts for five days. During this time, numerous special rites and rituals as detailed by the ancient texts, are performed and sacred mantras are chanted. It is after this complex set of sacred rituals that the murtis become infused with divine power and truly embody the God in whose manifest form they are created. At this point, they are no longer murtis. They are deities. After this, we no longer refer to the stone or other materials of which they are constructed. For, they have become sanctified and are now only a physical manifestation of aspects of the Supreme Reality. They are no longer marble. They are now divine. Lord Krishna tells us that, “Whatever form of Me any devotee worships with faith, I come alive in that form... Whenever one develops faith in Me – in My manifest form as the Deity or in any other of my manifestations – one should worship Me in that form. I

exist within all created beings as well as separately in both My un-manifest and manifest forms.”

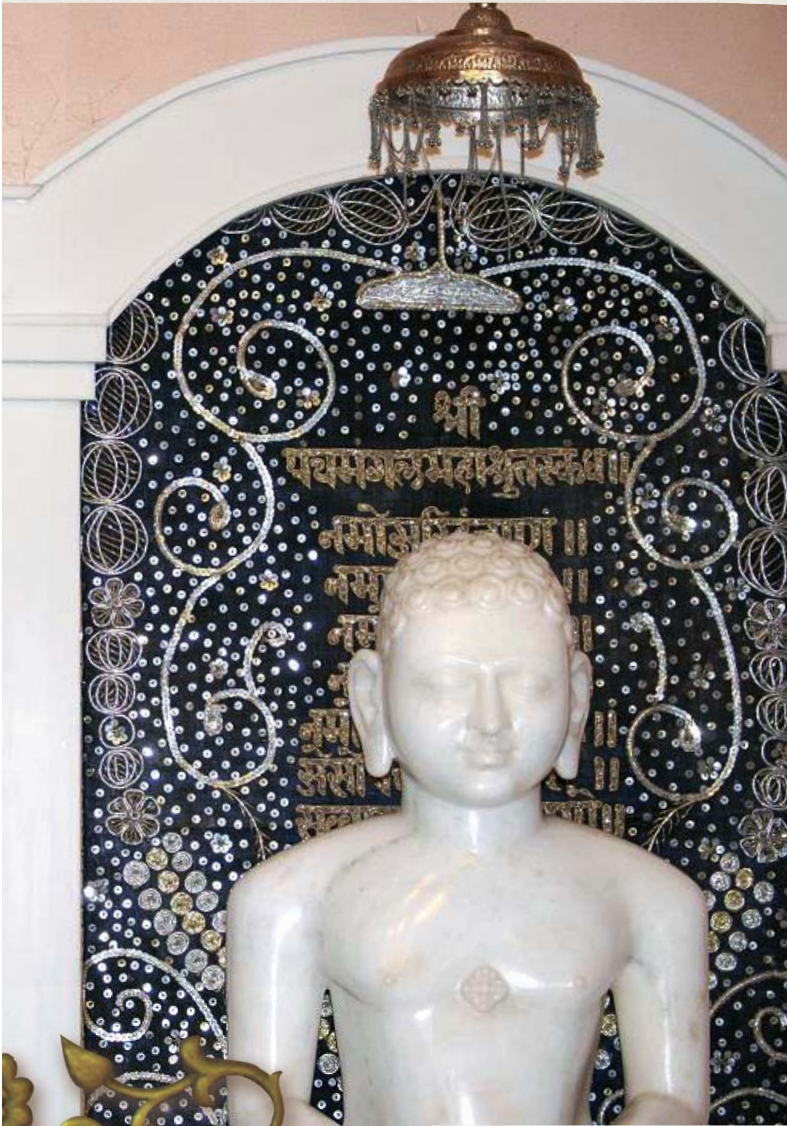
When the murtis become infused with Divine Life, the temple becomes alive. The deities form the living soul of the temple, and the building is the body.

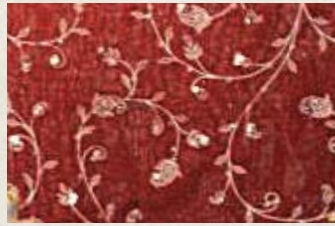
Some people may ask why we need deities, if God exists everywhere. It is very difficult for most people to envision the un-manifest, ever-present, all-pervading Supreme Being. It is easier for us to focus our attention and our love on an image of Him. It is easier to display love, affection and devotion to a physical deity than to a transcendent, omnipresent existence. Additionally, through the Prana Pratishtha ceremony and through our own faith and piety, this image of Him truly comes alive and becomes Him. So, by worshipping His image with faith and love, we arrive at His holy feet.

When we want electricity for our homes, we simply plug the appliance into an outlet. That outlet is connected to the main powerhouse. We do not have to go all the way to the powerhouse to plug in our blender or computer. Rather, the electrical lines have been laid; our individual house has been hooked up to the main powerhouse, so that now we only have to plug our appliance into the socket in order to receive electricity from the powerhouse. In the same way, the prana pratishtha ceremony is the equivalent of hooking up the murti to the Divine. The sacred rituals, pujas and mantras are the “expert techniques” through which the connection lines are laid. Then, when we want to connect to the divine, to receive that divine “charge” we simply go to the temple and connect with the deity. Through plugging ourselves into the deity with faith and love, we connect to the Divine Powerhouse.







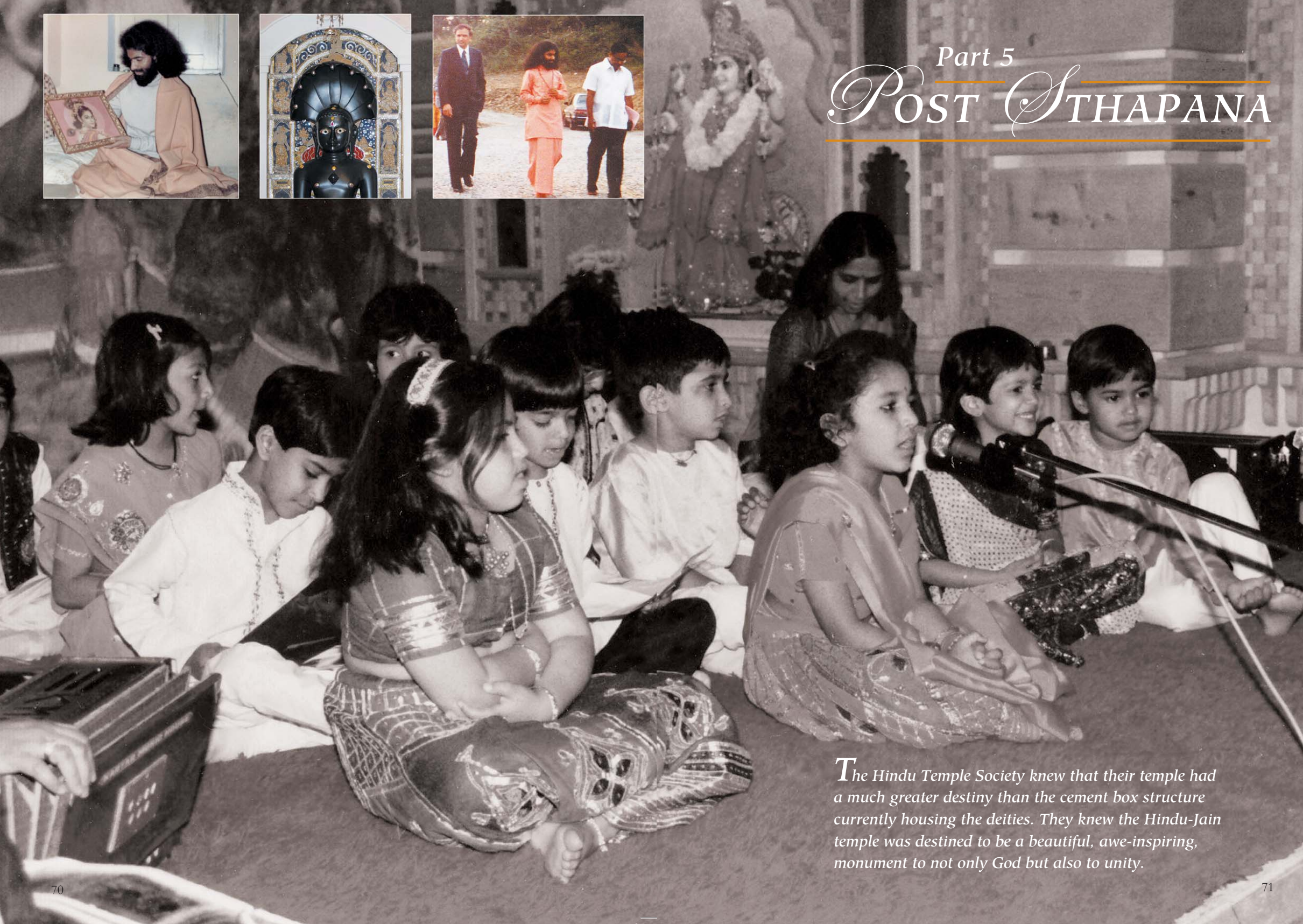








Part 5
POST STHAPANA



The Hindu Temple Society knew that their temple had a much greater destiny than the cement box structure currently housing the deities. They knew the Hindu-Jain temple was destined to be a beautiful, awe-inspiring, monument to not only God but also to unity.



Post Sthapana

The momentum for completion of the outside structure picked up considerably post sthapana and generous funds started to pour in. The same community members who – more than a decade prior – had been interns, residents and graduate students, now were successful professionals. Further, the great increase in programs, activities and general involvement of the community, as initiated and led by Pujya Swamiji, resulted in more and more people feeling that they, too, were part of giving birth to the temple.

The Hindus and the Jains were committed to seeing their temple through to its establishment as a grand religious and cultural monument. They were committed to building the full temple, in all its glory, and they were committed to maintaining their unity as a symbol and example for Hindus and Jains across the world.



Name Change

Having lost first the South Indian adherents to the authentic Venkateshwara temple and later the Sikhs, the Hindus and Jains felt that their lasting relationship should be officially solemnized. Thus, on June 1, 1986 the Hindu Temple of Pittsburgh became officially the Hindu-Jain Temple of Pittsburgh. This decision to change the name was not due to feelings of separateness or distinction between members of the two faiths, but rather an effort to proclaim to the world that these traditions were united. Vinod Doshi explains, “We wanted the name so that whenever people drove by on the turnpike, they would see the sign and know that there was a Jain temple near by where they could worship. We wanted all the neighboring cities to know that Jains weren’t merely being allowed to worship in a Hindu temple, but rather that the temple building actually included full Hindu temples as well as a full Jain temple.”

They sought Pujya Swamiji’s guidance on the matter. He encouraged them to make the name change official as he felt it would give the Jains even more of a feeling that the temple was equally theirs, and that they were united not only in spirit but also in name. Vinod Doshi explains that it all was “only due to Pujya Swamiji’s vision and blessing. I’ve never come across any saint who is so open and broadminded. That has kept us united.”

The addition of the name “Jain” was something that brought added prestige as well as uniqueness to the temple. When Vinod Doshi and Dr. Inder Patel went to nearby Cleveland, Ohio to speak to the Hindu and Jain communities there, they were so supportive of the unity at the Pittsburgh temple that they donated one shikhar, at twenty-five thousand dollars.

However, in every community, as even in every family, there are differences of opinion, of character and of nature. Thus, although the vast majority of the community was in favor of the official name change which recognized the Jains, not only implicitly but also explicitly, there were a few dissenters in both communities who continued to feel, despite more than a decade of sharing and worshipping together, that the two faiths did not belong under one roof. A temporary sign was erected, while the permanent sign was being commissioned and prepared, which stated “Hindu-Jain Temple.” Early one morning, when Pujya Swamiji went outside for his morning walk, he found that during the night someone had come and knocked down the “Jain” part of the sign, leaving it to read “Hindu temple.” Quietly and immediately he nailed back up the word “Jain” before the first worshippers arrived in the morning, lest anyone should know what had happened. A few days later, again, early in the morning, he found letters from the sign on the ground. Yet, this time it was the word “Hindu” which had been knocked down. Again, he quietly nailed back up the letters.

It was imperative to Pujya Swamiji that no one should know about these occurrences. A few isolated incidents, a few dissenters and a couple of people unable to see beyond barriers and boundaries should not cast a shadow over the glow of unity in which the entire community was basking. Thus, he mentioned the events to no one.

