



UNDERSTANDING HINDUISM

Exhibition Guidebook

BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir
LONDON





BAPS Shri Swāminārāyan Mandir

BAPS Shri Swāminārāyan Mandir in Neasden, north-west London, is Europe's first traditional Hindu temple. It was designed and constructed entirely according to ancient Vedic architectural texts – hence no structural steel has been used.

Almost 5,000 tonnes of Bulgarian limestone and Italian Carrara marble were shipped to India, hand-carved by over 1,500 skilled artisans, and then shipped to London. In all, more than 26,300 carved pieces, including intricate designs made from Indian Ambāji marble, were meticulously assembled like a giant jigsaw within three years.

The Mandir was a labour of love for over 3,000 volunteers and the vision and inspiration of His Holiness Pramukh Swāmi Mahārāj, the fifth spiritual successor of Bhagwān Swāminārāyan.

The ground floor of the Mandir hosts 'Understanding Hinduism', a permanent exhibition spread over 3,000 sq. ft. Using 3D dioramas, paintings, tableaux and traditional craftwork, it provides a valuable insight into the wisdom and values of the Hindu faith. This booklet provides a glimpse of that exhibition, allowing readers to learn about this ancient religion and how it is thriving today through traditions such as the Swaminārāyan Sampradāya.





AUSPICIOUS WELCOME



Aum is more than an auspicious symbol.
It is the Divine Sound,
the first sound of Creation from which life emanated.
Its chanting generates creative energy,
in all forms of existence, in all states of the mind.

We welcome you
with all the peaceful auspiciousness of Hinduism,
concentrated within this one-letter form of the Divine. ॐ

Pronunciation Note: 'ā' and 'Ā' should be pronounced aa, as in far.



ORIGINS

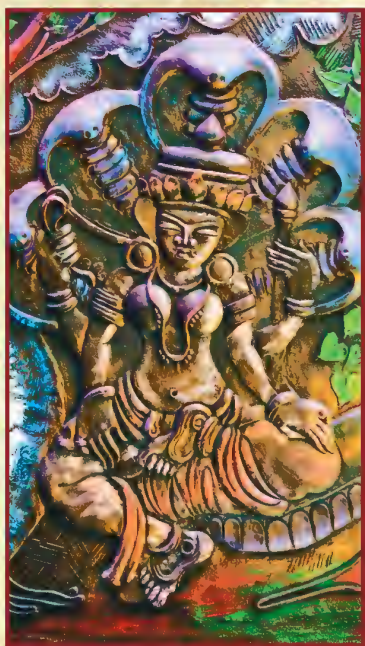
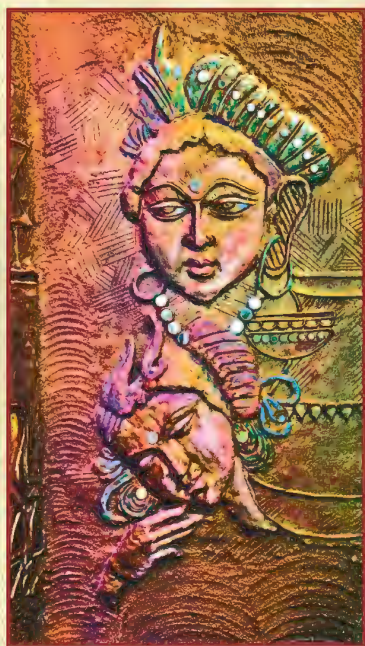
ROOTS

Hinduism is the world's oldest living religion. Its roots lie in the vast Indian subcontinent, in the Indus Valley which had hundreds of advanced settlements as early as 6500 BCE.* The people living around the River Sindhu (Indus) came to be known as Hindus. Also known as the Aryans (the noble ones), these people are believed to be local inhabitants and not foreign invaders.

* Recent marine and archaeological findings confirm the existence of an advanced civilization around 6500 BCE. Astronomical references in the Rig Veda (e.g. 10.64.8) indicate a similarly ancient civilization.

FOUNDER

Hinduism has no one single founder. Through austerities and prayers, intuition and introspection, ancient seers were able to receive the divine revelation of God. These collective experiences formed the foundation of the Vedic Civilisation and Sanatan Dharma (Hindu Dharma).