Too frequently in life we get bogged down in negativity, in gossiping, grumbling and complaining. We focus on that which is blocking our path or thwarting our progress rather than focusing on the actual destination. Pujya Swamiji’s goal was not only to create a beautiful monument of Indian culture and spirituality but

also to unite the community. He knew that if community members started focusing on difficulties or disagreements, it would only undermine the project and prevent achievement of the goal. He shares a beautiful story illustrating the importance of staying focused on the destination rather than on the obstacles along the way:

“When I was very young, not long after I came to Parmarth Niketan, a very old, revered saint came to Rishikesh to give his divine satsang at Parmarth Niketan. However, rather than staying in the comforts of the ashram, he used to stay in a small hut on the banks of Ganga a little bit away from the center of the ashrams. I was given the special seva of going to pick him up each morning and bring him to the ashram. As we walked through the busy marketplace, I would try to push everyone and everything out of his way so that this revered saint could walk comfortably and unimpeded to the ashram. I asked everyone along the way, Side please. Please give us the way to walk. I would gently push all of the wandering cows out of his path. I moved standing bicycles and fruit carts out of the way. Finally as we reached the gate of the ashram I was feeling very glad that I had been able to bring him so safely and smoothly to the ashram, and that I had been able to clear such a nice path for him to walk.

This saint, however, looked at me lovingly and said, Beta, kis kis ko hatate rahoge? Aur kab tak hatate rahoge? My child, how many people and cows can you push out of the way? For how long can you move other people and things out of your path? That is not the way. Apna rasta banate jao. Apna rasta banake nikalte jao. Do not try to move others; rather find your way between the obstacles and around them. Make your own path, but do not worry about moving others.”





Pujya Swamiji teaches as follows: In our lives we frequently get frustrated and broken by feeling that obstacles are blocking our way or thwarting our path. We blame their presence or the actions of other people for our own failure. We try to push people and obstacles aside to clear a way for ourselves in life.

However, obstacles never stop coming. People who are jealous never stop trying to block our path. For how long can we try to move them aside? How many obstacles can we try to push away? The answer is to simply find our own way, around them, between them. If they are blocking the path on the right, we walk on the left. If they are blocking the path on the left, we walk on the right.

So much of our precious time, energy and focus are wasted in the futile task of trying to remove obstacles and other people from our path. It is not necessary. Find your own path around the obstacles. Find your own path around the enemies. Do not try to push them aside or push them down or fight them for the right of way. Rather, carefully examine the situation and see where the path is clear. Then, choose that path and continue on your way.

The more attention we give to those who are trying to sabotage us and thwart our progress, the less time and energy we have to walk the right path. In that way, then, the enemies win, for they have stolen our peace of mind, our tranquility, our joy and also our time. Instead of trying to fight them out of the way, we must remain humble, pure and single-minded in the goal. If we can see our destination clearly then we will always be able to find a path in which to walk. So, keep the destination firm in your mind. Stay focused on the goal and nikalte chalo, chalte chalo, chalte chalo. [move around the obstacles and continue on the path.]

This teaching was exactly what Pujya Swamiji modeled in dealing with the few people who were against the formation of a Hindu-Jain temple. He remained quiet, but clear and focused on the goal, never giving importance to the obstacles or allowing them to block his way.

However, Pujya Swamiji did find himself wondering why these events were taking place, why was it that there was dissention amongst even a few in the community? If the Hindus and Jains were each devotedly worshipping their own forms of the Divine manifestation, how could anyone be going astray? In response to his inner queries, one night at midnight, after everything had been closed and locked up, he went to the temple doors and peeked quietly in to the sanctum through the key hole. He found everything peaceful. The deities were all silent and still in their respective temples. Another night, shortly thereafter, he went at 1:00 in the morning, again peeking into the darkness of the temple sanctum through the keyhole. Again, all was quiet and peaceful. Several times during the course of the next few weeks, He went at various times throughout the night to check on the mandir. Always he found nothing but the stillness of harmony.

At the next large function in the community, during his lecture, he mentioned his investigation:

“I thought that, perhaps, when everyone went home, when the doors were locked and the lights shut off, Lord Shiva and Lord Mahavir got down off their pedestals and started fighting on the floor of the temple. I thought that perhaps they yelled at each other, called each other names and vandalized each other’s stands. However, I can tell you today that no matter what time of night I went to check, our deities were sitting quietly, peacefully and lovingly in the temple.



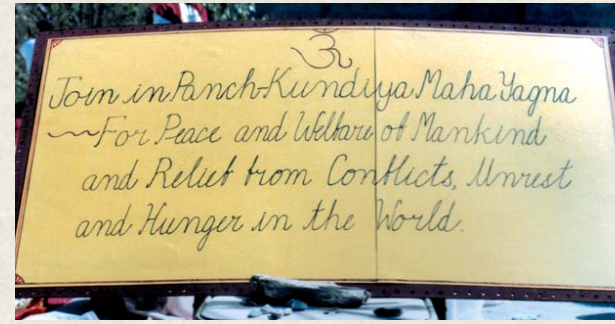
Even when the lights were out, even when no one was watching, they sat peacefully together. If our Gods can live in peace in one room, why cannot we live in peace in one community? If our Gods are sitting together calmly and lovingly, then why are we criticizing, slandering and hurting each other? Are we not supposed to live our lives as our Gods dictate?”

Like the head of a family who quietly and successfully keeps all family members in line, so he served the community, quickly and silently quelling any sparks of dissention before they became fires of discord. Slowly yet surely, with no breath to sustain them, the sparks of dissention extinguished themselves. For more than twenty years now, there has been nothing other than love, brotherhood, and harmony between the Hindus and the Jains.

One time, however, a well known spiritual personality came to the temple. It was a time when Pujya Swamiji was back at the ashram in

Rishikesh, and hence was not there to receive her personally. As she stood in the center of the temple, surveying first Laxmi-Narayan, then Radha-Krishna, then Rama Parivar, then Shiva-Parvati, then the Jain temple, then the yagna kund, she began to complain of intense dizziness and nausea. “I am going to faint,” she said during her lecture. “This temple is making me sick. We have on one side the incarnation of rajo-guna, then over here is the incarnation of tamo-guna, and over here is satva-guna. They cannot all be together in one place. Whoever designed and created this temple will go to Hell for sure!” When this event was recounted to Pujya Swamiji, He responded by saying, “If I have to go to Hell for building a temple of unity, I am prepared to face that. I am worried about prejudice. I am worried about barriers and boundaries between brothers and sisters. I am worried about discrimination. I am not worried about Hell. If we go to Hell, don’t worry. We will build a Hindu-Jain temple there also!”





In the summer of 1986 a Maha Yagna was organized, in which devotees performed the sacred yagna ceremony around five large havan kunds. Yagna is one of the most common ritual in Indian tradition. This Maha-Yagna was performed for world peace and the alleviation of hunger and poverty in the world. Pujya Swamiji has always been committed to doing whatever he possibly can to help lead the world toward peace and harmony; hence, he has played an active role in innumerable international, interfaith peace summits and forums at the United Nations, the Parliament of World Religions, the World Council of Religious Leaders, etc. However, in addition to his active work for peace in the form of dialogue, negotiation and conflict-resolution, he has also frequently organized large pujas and prayer ceremonies. "Do your best and then leave the rest to God," has been his lifelong motto. We must work tirelessly and tenaciously for peace in whatever way we can, and then we must pray that God will take the rest into His hands. Therefore, Pujya Swamiji's work for peace has always taken both forms – active, field work and also active prayer and puja.

Celebrations and Events

Once the deities had been installed and the formal prana pratistha performed, the Hindu Temple officially shifted its premises from the lower temple to the new mandir on the hillside. What now would be referred to as the "old temple" remained the location for Sunday school, meetings, community kitchen, the library and, of course, Pujya Swamiji's room. Later, in 1998 it would be renovated into a full fledged, two-story community center.

The new hillside temple became the site for daily puja and aarti, regular yagnas, innumerable events, festivals and celebrations, including of course all of the Hindu and Jain annual holidays.

May 1985 was the first Sthapana anniversary celebration, the highlight of which was definitely the song and dance performances by the children. From 1985 onward, a tradition was established, and each year during the first or second weekend of May, the annual sthapana celebrations are held with great piety, devotion and extravagance.





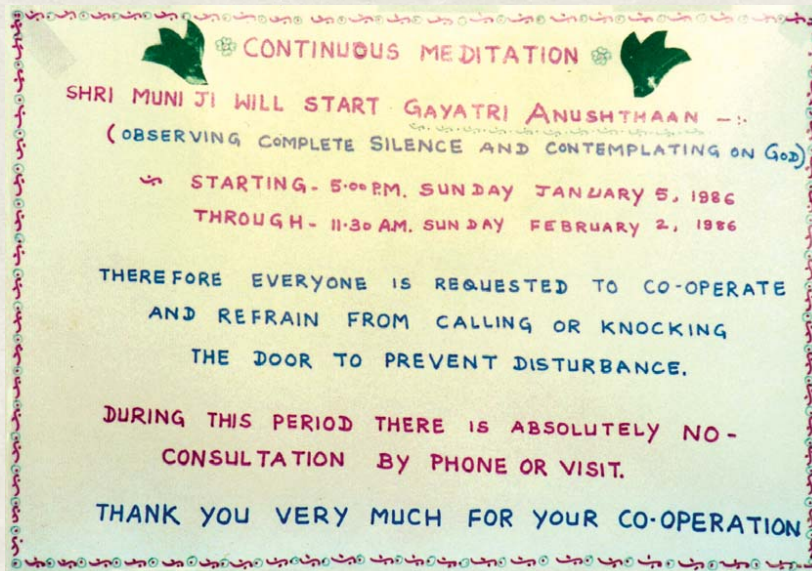
Pujya Swamiji's Anushthan

The summer of 1985 was a record cold year. It was the first time Pujya Swamiji had seen so much snow. Although his childhood had been spent in the Himalayas, and thus he had experienced severe cold, frost and even snow, and although he had now spent several winters in Pittsburgh he had never seen snow the way it came down in the winter of 1985. In a letter to a devotee he has written beautifully: "There is snow everywhere and nothing but snow! Snow on the rooftops, snow on the cars, snow on the trees, snow on every bit of land...I wonder, if it is snow on the earth or the earth of snow...snow on the trees or are they snow trees...I am really enchanted by these snow-covered trees! Pittsburgh ashram looks adorned like the mighty Mount Kailash situated in the marvelous snow white ranges of magnificent Himalayas...how wonderful! Surrounded by this glorious snow white purity, this ashram emerges to be an incredibly blissful experience. Peace and harmony everywhere... oh, how beautiful!! Inspired

by this perfect peace within and without, I have decided to undertake ANUSHTHANA of 40 days silence from January first week to February second."

And he did. From January 5 – February 2, 1986, Pujya Swamiji undertook a forty-day silent Gayatri anushthan in the temple. Seeing no one, speaking to no one, he spent forty days engrossed in nothing but the Divine. Community members comment on the incredible vibrations one could feel during the time of his anushthan "Although we did not have his darshan for forty long days, and we missed him terribly, the spiritual vibrational energy was amazing. Merely upon entering the temple compound, one could sense that something truly remarkable was taking place inside."

Upon his emergence from the anushthan on February 2, 1986, as he was greeted lovingly by the crowd of devotees waiting outside his room, eager for the first darshan, he looked at Haribhai Patel and said, "Kem cho,



Haribhai?" Pujya Swamiji's native tongue is Hindi. He was schooled in Sanskrit, and he spent much of his youth in the mountains and villages of Punjab. He also had a long association with many people of Marwar background from Rajasthan. Thus, Hindi, Sanskrit, Punjabi and Marwari flow natively from his tongue. But Gujarati? In the decades since 1986, he has spent a great deal of time in Gujarat and has thousands of Gujarati devotees. However, in 1986 his physical connection to Gujarat was limited; he had traveled there fewer than half a dozen times. Yet, upon emergence from a forty-day silence, the first words that fell from his tongue were in Gujarati.

Stunned, Haribhai told him "Thoke Raakho" [keep speaking]. Keep speaking he did and his Gujarati today is so fluent that many people actually think he is natively Gujarati. "In some past life I was definitely Gujarati," He says. "It took this

particular anushthan for the language to come back. It just came to me during the anushthan. In my room there was a Ramcharit Manas book by Pujya Morari Babu in Gujarati. During the periods of the day when I was not doing japa I would read the scriptures. One day I picked up this Ramcharita Manas and just began to read it, fluently and with no difficulty, as though it were my native tongue."

As Pujya Swamiji's life became more and more involved with more and more humanitarian projects, and guiding more and more devotees around the world, he no longer had the time to take off for months or years of silence as he had done previously. However, the 40-day anushthan became a staple of his annual routine and he regularly undertook them in USA and later in Australia, when he was living there as the inspirer and creator of the first underground temple in the world, a Hindu temple in Sydney.



Exterior Design and Construction Continues

In February of 1987, Muthiah Sthapathi, a world renowned temple architect from South India who has been awarded both the Silpa Kalamani and Silpa Rathnakara titles from the Government of India, came to Pittsburgh to work out details of exterior design and construction. Throughout 1987 and 1988 detailed plans were finalized on paper for the intricate carvings on the outside and the inside of the temple. However, again there was a shortage of funds. Deepak Kotwal recalls that “I served as treasurer at that time during construction, and I was working at Mellon Bank at that time. Our account was also at Mellon Bank, and I remember that whenever the contractor would come for his payment, I would notice that our account was empty and there was no money to pay him. Thus, I always had to go to Jitubhai or Sethiji to collect the money to pay the contractor.” However, as the temple began to take its beautiful shape, more and more people came forward to offer their support.



On August 8, 1988 the shilpies arrived from Chennai, to carry out the final, detailed carving work. For nearly two years, these masters of masonry toiled with love, devotion and tirelessness until cement pillars, ramps, beams and posts had become canvases upon which the Indian spiritual culture was carved. Finally from the 22-29 September 1990 the grand inauguration ceremony was held.

The construction of this temple was truly a long undertaking of deep sadhana on the part of all the temple members. Whenever they thought it was nearly ready, there was always yet one more phase of construction work left to be done.

Shashibhai Patel sums up the challenge of getting the temple off the ground: “People don’t realize how much is required to build a temple. I remember when this temple was nothing but concrete blocks. Everyone kept complaining about when it would be completed, about what was taking so long. It took years, years and hundreds and hundreds of manhours, endless committee meetings. Even just selecting the red brick to use, which brick should be used, was a huge issue. The unity of the community is so strong that luckily everyone worked together, but no one realizes how much is involved.”





Part 6
TEMPLE ACTIVITIES



The Hindu-Jain temple is a place where people come for daily puja and aarti, for weekly events such as Shivabhishek or Hanuman Chalisa, for holidays and festivals as well as to celebrate major life events and rites of passage.



Seva and Sanskaras

In Indian culture, there are sixteen main rites of passage, referred to as sanskaras. They include a child's first haircut and marriage and culminate in the ash immersion or final rites. One of the most sacred of the sanskaras is the sacred thread ceremony, or upanayana sanskar, traditionally performed for young boys at the beginning of their Vedic studies. [Side bar on upanayana sanskar] It is the Hindu parallel to a Jewish boy's bar-mitzvah or a Christian boy's communion. Typically, in traditional India, it is a ceremony performed only for boys and only for boys of the Brahmin caste. This is due to the simple fact that the purpose of the ceremony is to ready a boy to read the scriptures. As girls traditionally did not take to the priestly path, there was no need for them to go through this rite of passage. They were not reading from original scripture.

Further, as the priest class was made up entirely of Brahmins, with other castes fulfilling the other professions, young boys of other castes did not have any reason to undergo the upanayana sanskara.

However, tragically, as fluid systems of logistic arrangement based upon individual temperament became static, rigid hierarchies based on birth, the upanayana sanskar has taken on even greater significance. Now, not only does it signify a young boy's passage from a playful childhood to serious scriptural study, but it also symbolizes the thick lines between castes. Brahmin boys, even those having no intention of becoming priests or studying the scriptures, undergo the sacred ceremony, marking them with a physical reminder (in the form of three interwoven threads) of their caste.

In recent years some institutions -- particularly those outside of India -- have begun to question withholding the sanskara from non-brahmin boys, and in several places non-brahmins are permitted, although not encouraged, to undergo it as well. Pujya Swamiji's gurukul at Parmarth in Rishikesh, India is one of the very few institutions in India where non-brahmins undergo the sanskara alongside their brahmin brothers. Girls still almost never receive it anywhere.

Deepak Kotwal recalls the time the subject of the upanayana sanskar was being discussed in his family. His daughters wanted to know why they were not allowed to have it. Thus, Deepakji began a search in the scriptures to find out whether there was any particular prohibition against girls undergoing the ceremony. When he could find nothing, he went to

Pujya Swamiji to ask if it was okay to have the upanayana sanskar performed for his daughters at the temple. Pujya Swamiji, of course, said "no problem." Along with Deepakji's daughters and a few other girls, a young boy of a lower caste also received the sacred thread in the same ceremony. The boy actually belonged to another temple where he had been permitted but not encouraged to undergo the sanskara. Sensing the strong lack of support, he opted out of the ceremony at the other temple but came and enthusiastically received his sacred threads at the Hindu-Jain temple.

This is part of the temple's unique and divine gift -- a gift of unity, between all peoples, of all faiths, all castes and all classes. It is a place where God is worshipped not merely by the letter, but also by the spirit.

A young boy receiving his sacred thread, at the official janeo sanskar



SACRED THREAD

The Upanayana sanskar or yagno pavit is essentially an initiation ritual. The child is initiated into the study of the sacred Vedas. It marks the transition from the infantile stage of play to the serious stage of study and sadhana. The upanayana sanskara typically takes place around the 8th year of a child's life; however, some receive it as early as 5 and some as late as 12 or even older. To many, it is regarded as one of the most important sanskaras of childhood. Further, it is considered such an essential sanskara that most traditions concede that, however late it may be, the sanskara should still be performed.

It is said that the sacred thread ceremony marks a new life. The child, traditionally, leaves the family home at this young age to go and live with the Guru in the Guru's ashram or in a gurukul. Upa means "near to" and Nayan means "to take (him) to", so upanayana is the sanskara of taking the child near to the guru.

At the sacred thread ceremony, the child enters the brahmacharya stage of his life -- a time of complete focus and immersion in his studies and spiritual growth.

The three strings of the janeo (the threads) denote the three gunas - sattva (reality and truth), rajas (passion), and tamas (darkness). Their significance is that the wearer must be above the three gunas, must transcend the bondage of the three qualities of life. They also remind the wearer that he has three debts in life: to the seers, saints & rishis, to his ancestors and to God. The three strings are tied in a knot which is called the brahmagranthi and it symbolizes the united trinity of Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Sustainer) and Shiva (the Destroyer).



Summer Camp

In the spring of 1981, Dr. Amrit Agarwal and Dr. Hari Tayal were discussing the need for a place where their children could go during summer vacations, where they could not only learn about Hindu culture but actually live, breathe and imbibe it, a place where learning would be not only educational but also entertaining and enjoyable. They decided, therefore, to start a summer camp for the children of the temple.

A beautiful location was chosen on the banks of Lake Erie, replete with log cabins, a dining hall, sports facilities, and of course access to the lake. Ms. Sarojini, a school teacher from New York City who specialized in working with disabled children was hired to run the camp. Her tremendous knowledge of Indian culture combined with melodious singing voice made her a wonderful asset. The first summer camp took place in August of 1981, and has become an annual tradition.



According to Subhash Ahuja, “The youth camp and the Sunday school have been the most beneficial services that the temple has provided.” Rohit Agarwal agrees: “The camps did a phenomenal job of exposing us to much of our Hindu roots. We learned mantras along with their meanings. We learned bhajans. We learned about different poojas and became fairly proficient with the aarti ceremony. We were given opportunities to ask ‘why’ with regards to our traditions. We were able to meet and bond with other children of similar backgrounds and formed lifelong friendships. To this day, we may meet after many years but still share fond memories of our camp days.”

Puja Swamiji graced the camp with his presence, and he filled the atmosphere with joy. Puja Swamiji immediately became one with the children, leading them in prayers and chants, teaching them to sing the aarti, as well as just inspiring and guiding them as they all enjoyed the beautiful natural surroundings.

Rohit Agarwal remembers, “I will never forget that first Hindu Jain Temple Summer Camp when Swamiji (then known as “Muniji”) arrived. He was a young, charismatic, vibrant, and energetic man. He was different from all of the previous spiritual leaders we had seen. He was one of us, down to earth, and a friend. He made the religious teachings enjoyable and brought smiles to our faces. We loved him...he was our hero and our leader.”

Vasviben Patel describes the way Puja Swamiji taught all the children how to do japa: “It wasn’t only japa of Krishna or Shiva or other forms of God. Rather the japa Puja Swamiji taught everyone was ‘no problem.’ All of the children still remember their ‘no problem’ mantra. In fact, today, decades later whenever anything happens with my own children, they always say, ‘No problem, Mom,’ or ‘No problem, Dad.’”

When one speaks to the children of the temple, those who are no longer

children (and many of whom now have children of their own), but to whom I’m referring as “children of the temple” for they are the ones who grew up in the shadow of its establishment, when one speaks with them, inevitably one will hear about the summer camp. Devanshi Patel shares, “There really was a strong camaraderie between everyone that centered around and was due to the Temple. It was a chance to grow up and bond with kids who shared our background and culture. Sunday School and Temple Camp allowed us to build on those bonds and create some great friendships and memories.”

Neil, Shawn and Jayshiv Badlani describe their camp experience as follows: “We did not realize how lucky we were to have a camp like this until we all went to college and talked to other Indian Americans, who had had no community or experience like it. Their jaws dropped and their eyes filled with envy when we described how, every summer we and approximately 80 of our closest friends, with the same upbringing and values, gathered to enjoy each other’s company and learn and embrace our religion, culture, and history.”

The credit for the establishment and early running of the camp goes to the following people who planned as well as executed all the major and minor details for enjoyment, education, entertainment and upliftment. These families include:

Veena and Amrit Agrawal
Rashmiben and Mahendra Bhalakia
Saryuben and Jitendra Desai
Laxmiben and Jayant Mirani
Ranjanben and Harilal Patel
Taruben and Rajni Patel
Uma and Prakash Shrivastava

Anita vin sums up the greatest gift of the summer camp: “I think one of the most important things summer camp did for me was to make religion and praying fun.”

“This temple has truly enriched our life in countless ways. Our children used to go to camp and have personal interaction with Puja Swamiji. They are doing very well these days and I know it is due to the way their lives were enriched through participation in the temple.”

~ Vinod srivastava:

“We did not realize how lucky we were to have a camp like this until we all went to college and talked to other Indian Americans, who had had no community or experience like it. Their jaws dropped and their eyes filled with envy when we described how, every summer we and approximately 80 of our closest friends, with the same upbringing and values, gathered to enjoy each other’s company and learn and embrace our religion, culture, and history.”

~ Neil, Shawn and Jayshiv Badlani:





“There really was a strong camaraderie between everyone that centered around and was due to the Temple. It was a chance to grow up and bond with kids who shared our background and culture. Sunday School and Temple Camp allowed us to build on those bonds and create some great friendships and memories.”

~ Devanshi Patel

Sunday School

The goal of the Hindu-Jain temple family, founders and committee members has always been not only to create a place of worship, but also to create a place where their children could learn about the ancient, timeless teachings of Indian culture. As young professionals, very few had time to personally sit with their children for extended periods,

explaining the details and nuances of their rich culture. Growing up in India, there are always myriad extended family members and village members to play the roles of aunts and uncles, looking after children and infusing their young minds with essential sanskaras. However, in America, this village does not exist. There is no one to pick up

where parents leave off. There are not rows of neighbors' homes to which children go and learn different prayers, songs, stories and rituals. Even more destructively, the Western media influence is so strong that children born and raised in America tend to be more content sitting in front of sitcoms than reading books on the Indian epics or puranas.



Hence, it was of vital importance to create a place where the children could come together, not only to meet each other, sharing the joys and exasperations of being Indian in Pittsburgh, but also where they could imbibe some of that divine cultural and spiritual essence.

Summer camp was wonderful, but it was only a week during the summer. Its effect was profound, but limited. Hence, the temple members felt it was crucial to establish a Sunday school where children of all ages could come, each week, to learn about and revel in the joy of their ancient heritage.

Vinod Doshi and Sati Mazumdar were instrumental in beginning the school which is still flourishing, thriving, teaching and touching young children today under the current leadership of Drs. Krishan and Madhu Aggarwal and their team. It established a pattern for Indians to come and spend Sunday at the temple, drawing them there rather than to shopping centers or sports matches. As Anita Vin says, "On Sundays, almost my entire day was spent at the temple. It solidified the

place of the temple in my life as a place of worship and a lifeline to my heritage."

Sunday school, like summer camp, is a time when the children bond not only to each other but also to their roots and their culture. It's a time when they learn the answers to their questions and their doubts are assuaged. Devanshi Patel describes the effect of Sunday school as follows: "As a rag-tag bunch of children who were as smart as we were energetic, we didn't realize how Sunday School at Hindu-Jain Temple laid the foundation for our knowledge and pride in being Indian and members of one of the more philosophically liberal and empirically based religions. I believe this is something many of us carry throughout our lives."