BELIEFS

Hinduism teaches one to see the presence of God in everything and thus honour the whole of creation. With this perspective, there are no heathens or enemies. Everyone has the right to evolve spiritually and will at some time realise the truth.

Hinduism is, in a sense, generous; souls are not limited to one life – many lives offer many chances for elevation. At the same time, Hinduism is rigorous; people are responsible for every action they perform, through the Law of Karma.

The major beliefs of Hinduism include:

PARABRAHMAN: One supreme, all-powerful God. He is the Creator, has a divine form, is immanent, transcendent and the granter of *moksha*.

AVATARVĀD: Manifestation of God on earth. God Himself manifests on earth in various forms to revive Dharma and grant *moksha*.

KARMAVĀD: Law of Action. According to its past and present actions, the soul reaps fruits – good or bad – which are experienced either in this life or future lives.



PUNAR-JANMA: Reincarnation. The immortal soul is repeatedly born and reborn in one of millions of life-forms until it attains *moksha*.

MOKSHA: Spiritual liberation. The liberation of the soul from the perpetual cycle of births and deaths, to remain eternally in the blissful presence of God in His transcendental abode and here on earth, is the ultimate goal of human life.

GURU-SHISHYA SAMBANDH: Guru-disciple relationship. The guidance and grace of a spiritually enlightened teacher is essential for an aspirant seeking liberation.

DHARMA: An all-encompassing term representing divine law, law of being, path of righteousness, religion, duty, responsibility, virtue, justice, goodness and truth.

VEDA-PRAMĀNA: Authority of Vedic scriptures. Hindu faiths accept the spiritual authority of the four Vedas, each of which consists of the *Samhitā*, *Brāhmaṇa*, *Āraṇyaka* and *Upanishad* texts.

MURTI PUJĀ: Worship of sacred images of God. Devotees worship images ritually infused with the presence of God to develop and express their relationship with Him.



GLORY

GROWTH

Hinduism existed before the sun rose on the kingdoms of Egypt or set on the Roman Empire; even before it sparkled upon the Chinese civilization. Well before the Renaissance in Europe, Hindu astronomers were mapping the skies, doctors were performing surgery, and seers were composing scriptures.

The growth and spread of Hinduism has been possible because it encourages scientific and social developments while remaining focused on spiritual principles. It is more than a religion and is called Hindu Dharma – meaning ‘that which sustains’. The truth of Hinduism aims to sustain the whole of creation, not just one particular species or group. Hence, Hinduism has survived for millennia in the face of both foreign invasions and internal challenges.



The values and wisdom of Hinduism have inspired people all over the world. Presently, Hindus comprise about one seventh of the world's population, which is spread over 150 countries. The major countries include:

- | | | |
|--------------|---------------|----------------------------|
| • Bangladesh | • Kuwait | • South Africa |
| • Bhutan | • Malaysia | • Sri Lanka |
| • Canada | • Mauritius | • Suriname |
| • Fiji | • Myanmar | • Tanzania |
| • Guyana | • Nepal | • Trinidad & Tobago |
| • India | • Netherlands | • United Arab Emirates |
| • Indonesia | • Pakistan | • United Kingdom |
| • Kenya | • Singapore | • United States of America |



GLORY

GLORIOUS CULTURE

For centuries, India has attracted travellers and traders, scholars and philosophers, kings and conquerors. They have been fascinated by her natural beauty, glorious culture, and rich ancient civilization.

“The ancient civilization of India differs from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece in that its traditions have been preserved without break down to the present day.”

ARTHUR BASHAM (Australian Historian, 1914-1986)

“In India, I found a race of mortals living upon the Earth but not adhering to it, inhabiting cities but not being fixed to them, possessing everything but possessed by nothing.”

APOLLONIUS TYANAEUS (Greek Traveller, 1st Century CE)



“If there is one place on the face of this Earth where all the dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when man began the dream of existence, it is India.”

ROMAIN ROLLAND (French Philosopher, 1886-1944)

“In religion, India is the only millionaire.... The one land that all men desire to see, and having seen once, by even a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for all the shows of all the rest of the globe combined.”