Anita Vin is effusive in her appreciation of the temple and Sunday school: "It is hard to imagine my growth into the person I am today without the Hindu-Jain Temple and the uncles and aunties who worked so hard to make it what it is today. As a child, going to the temple meant Sunday School, the place where Gautam Uncle (the principal) called

attendance and each student had to yell out "Ji haa, sir" when his or her name was called. Sunday School is where I met Hindu girls my age with similar families, interests, and daily struggles. It was absolutely a place where I developed a sense of my identity, which so easily can dissolve away when you're surrounded otherwise by children who look different than you and don't seem to understand the difference between Indian-American and American Indian (Native American)."

One of the highlights of Sunday school, just like summer camp, was always Pujya Swamiji. Whenever he was in town he would take part in the Sunday school, leading the children in prayers and bhajans, teaching the words to Aarti, telling stories from the scriptures, and giving lucid, logistical and compelling answers to their innumerable questions. Devanshi Patel remembers: "I remember during Sunday School, as Pujya Muniiji's schedule grew hectic and eventually we only saw him a few times a year, whenever we were told he would be there, all the kids and parents would be so excited. Kids would show up that day who I didn't even know were in Sunday School."



Youth at summer camp sing the evening aarti

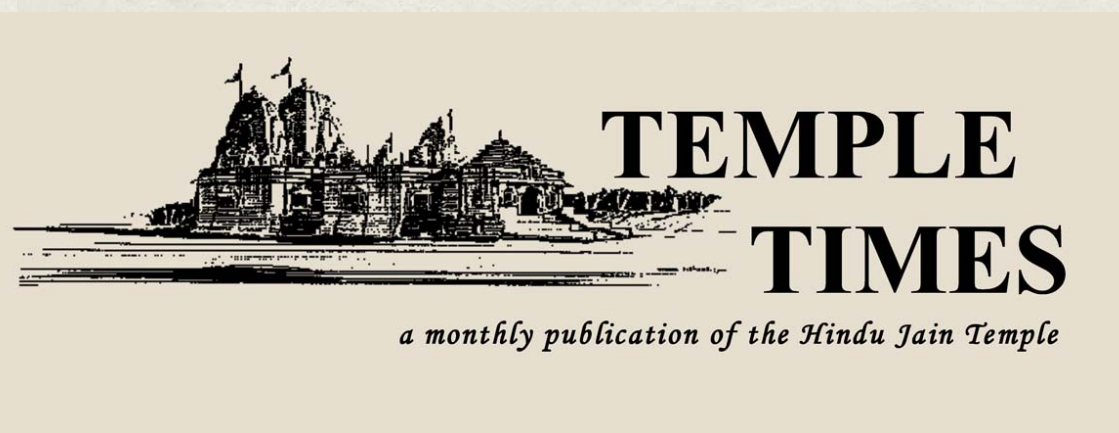
Temple Times

In 1976, as the community grew larger in numbers, the importance of proper and effective communication was realized. Further, it was crucial at that time to have a regular way of keeping people connected the temple. There was no email nor online networking sites to keep everyone abreast on the project and in touch with other members. Therefore, Haribhai Patel and Jaswant Sharma began a small newsletter called Temple Times, giving details of the progress of work as well as upcoming events. In 1978 Subhash Ahuja moved to Pittsburgh and took over the editorial seva with great fervor. He served as editor for fourteen consecutive years, until 1992.

When Pujya Swamiji moved to Pittsburgh he immediately realized the significance of this publication, as his goal was to unite the community in heart, mind and spirit. Thus, he enthusiastically urged Subhashji to gather more and more families' addresses and increase the numbers on the mailing

list. More and more people should become aware of the activities of the temple and inspired by the articles on various spiritual topics. Soon, the mailing list extended to approximately 2500 families in Pittsburgh and the surrounding cities. However, Pujya Swamiji has also always been extraordinarily frugal. Every dollar, rupee and pound sterling should go to the service of the world. He has always vehemently opposed any unnecessary or extravagant expense. This included paying for the service of preparing Temple Times for distribution. Thus, whenever his devotees would come from throughout Pittsburgh, from across the United States or from abroad to visit and have his darshan, he would put them to work collating printed pages and stuffing envelopes.

Even today, the Temple Times can be found, held by magnets, on the refrigerator of nearly every temple member as well as thousands of devotees across the world. It is the automatic reference for dates as well as meanings of upcoming holidays.





Part 7
THE TEMPLE TODAY

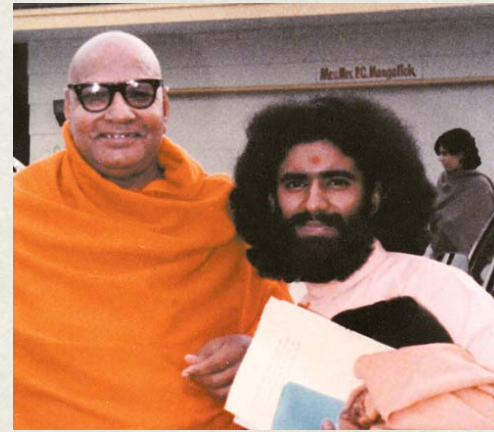
In the twenty-five years since its sthapana and nineteen years since the official inauguration of the finished temple building, the Hindu Jain temple has served as the home and host of innumerable programs, large and small, for the Hindu and Jain communities of not only Pittsburgh but much of the Tri-State region.



Pujya Swami Chinmayanandaji (sitting on ground)

Visits by Revered Saints

Revered saints from India, kathakars, dancers, singers and musicians have all graced the halls of the temple, adding wisdom, inspiration and culture to the already divine presence of the sacred deities. Pujya Swami Chinmayanandaji, Pujya Pramukh Swamiji, Pujya Swami Satyamitranand Giriji, Pujya Shri Morari Bapuji, Pujya Shri Rameshbhai Ozaji, Pujya Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, Pujya Swami Jyotirmayanandaji, Pujya Madhav Priyadas Swamiji, Pujya Acharya Sushil Muniji, Pujya Shri Chitrabhanuji, Pujya Chandraswamiji, Pujya Goswami Indira Betiji and many more revered saints have blessed the temple with their presence since the sthapana. Of course Pujya Swami Dharmanandji and Pujya Swami Sadanandji of Rishikesh graced the temple, the project of their beloved disciple, Pujya Swami Chidanandji, several times.



Pujya Swami Sadanandji



Pujya Swami Dharmanandji



Pujya Swami Satyamitranand Giriji



Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj



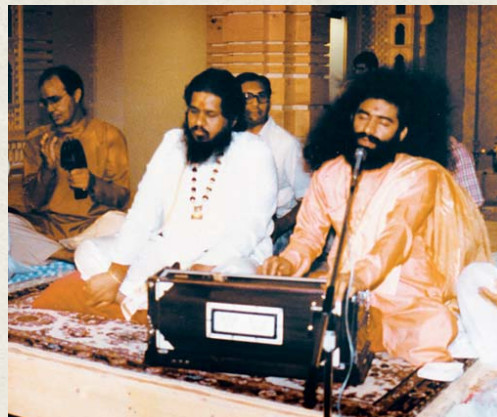
Pujya Sivaya Subramuniyaswami



Respected Jain Monks



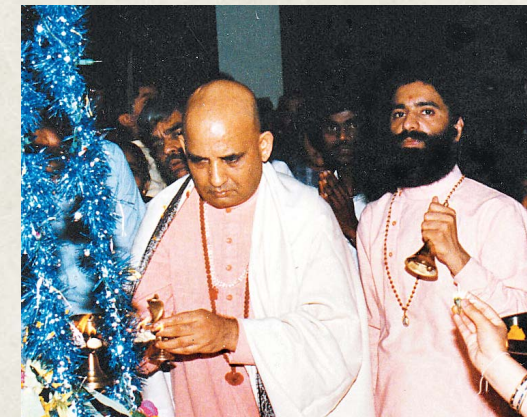
Pujya Shri Morari Bapuji



Pujya Swami Chandraswamiji



Pujya Acharya Sushil Muniji and
Pujya Shri Rameshbhai Ozaji



Pujya Swami Jyotirmayanandaji



Further, each year, all of the Hindu and Jain holidays are celebrated with great fervor, and the temple hall is always full to capacity. The Hindu Jain temple has truly become a living, breathing entity, not merely a beautifully stacked array of bricks, cement and wood. It has taken on a life of its own, a fact which fills all of the original founders with great joy. "Now we are not needed much anymore. The new generation is taking it forward. Even without our input and support, everything continues to move in the right direction" they share.

The prana pratishtha ceremony breathed life into marble statues, transforming them alchemically into not merely representations of the Divine but into true manifestations of the Divine. Similarly, the love, sweat, tears and thousands upon thousands of hours dedicated to the temple by Pujya Swamiji and all of the founding members have not caused simply a building to be erected. Rather they were labor pains, part and parcel of a joyful, blissful, challenging and prolonged labor, which culminated in the actual birth of the Hindu-Jain temple.

A festival procession at the Temple



Mahavir Jayanti Celebrations



Rudrabhishek Pujan



Ganesh Chaturti Pujan

श्री राम चरित मानस कथा
 श्रीराम जय राम जय राम
 श्रीराम जय राम जय राम

कथाकार
 परम पूजा
 स्वामी श्री
 विजयानन्द
 चिन्मया मिशन
 वरमई

CHINMAYA
 MISSION
 OF
 PITTSBURGH
 WILL ORGANIZE

'SHRI RAM
 CHARIT MANAS
 KATHA'

PLACE: HINDU - JAIN TEMPLE
 MONROEVILLE

TIME: MAY 9, 1987 (SATURDAY)
 TO
 MAY 15, 1987 (FRIDAY)
 7:30 P.M. TO 9:00 P.M.

परम पूजा स्वामी श्री विजयानन्द जी द्वारा बनाया स्थान
 और समय पर श्री राम चरित मानस कथा का धार्मिक
 प्रवचन करने पर पशु स्वामीजी, रामायण के प्रथम विद्वान
 एवं उत्तम कविके सम्मान है। श्री राम चरित मानस कथा
 रामायण प्रवचन करके ही ही में होगा।
 इस महानमय प्रवचन पर आप स्वयंसेवक, मित्रमंडल सहित
 पदार्थ पुरी विनोदी है।

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Rajoo Patel 733-7773



Like humans, buildings are in regular need of maintenance. As years go by, certain parts may even need to be repaired or redone. Further, as the temple community has grown in numbers and in funds, they have been able to undertake additional projects on the land. For example, the original church building which had served as the old temple became a make-shift community center when the new temple opened on the hill. However, it had long been a dream of the community to have a proper, beautiful community center including classrooms, a proper library, large hall with kitchen and dining facilities, etc. This dream was fulfilled in 1998 when the new "community center" project began.

On January 23, 1998, as the winter rain poured down upon the temple members gathered for the occasion, Pujya Swamiji performed the bhoomi

puja for the new community center. Nearly thirty years after he had shoveled the Earth and broken the ground of the temple's foundation, he raised the first shovel-full of dirt on the site of the new community center. A few feet outside the window of the room in which he had lived for years, the room which he had made his own despite protests from the community who wanted him to stay comfortably in their own houses, just outside what had served as the temple for so many years, he broke the Earth to lay the ground for a center of education and culture.