MARK TWAIN (American Author, 1835-1910)

“It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race.... At this supremely dangerous moment in history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the Indian Way.”

DR ARNOLD TOYNBEE (British Historian, 1889-1975)



HINDUISM FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

Hinduism has inspired some of the loftiest ideals of human life. As George Bernard Shaw confirmed: “The Indian way of life provides the vision of the natural, real way of life. We veil ourselves with unnatural masks. On the face of India are the tender expressions which carry the mark of the Creator’s hand.”

These ‘tender expressions’ are the values of service, love, sacrifice, humility, duty, devotion, fidelity, respect, integrity... and others that help elevate the individual.

THE STORY OF SITĀ

Sitā is honoured as an exemplary Hindu woman. She was married to Lord Rāma, and was his most beloved devotee.

Her faithfulness was put to test on the day of Rāma’s coronation as the King of Ayodhyā. The whole city was celebrating, when suddenly, instead of being crowned, Rāma



was sent into exile to the forest for 14 years by the ill wish of his step-mother.

The whole city sank into gloom. When Rāma departed, Sitā followed him. It was Rāma who was being exiled, not her; but as the model spouse, she taught the world that husband and wife should share together whatever life brings them – joy *and* sorrow.

THE VALUE OF FAITHFULNESS

Faithfulness is loyalty of love, the bond that holds a marriage together. Marriage is a sacred ceremony, not a contract. It is a lifetime commitment between two equal individuals to unite together for the progress of themselves, their family and society. It is a pledge to remain faithful to each other, to stand by each other in moments of joy and sorrow, success and failure. Faithfulness is to share – and share fully – everything life has to offer.



HINDUISM FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

THE STORY OF SHRAVAN

Shravan lived in the Rāmāyana era. He was strong and youthful, while his parents had grown old and frail, and were totally blind. Once, they declared their wish of going on a pilgrimage. It would take months, for India was a large country with a great many holy places. And how would he guide two blind people, through valleys, jungles, and treacherous terrains?

Despite the challenges and strong discouragement from others, Shravan's love for his parents found a way. He built huge scales and carried his parents in comfort. Every step he took earned him special blessings, and today Shravan has become an exemplar for children everywhere.



THE VALUE OF DUTY

Duty is done without the want of return. It is the sacred duty of every person to serve his or her parents. Just think: Our parents brought us into this world, we should see them through. When we were weak and frail, they protected us. Fed us. Clothed us. Taught us. Even tolerated us. Is it not our duty to return their love and care? Our parents were there when we breathed our first. We should be there when they breathe their last.



HINDUISM FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

THE STORY OF NACHIKETĀ

Nachiketā lived in the Vedic era, thousands of years ago. Once while seeing his father, Vajashravā, donating weak, withered cows during a religious ceremony, Nachiketā himself volunteered to be given away. Angrily, his father cursed him: “To Yama, the God of Death, I donate you.”

Consequently, Nachiketā found himself at the doorways of Death, all alone! He remained fearless, waiting three days without food or rest. When Yama arrived, he was pleased to see the child’s bold determination and offered him three wishes. For his third wish, Nachiketā requested the ‘Knowledge of the Soul’. It meant victory over death, so Yama tempted Nachiketā with grand offers of wealth, luxuries and maidens. Yet the child remained unswayed. Nachiketā’s clear and firm purpose earned him the highest spiritual knowledge.



THE VALUE OF PURPOSE

A child with a purpose can move the world. Purpose focuses our energies, and generates great strength and courage. It produces a fearlessness that can challenge all trials and temptations, and at times, even defy death! But a firm purpose is not enough. It has to be a righteous purpose. A righteous purpose uplifts – not only oneself but others also. As Swāmi Vivekānand said: “Give me a hundred Nachiketās and I’ll change the face of this Earth.”



HINDUISM FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

THE STORY OF RANTIDEV

King Rantidev had a glorious kingdom, but most striking was his virtue of service and sacrifice. He had pledged never to allow anyone to leave his kingdom empty-handed. And so he continued to donate to anyone and everyone.