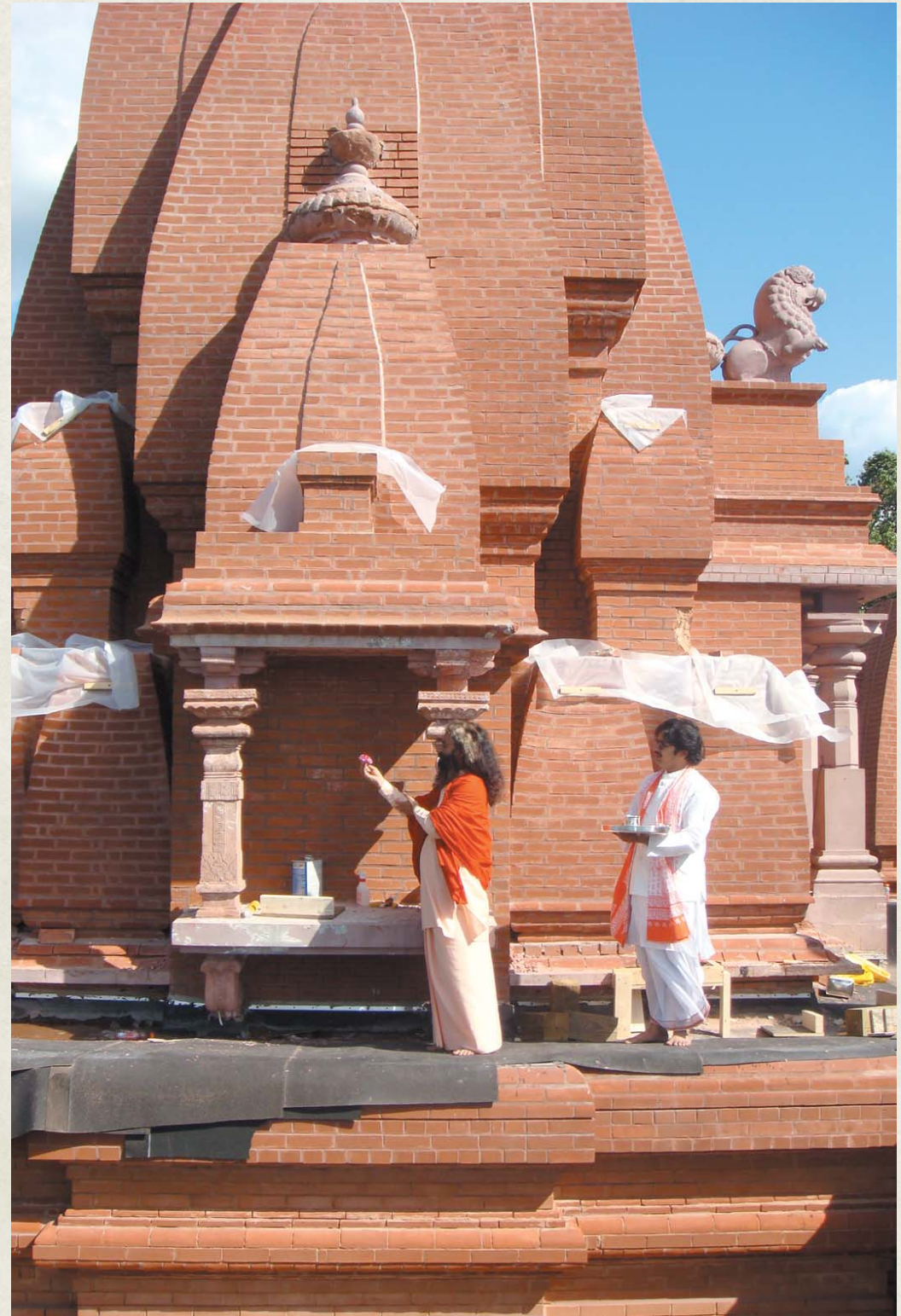
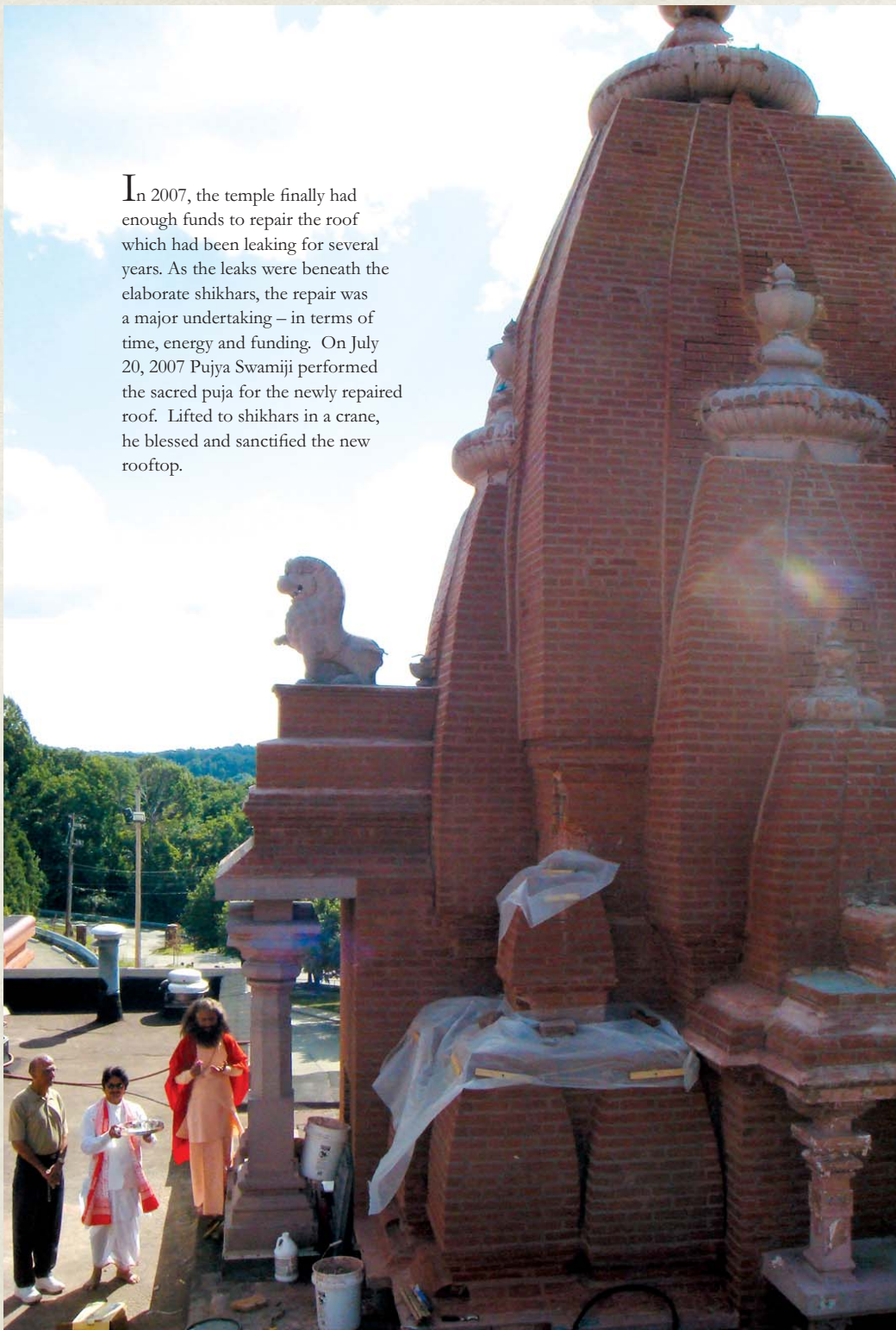
Compared to the early 1980s when funds were sparse and hence the construction speed slow, the community center was built in rapid speed. Generous contributors, a bank balance in the black, professional advisors, contractors and architects led to an extremely

rapid and successful completion of the new two-story, grand, beautiful center. The new community center now includes: two main halls, one upstairs and one downstairs and four separate multipurpose rooms, as well as a large kitchen. Today, pujas, functions, satyanarayan kathas and other spiritual and cultural events take place in the hall on a regular basis. Of course, it is also the home of the Sunday School, being successfully run by Dr. Krishan Aggarwal and his team.



Pujya Swamiji and the temple community members perform the bhoomi puja for the new community center.

In 2007, the temple finally had enough funds to repair the roof which had been leaking for several years. As the leaks were beneath the elaborate shikhars, the repair was a major undertaking – in terms of time, energy and funding. On July 20, 2007 Pujya Swamiji performed the sacred puja for the newly repaired roof. Lifted to shikhars in a crane, he blessed and sanctified the new rooftop.





Pujya Swamiji with original, founding members and devotees, twenty five years later!



“Because of the Temple, both of my daughters have a deep appreciation for their Indian background and Hindu religion- and for that, I am forever indebted to Swamiji’s dedication and the Hindu Jain Temple of Pittsburgh.”

~ Kalpana Jambusari



Pujya Swamiji and Pujya Sivaya Subramaniaswami conducting Shivalinga Abhishekam

Birth of the Encyclopedia

In August 1987, a special spiritual ritual was conducted – a Sahasra Shivalinga Abhishekam – at the temple. Pujya Swamiji led the community in performing this ceremony dedicated to the divine in the form of Lord Shiva. For the event, several revered spiritual leaders were called, including Pujya Swami Dharmanandji, Pujya Sushil Muniji and Pujya Swami Sivaya Subramuniaswami, founder of Hinduism Today magazine.

Due to the uniqueness and spiritual sanctity of the event, it was well attended by Indians from many Eastern and Mid-Western states. Following the conclusion of the abhishek, many of the devotees (who included also, serendipitously, several scholars on Hinduism) sat together

with Pujya Swamiji in the temple, discussing the state of Hinduism in America. They shared concerns for the diluted way in which Hinduism was being presented by schools, universities and colleges throughout the West, and the dearth of any available sources of reference on authentic Hinduism. Hindu youth being born, raised and educated in the West, were coming face to face with misconceptions, misinformation and consequentially with prejudice and disparagement. When their American friends queried these Hindu youth on various aspects of Hinduism, they frequently had no answer nor any place to turn in search of the answer. Embarrassed, these youth would return home and express their frustration to their parents. However, in many cases, the

parents also didn't have the answer. Hinduism is more of a way of life than a "religion" in the traditional sense of religious dogma. It is inclusive, expansive and permissive of innumerable forms of worship. Therefore, it typically manifests in day to day life more than in religion classes. Hence, Indians who had been born and raised in India, steeped in Hindu culture, may have lived Hindu rites and rituals throughout the day without necessarily knowing the specific meaning or significance. They simply were part and parcel of daily life. However, when these Indians moved West and their children began questioning their religious ways which were so different from those of their friends, these parents frequently had no sufficient way of explaining Hinduism to their children.

These concerns and dilemmas were discussed that summer afternoon in Pittsburgh, and conversation shifted to the idea that a major text should be brought out, encapsulating all of the details of Hinduism. It was noted that every major religious tradition had produced one or more Encyclopedias on their respective religion, as an authentic source of information and as a necessary academic tool for information and research. References were made to the New Catholic Encyclopedia and the Encyclopedia of Judaica. It was pointed out that the government of Sri Lanka was preparing an Encyclopedia of Buddhism and the Turkish government had brought out the Turkish version of Encyclopedia of Islam. Further, the Indonesian government had produced its own Encyclopedia of Islam. Punjabi University in Patiala was preparing the Encyclopedia of Sikhism.

Yet, those gathered realized, the Hindu tradition, one of the oldest, largest and most influential religions on earth with over 7000 years of history and prehistory did not have

a comprehensive Encyclopedia of Hinduism. This lack of an authentic, comprehensive and up-to-date encyclopedia of Hinduism had been recognized by scholars for many years.

Pujya Swamiji, whose entire life has been focused on action for the benefit of humanity, for whom seva IS sadhana, immediately said, "We should bring out an Encyclopedia of Hinduism. We should provide the children, and the children's children, and all the children of the world with an authentic, informative, insightful and inspiring source of reference for Hinduism."

He turned to Dr. K.L. Seshagiri Rao, a respected professor from University of Virginia and said that with Dr. Rao guiding the project from an academic standpoint, they would undertake this mammoth task for all of humanity. Dr. Rao and others looked incredulously at Pujya Swamiji. A multi-volume encyclopedia of the world's oldest living religion was a huge commitment. "Do you really think it can be done?" someone asked Pujya Swamiji. He closed his eyes, entered a meditative trance, and opened them a short while later. "Yes," he replied upon opening his eyes. "It can be done and we will do it."

On November 21, 1987 Pujya Swamiji organized a meeting to form the India Heritage Research Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated – in its initial stages – to bringing out the multi-volume Encyclopedia of Hinduism. IHRF's activities have blossomed and expanded greatly in the last two decades, to include innumerable projects for the benefit of humanity, including free schools, orphanages, vocational training programs, women's upliftment projects, rural development, disaster relief, ecological preservation and much more. (see www.ihrf.com)





Pujya Swamiji was selected as the Chairman of the Board of IHRF, as it would be through his leadership, inspiration and blessings that the Encyclopedia could come to fruition. Pujya Swamiji requested Dr. Rao to serve as the Chief Editor of the Encyclopedia. The other initial Board members were as follows:

Board of Trustees:

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Swami Chidanand Saraswati (Muniji),
President: Dr. Vijai P.Singh
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Thakor Patel
H.K. Rawal
Hasu Shah

Pujya Morari Bapu
inaugurating
IHRF house



Dr. Naval Kant generously purchased the building just next to the temple to house the office of the Encyclopedia. Dr. Rao took voluntary retirement from the University of Virginia and moved to Pittsburgh to do the Encyclopedia work full time.

Out look

The Board recommended that the encyclopedia should be authentic and lucid; it should be easily comprehended by the average educated person; it should be informative on the rich and ancient Hindu heritage, yet relevant to the modern world, it should be profound but not abstruse, sensitive to the Hindu tradition, but not narrow in outlook, it should be educational but without losing the spiritual substance of the tradition. It should be useful and informative to the students of Humanities in general and to students and teachers of religions in particular.



Pujya Swamiji with saints,
scholars and original
trustees of IHRF at the
new IHRF house

General Approach

It was agreed that the EH should present each sect, school and movement of the Hindu tradition in its own terms. Its approach should be holistic, ecumenical, harmonious and spiritual. It should use historical, philosophical, exegetical and critical methods appropriately, wherever necessary.

The Encyclopedia will include entry items not only from the Sanskrit sources, but also items related to the development of Hinduism in different Indian regions and languages.

Accurate data should be presented with appropriate illustrative material (drawings, photographic reproductions, maps, etc.)

Work done in Pittsburgh

Conceptual work of EH, planning of the Project, and its preparatory work (both academic and administrative) were all done at the EH Office in Pittsburgh, with the enthusiastic help of many leaders and volunteers of the Hindu-Jain Temple.

For the next several years, Pujya Swamiji and Dr. Rao traveled the world meeting with scholars in universities and colleges, selecting those who would form the main team of authors for the Encyclopedia, and developing an initial master list of entries.

Now, by the grace of God, with the dedication of the hundreds of international scholars, and with Pujya Swamiji's blessings, the Encyclopedia is nearly ready for publication. It will be released at a huge function during the Maha Kumbha Mela of Haridwar/Rishikesh, 2010



Why do we need Temples?

By
H.H. Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji

*A temple is not a building.
It is the abode of the Lord.*

*A temple's strength is not in its bricks.
Its fortitude comes from the dedication of its members.*

*A temple is not held together by plaster and cement.
Its glue is the piety and devotion of the community.*

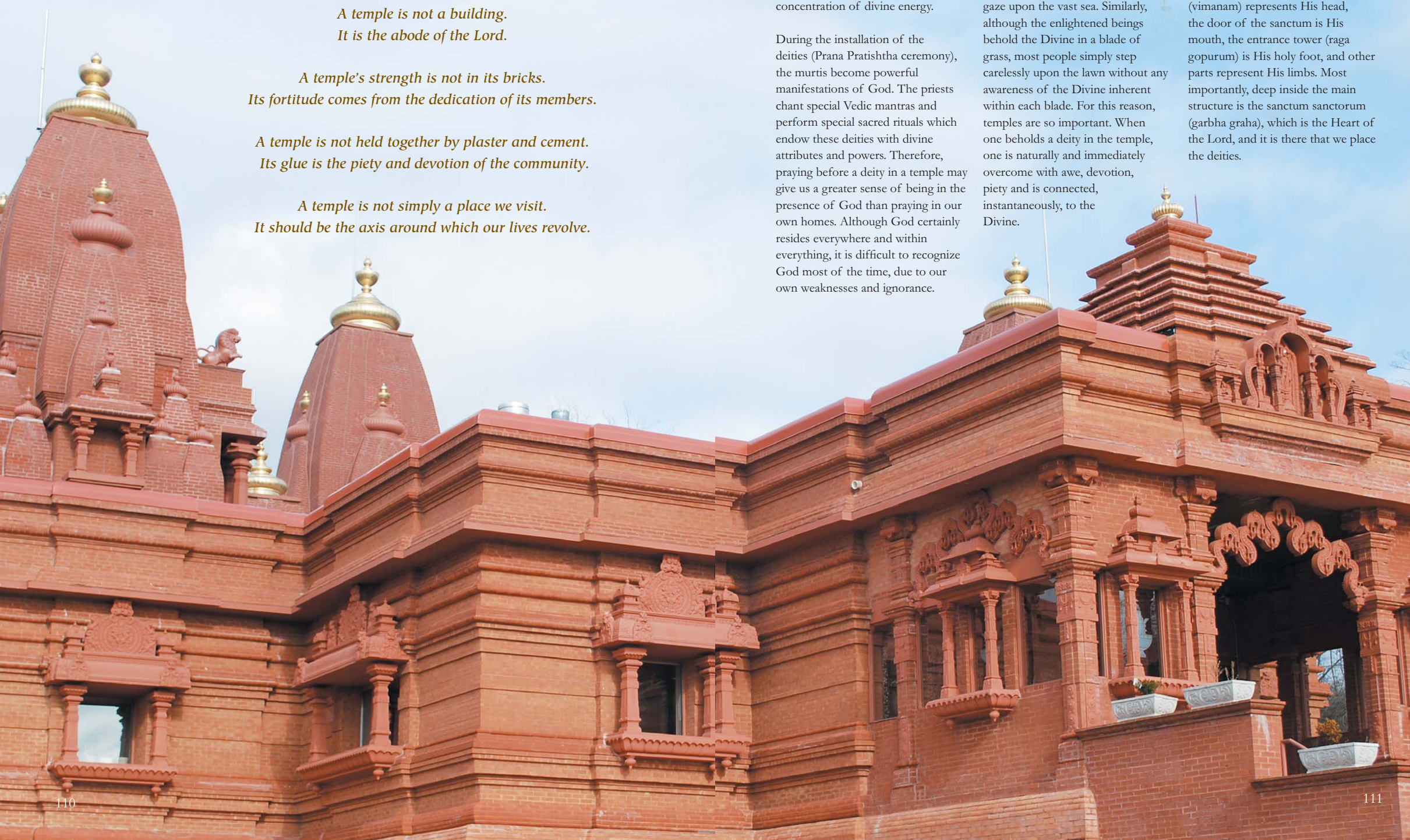
*A temple is not simply a place we visit.
It should be the axis around which our lives revolve.*

People may ask, "But if God is everywhere, if every living being is a manifestation of the Divine, then why do we need to go to temple?" There are many reasons. The most important reason is that a temple is not only the home of God, but is a concentration of divine energy.

During the installation of the deities (Prana Pratishtha ceremony), the murtis become powerful manifestations of God. The priests chant special Vedic mantras and perform special sacred rituals which endow these deities with divine attributes and powers. Therefore, praying before a deity in a temple may give us a greater sense of being in the presence of God than praying in our own homes. Although God certainly resides everywhere and within everything, it is difficult to recognize God most of the time, due to our own weaknesses and ignorance.

Just as it is difficult to see the ocean in a drop of water, so it is difficult to behold the Divine through His creation. It is a rare person who is filled with awe and wonder at the sight of a drop of water, but it is natural to feel awe as one fixes ones gaze upon the vast sea. Similarly, although the enlightened beings behold the Divine in a blade of grass, most people simply step carelessly upon the lawn without any awareness of the Divine inherent within each blade. For this reason, temples are so important. When one beholds a deity in the temple, one is naturally and immediately overcome with awe, devotion, piety and is connected, instantaneously, to the Divine.

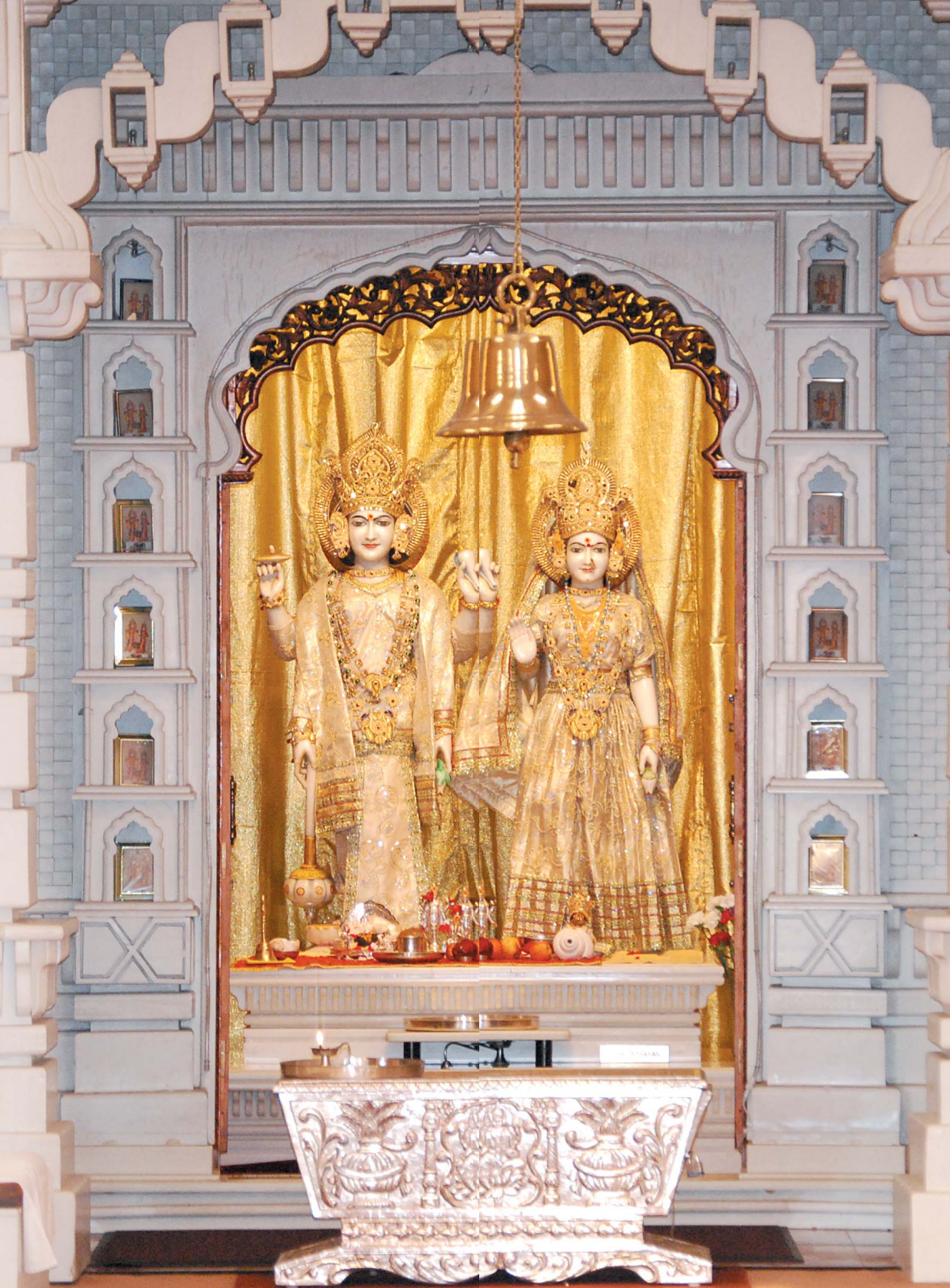
Additionally, the temple building itself is constructed in such a way as to maximize the concentration of positive, sacred and divine energies. The actual structure of a temple is said to represent the resting body of the Lord. The sanctum tower (vimanam) represents His head, the door of the sanctum is His mouth, the entrance tower (raga gopurum) is His holy foot, and other parts represent His limbs. Most importantly, deep inside the main structure is the sanctum sanctorum (garbha graha), which is the Heart of the Lord, and it is there that we place the deities.



When one enters a temple, one travels not only physically from the doorway to the garbha graha, the heart of the Lord, but one also travels symbolically deep into one's own heart. This traveling internally is a crucial part of the spiritual path, and it happens much more easily in the physical structure of a mandir than in, for example, a supermarket or cinema.

Rishis, sages and saints realize God through their meditations. They lived high in the Himalayas or in secluded forests. There were few distractions, and their lives were focused on one thing: attaining the divine vision. They, therefore, did not need temples. Their world was their temple. However, today, our lives are flooded with material desires, with mundane tasks, with logistic concerns. We must get up each day and go to earn a living to feed our families. We must live in a world that indoctrinates us to crave only sensual pleasures and material wealth. It is very difficult for this world to seem like a temple. Therefore, we must have a place which is sacred, a place which is holy, a place in which our sole purpose is becoming one with God, a place in which we hang up our daily concerns and troubles like coats at the door. We must have a place which focuses our mind on the true meaning in life. The temple serves this purpose.

A university student may claim he does not need to go to the library to do his homework – his dorm room is a fine place to study. Theoretically, that is true. The books are the same, the material to be learned is the same.



However, we know that in a dorm room he will be constantly tempted by ringing phones, knocks at the door, loud music and by the desire to gossip with his friends in the hallway. However, the library is silent. It is a place devoted to academic studies. There, he will not be distracted. In the library, everywhere he looks he will see other students deep in their work. This environment will provide him not only with quiet in which to study, but also with inspiration from others who are there for the same purpose.

Similarly we go to temple for the sacred environment, for the holy energy in the building itself, for the divine presence of the deities, as well as for the inspiration of others who are focused on God.

However, a temple should not only be a place in which we worship. It should become the focal point of our lives. In the West, many of you have left your extended families back in India. Most of you do not have the luxury of living in a tightly-knit Indian community. Therefore, the temple should become that extended family; it should be your tightly knit community. Your temple should be the place where children come to learn about their heritage as well as to play with their Indian peers. Your temple should be your place of celebration during times of joy, as well as your place of comfort and solace during times of grief. Your temple should feed every aspect of your being: your hearts, your minds, your stomachs and your souls. Then, it will truly be a “mandir” and not only a building.



Hinduism's Ten Commandments

By
H.H. Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji

Many people ask “What are the basic tenets of Hinduism? What are the rules? What are the commandments?” Hinduism is, as our sages and seers have said continuously, not a dogma but rather a way of life. That is why the true, correct term is actually “Sanatan Dharma”, eternal way of life. It encompasses, not a set of strict, binding rules and regulations which are applicable and appropriate to a certain time and place, but rather it encompasses the very essence of what a good, righteous, spiritual life should be.

However, despite the broadness of Hinduism's reach and despite its nearly boundless inclusiveness, it is helpful to have some guidelines, some understanding of what makes up the righteous life according to our tradition. These can be found in the yamas and niyamas of Patanjali's yoga sutras. When we think of “yoga” we tend, unfortunately and incorrectly, to think only of a series of physical postures and breathing exercises. Hence one might wonder why or how the yoga sutras could possibly encompass the commandments of Sanatan Dharma. The answer is that although yoga does encompass “asana” (the postures) and “pranayama” (the breathing exercises), ultimately the word “Yoga” actually means Union. Union of what? Union of the self to the Divine. One-ness with the Divine is what we are striving for in our lives. The final “limb” of Patanjali's 8-limbed path of yoga, the uppermost branch on the tree is Samadhi or divine bliss. But one has to begin at the foundation and move upwards.

Oneness with God, unwavering peace, ecstatic joy, and ultimate fulfillment in life – of our external, physical desires as well as our internal, spiritual desires – can only come if we abide by the natural laws of dharma. These laws are delineated simply and comprehensively in the first two “limbs” of the yogic path: the yamas and niyamas.

What are they? What are the ten commandments of Sanatan Dharma? We begin with the 5 Yamas – the moral restraints and injunctions which, when followed with dedication and discipline, help us become the master of our bodies, minds and lives.

1. Ahimsa – non violence

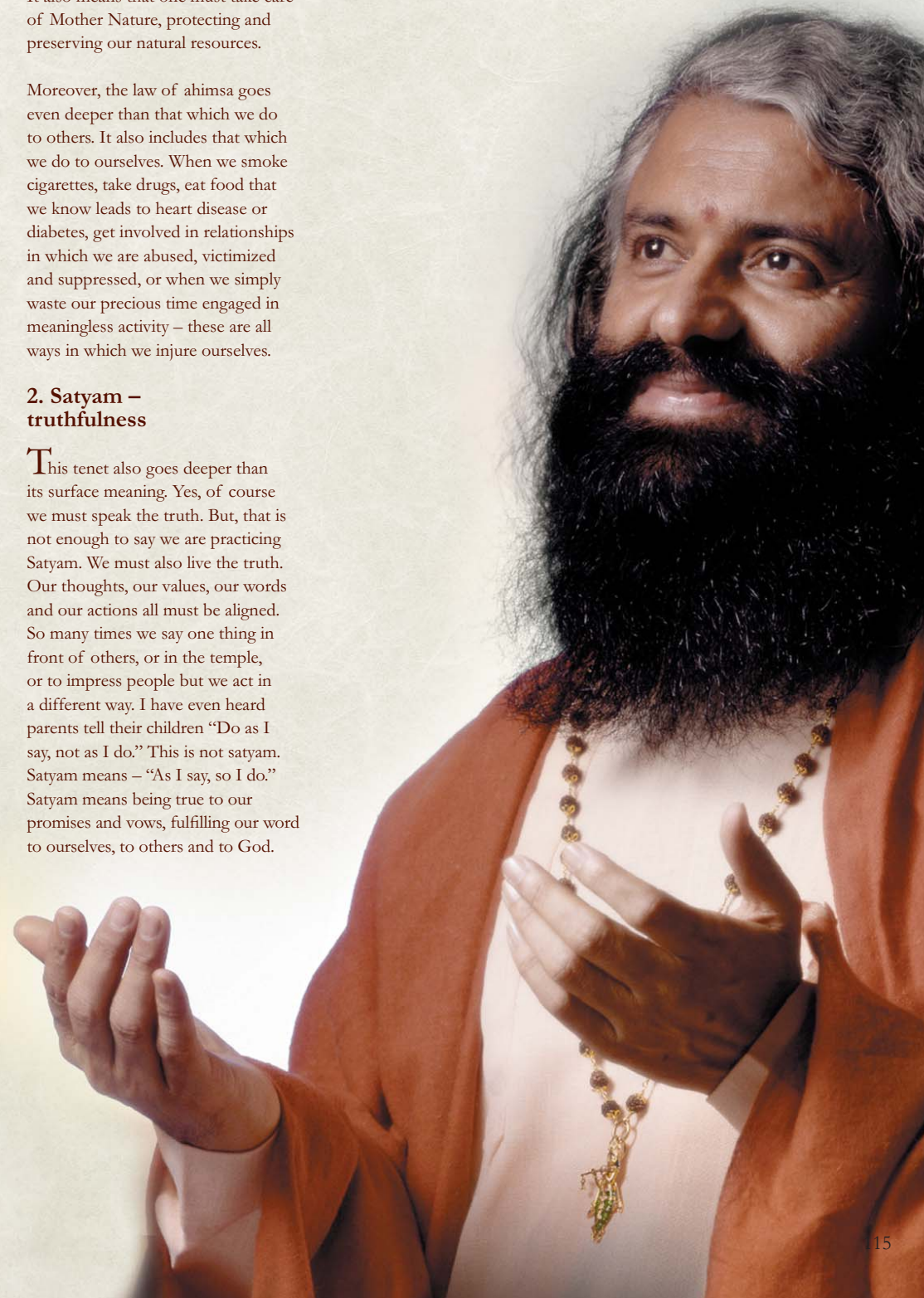
This is the fundamental, most basic and crucial tenet of living as a good human. What does nonviolence mean? Simply it means Do not cause pain or injury to another. However, ahimsa does not pertain only to our physical actions. It does not simply mean “Thou shalt not kill” or “Thou shalt not hit.” Rather, it encompasses all forms of violence – violence in thought, violence in speech and violence in deed. We must think pure and loving thoughts. We must speak pure and loving words, and we must practice pure and loving acts. Further, ahimsa does not only call upon us to live peacefully with other human beings. Rather, the meaning of ahimsa encompasses all beings, all creatures, all life on the planet. It includes the animals as well as Mother Nature. This means – of course – that one should be a vegetarian and shun products which are made through violence to animals (either

through using animal products or through cruel testing on the animals). It also means that one must take care of Mother Nature, protecting and preserving our natural resources.

Moreover, the law of ahimsa goes even deeper than that which we do to others. It also includes that which we do to ourselves. When we smoke cigarettes, take drugs, eat food that we know leads to heart disease or diabetes, get involved in relationships in which we are abused, victimized and suppressed, or when we simply waste our precious time engaged in meaningless activity – these are all ways in which we injure ourselves.

2. Satyam – truthfulness

This tenet also goes deeper than its surface meaning. Yes, of course we must speak the truth. But, that is not enough to say we are practicing Satyam. We must also live the truth. Our thoughts, our values, our words and our actions all must be aligned. So many times we say one thing in front of others, or in the temple, or to impress people but we act in a different way. I have even heard parents tell their children “Do as I say, not as I do.” This is not satyam. Satyam means – “As I say, so I do.” Satyam means being true to our promises and vows, fulfilling our word to ourselves, to others and to God.





3. Asteya – not stealing

Asteya is not as simple as refraining from stealing a possession that belongs to someone else. We steal much from others without realizing it. We steal people's time by wasting it engaged in idle gossip or complaints. We steal people's credit by claiming to have done something that actually was accomplished by someone else. We steal from Mother Earth by using more than we need – by driving cars that are too big and use too much fuel, by building homes larger than our requirements, by purchasing more and more unnecessary possessions which are made using natural resources and whose production pollutes the atmosphere. Further, if God has blessed us with prosperity and we have enough to help others, it is stealing if we do not share our wealth. We must realize the joy that comes from sharing with others. Life is for sharing and caring. Life is for giving.

4. Brahmacharya

Brahmacharya is frequently translated as celibacy or abstinence, but actually its meaning is more complex than refraining from sexual activity. Rather, it actually means one who is brahma-acharya; this means one whose actions are all dedicated to God, one whose actions are all pure and holy. It means one whose attention, energy and life are focused on God. These 10 commandments are not applicable only to sanyasis or monks. Rather they were laid out by one of the greatest sages of all times, for all of humanity. Therefore, the law of brahmacharya also pertains to those on the householder path. What does it mean? It means restraint. It means moderation. It means realizing that the purpose of life is much greater and far deeper than continually fulfilling one's sexual urges. By over-engaging in sexual activity our minds and attention divert and also our vital energy gets dissipated. So, even if you are married, still one must try – as much as possible – to move beyond the realm of the body to the realm of the spirit.

5. Aparigraha – non accumulation

Aparigraha literally means “non-hoarding.” It means don't take more than you need – in any area of life. Mahatma Gandhiji said it beautifully: “There is more than enough for everyone's need, but not enough for any man's greed.” It means, live simply. Use only that which you require. Purchase only that which is essential. It doesn't mean that everyone must live like a wandering monk, but it means that we must cultivate a sense of moderation and simplicity; regardless of our financial means, we should not live extravagantly or surround ourselves with unnecessary possession.

Aparigraha also means that there should be no sense of “mine” in life. We should realize that everything is God's and we have simply been lent a certain amount for a temporary period of time. In yagna ceremonies, after each mantra, the priest chants “idam namamah.” It means “Not for me, God. It is for you, God.” This is aparigraha. Nothing is mine. Everything is His. Everything is for Him.

We also have 5 niyamas – the spiritual and ethical observances which, once we have mastered our bodies and minds through practice of the yamas, will take us higher on the spiritual path.

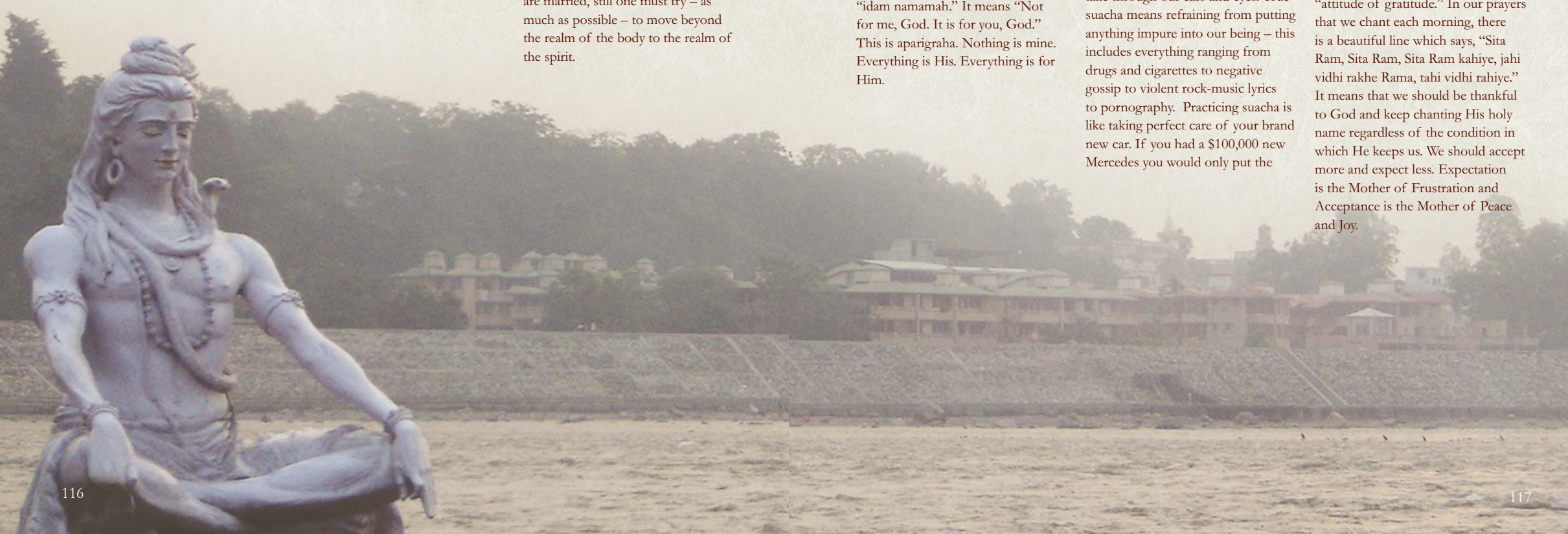
1. Saucha – purity of thought & action

Saucha means “cleanliness and purity,” but it does not simply imply that one must bathe each day and keep one's fingernails clean. Rather, it pertains to a deeper level of purity – purity on the inside, purity of thought and action. We must purify our thoughts through japa, meditation and the practice of positive thinking. We must purify our lives by ensuring that our actions are models of integrity, dharma and righteousness. Saucha also pertains to that which we allow to enter our bodies and minds – what food we take through our mouths and also what food we take through our ears and eyes. True suacha means refraining from putting anything impure into our being – this includes everything ranging from drugs and cigarettes to negative gossip to violent rock-music lyrics to pornography. Practicing suacha is like taking perfect care of your brand new car. If you had a \$100,000 new Mercedes you would only put the

most expensive, purest, best quality gasoline in the tank. You would never fill it up with cheap, bad quality gas and you certainly would never dump mud into the engine! Yet, our divine selves are more valuable than the most valuable car, and we continually fill them with low-quality, impure junk!

2. Santosha – contentment

In life, the tragedy is that no matter what we have, we always want more. It is a disease of the human mind: we are rarely, if ever, satisfied. The tragic irony is that even as we earn more and more, buy more and more, acquire more and more, and achieve more and more, our hunger for possessions and achievement only grows! It is a disastrous paradox. Our scriptures say that whatever we are given we should accept as Prasad from God. One of the most important personal characteristics toward which we should strive is the “attitude of gratitude.” In our prayers that we chant each morning, there is a beautiful line which says, “Sita Ram, Sita Ram, Sita Ram kahiye, jahi vidhi rakhe Rama, tahi vidhi rahiye.” It means that we should be thankful to God and keep chanting His holy name regardless of the condition in which He keeps us. We should accept more and expect less. Expectation is the Mother of Frustration and Acceptance is the Mother of Peace and Joy.





3. Tapas – austerities or sadhana

Through the performance of regular tapas we learn to be the master of our body and mind. Due to our lifelong and misguided identification with maya, we spend our lives entrapped by the belief that we are at the beck and call of our mind, emotions and senses. We unconsciously yet readily hand over the reigns of our lives to our volatile mind and insatiable senses! Tapas puts the control back into our hands, into the hands of our higher Self. Tapas does not mean only doing japa or fasting or doing a certain number of ahutis in the yagna. Tapas can extend to every area of our lives. Tapas is being nice to our mother in law. Tapas is not shouting back when our husband or wife gets angry. Tapas is the practice of tolerance.

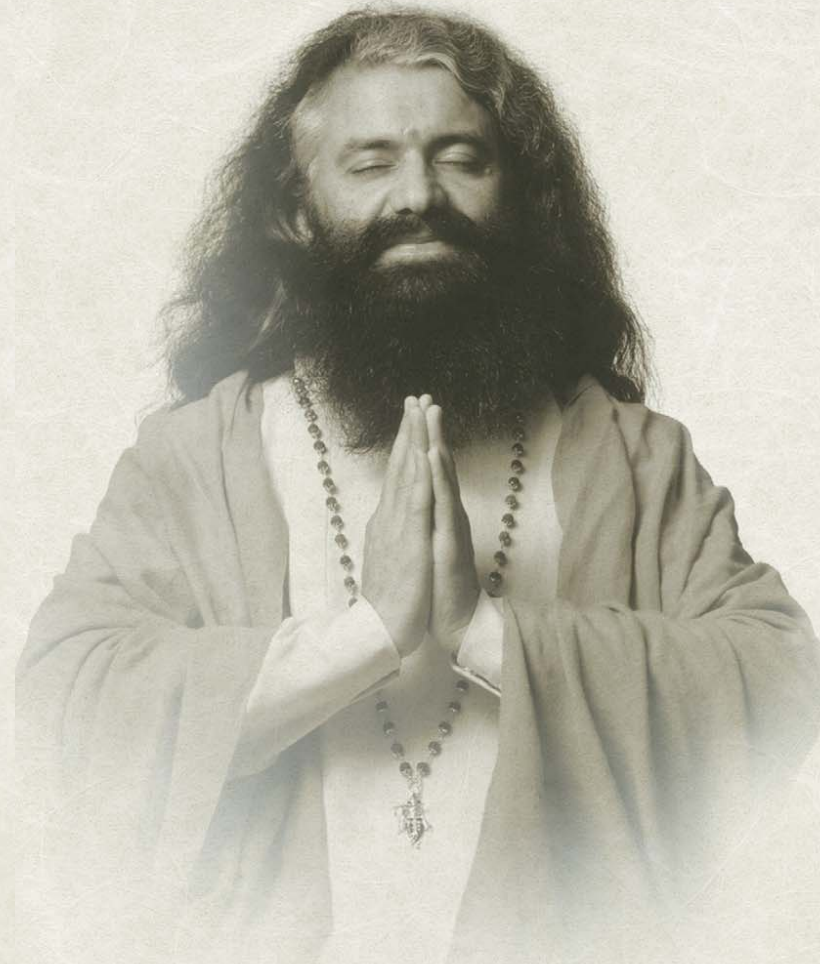
In our lives, we tend to act based only on instinct – like animals. When the feeling of anger washes over us like a wave, we yell and lash out at others. When the feeling of hunger creeps into our stomachs we eat. When we are overcome by feelings of lust we engage in sexual behavior. Through practicing tapas, we learn to have control over ourselves so that we can choose whether to act or not. Tapas teaches us that we are not merely lightbulbs which can be switched on and off by the incessantly vacillating mind and senses.

4. Swadhaya – sacred study

Swadhaya typically means study of the scriptures. It is very important to read something spiritual, something inspiring every day. This helps to keep us on track and to keep our mind pure. Otherwise we tend to get lost in our own mind's sea of confusion. However, it is important to remember that scriptural study – although it is crucial – is not, by itself, a complete spiritual path. It is only 1 of the 10 yamas and niyamas. Simple reading of the scriptures does not take you to Samadhi. One must also put these readings into practice. One must LIVE the scriptures, not just read a few chapters every morning or every evening.

Further, Swadhaya also means self-study. Introspection is one of the greatest tools of a spiritual path. Our egos, our fears, our desires, our misconceptions and even just the hecticness of our lives keep us from truly examining our own lives.

Each night we must ask ourselves, “Where do I stand?” Am I progressing further and further on the spiritual path? A good businessman always examines his balance sheets in order to see whether he is in the red or in the black. Similarly we must examine the balance sheet of our lives.



5. Ishwara pranidhana – devotion or surrender to God

This is the final, ultimate commandment of leading a dharmic life. It doesn't matter what name or what form of the Divine you worship. What matters is that you are surrendered fully to God. Only through living for Him and dedicating all of our actions to Him can we find peace, joy and meaning in life.

It means, “Oh Lord, whatever I have done, whatever actions I have performed – whether through speech, through thought, through my senses, through my mind, through my hands or through just the nature of my existence – I lay it all at Your Holy Feet. Every aspect of my life and existence are completely surrendered to you.”

There is a beautiful mantra in our scriptures which says, “

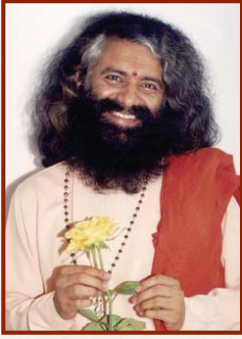
kāyena vāchā manasendriyairvā
buddhyātmanā vā prakriteh svabhāvāt
karomi yadyat sakalam parasmai
nārāyanāyeti samarpayāmi

If we practice these 10 commandments and live them every day of our lives we will find that our lives become full of joy, peace and fulfillment. We will be truly living our divine dharma!





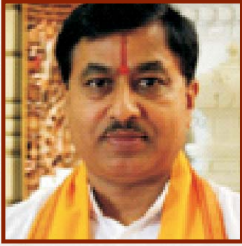
Spiritual & Religious Guides



Spiritual Head - Swamiji

Puja Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji was the guiding and inspiring force behind the conceptualization, planning, building and running of the Hindu-Jain Temple. His vision, devotion, dedication and tenacity truly brought this temple into existence. He left the holy banks of Mother Ganga and the sacred Himalayas and moved for many years to Monroeville in order to ensure that the temple came to a beautiful fruition. From day one He led and guided the planning and execution of the plans for the temple. Further, His boundless commitment to unity in the community made this temple the first temple in which Hindus and Jains worship side by side. He is still the spiritual head and divine guide for the Temple.

Resident Priests



Shri Sureshchandra Joshi (Joshiji) has been with Hindu Jain Temple since 1986. He has M.A. and B.Ed degree in Sanskrit and Hindi as well as degree of Acharya. He has taught Sanskrit and was principal of Sanskrit Vidyalay in India. He is very disciplined, dedicated & methodical and always tries to be helpful. He speaks fluently Sanskrit, Hindi, Gujarati, and English. He is an excellent bhajan singer and harmonium player and conducts various major celebrations with a unique flair.



Shri Vinodkumar Pandey (Pandeyji) came to Pittsburgh in 1991 and has been an integral part of our temple. He was born in Sultanpur, U.P. and obtained his master's degree in Sanskrit and Hindi at the University of Allahabad. He also obtained his Acharya & Shastry degrees from Sanskrit University at Varansi. Pandeyji is a disciple of Sant Acharya Bhagvatnanda. He is well versed in Vedas & Karmakand. He speaks fluently Sanskrit, Hindi, and English. His interests include astrology and music.



Pandit Jagdishchandra Joshi (Jagdishji) was born in Uttar Pradesh and received education in Haridwar and Varanasi. He is well trained in Sanskrit, Karmakanda, Vedanta and Indian Philosophy. He is quite fluent in Gujarati and English, in addition to his command over Hindi and Sanskrit. He is a proficient singer, harmonium, and tabla player, and he is a disciple of H.H. Dandiswami Vimaland Tirth, who is a senior scholar on Hinduism and often an advisor to the Sankaracharya.

Patrons of the Temple

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Shashi Gupta

Sunita Nigam

Hitesh Mehta

Parminder Sharma

Pratibha Mehta

Chetan Patel

Current Weekly Activities at the Mandir

Mondays:

Shivabhishek 10:30 am

Tuesdays:

Hanuman Chalisa before Evening
Aarti

Sundays:

• Vidya Mandir

10 am - 12 noon;

• Music Classes

12:30 pm - 3 pm

• Bharat Natyam Classes

12:30 pm – 4 pm

Kathak Dance Classes

9 am – 1 pm

Ekadashi:

Vishnu Sahasranam Path
6:30 pm

First Sunday of Month:

Havan
11:30 am

Third Sunday of Month:

Jain Pooja and Bhavana,
4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Poornima (Full Moon):

Satyanarayan Katha

Youth Activities

Summer Camp:

Every summer, the Hindu Jain Temple conducts a youth camp for children ranging from ages 9 through 16. This week-long camp starts on a summer Sunday and concludes the following Saturday noon. During the camp, campers are under the guidance and direction of the Camp Director, Adult Volunteers, and Camp Counselors

Following are some of the missions and objectives of the camp:

- Nurture Hindu-Jain spiritual values and the cultural heritage of India.
- Provide opportunity to the campers to explore aspects of Hinduism, Jainism, Indian history, and culture.
- Provide opportunity for developing leadership skills, team building, and camaraderie among campers through various cultural, religious, craft and athletic programs.

Vidya Mandir: Vidya Mandir is a temple sponsored, volunteer-run Sunday school to promote languages, culture, and music of India, and the Hindu and Jain religious values to children and adults residing in the tri-state area.

Vidya Mandir Classes include: Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi and Sanskrit, as well as various music and dance classes.

CLASS TIMES

10:00 am - 10:15 am

Prayers

10:15 am - 11:15 am

Language classes,
Yoga classes for adults

11:15 am - 11:45 am

Religion/Culture classes

12:30 pm - 01:15 pm

Beginners Keyboard,
Tabla and Vocal classes

01:15 pm - 02:00 pm

Advanced Keyboard,
Tabla and Vocal classes









“Don't only light
the oil lamp
in your temple,
But light
the lamp in
your own Hearts.”