During a series of extreme famines, Rantidev gave away all his wealth in charity. Soon homeless and penniless, he left for the forest with his family. For 48 consecutive days he found nothing to eat and suffered from starvation. On the 49th day, he found some food and was about to begin his meal when a hungry beggar appeared. He happily gave a share. Next a leper came forth. He too was appeased. And finally, a dog came barking. Without any hesitation, Rantidev fed the dog all that he had left.

God was pleased by Rantidev's spirit of sacrifice and granted him a boon. Even then, Rantidev did not ask for the return of his wealth or kingdom or for food – but asked that no living being should ever suffer.



THE VALUE OF SACRIFICE

Sacrifice is when we think less and less of ourselves, and more and more of others. It is to offer ourselves in service, to give a part of whatever we have – our time, our talent, our wealth. Indeed, a kind word, a helping hand, a supporting shoulder – even such small deeds of service are sacrifice. And to do them daily without keeping count is selfless sacrifice.



HINDUISM FOR SOCIETY

Some of the most remarkable discoveries of the world have been the great contributions of Hindu seers and scientists. Their vision and Hinduism's inclusiveness have helped society advance in a myriad of fields.

LITERATURE

WORLD'S OLDEST RELIGIOUS TEXTS

The Vedas are the sacred scriptures of the Hindus and are accepted as the world's oldest religious texts having been written thousands of years ago. Hindus believe they contain eternal truths revealed by God to the ancient seers of India. For generations, their wisdom was passed on through experience and a precise oral tradition, until eventually being committed to script.

In Sanskrit, *veda* means 'knowledge'. Two types of knowledge are deemed necessary to elevate human life:

1. **Aparā Vidyā:** Knowledge of the World
2. **Parā Vidyā:** Knowledge of the Divine



The four Vedas – the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sāma Veda and Atharva Veda – and their related texts, including the many Upanishads, are a repository of worldly and spiritual knowledge. They cover a wide variety of fields, including architecture, astronomy, art, cosmology, economics, geometry, health and longevity, hermeneutics, linguistics, literature, logic, music, philology, philosophy, rituals, religion, mathematics, medicine, theology, weaponry, and many more.

WISDOM OF THE VEDAS

“Whenever I have read any part of the Vedas, I have felt that some unearthly and unknown light illuminated me. In the great teaching of the Vedas, there is no touch of sectarianism. It is of all ages, climes, and nationalities and is the royal road for the attainment of the Great Knowledge. When I am at it, I feel that I am under the spangled heavens of a summer night.”

HENRY DAVID THOREAU (American Thinker, 1817-1862)



HINDUISM FOR SOCIETY

LANGUAGE

SANSKRIT – THE MOTHER OF LANGUAGES

The Sanskrit language is considered the oldest, most systematic language in history. Its numerous verb-roots and affixes have produced words that give precise expression to diverse ideas – from mythology and philosophy to science and mathematics, from poetry and prosody to astronomy and anatomy.

RICHNESS OF SANSKRIT

Sanskrit's vast array of words gives it an impressive wealth of expression. With 65 words for 'earth' and 70 for 'water' – with each word being originally Sanskrit, not derived from any other language – imagine its richness! Below are the 70 synonyms for the word 'water'. With various suffixes (धारम्, वारम्, तौषारम् and हैमम्), these multiply into 280 words to describe specific types of rainfall.

जलम् = jalam = water

वाः	vāha	अमृतम्	amrutam
वारि	vāri	भुवनम्	bhuvanam
सलिलम्	salilam	वनम्	vanam
कमलम्	kamalam	कबन्धम्	kabandham
पयः	payaha	उदकम्	udakam
कीलालम्	keelālam	पाथः	pāthaha



पुष्करम्	pushkaram	अन्धम्	andham
सवरम्	savaram	कुशम्	kusham
अम्भः	ambhaha	कर्बुरम्	karburam
अर्णः	arnaha	क्षीरम्	ksheeram
तोयम्	toyam	तामरम्	tāmaram
दकम्	dakam	हीवेरम्	hriveram
कम्बलम्	kambalam	सञ्चलम्	sanchalam
स्यन्दनम्	syandanam	सम्बरम्	sambaram
आपः	āpaha	जडम्	jadam
सदनम्	sadanam	जीवनम्	jeevanam
इरा	irā	कोमलम्	komalam
अम्बु	ambu	तारम्	komalam
क्वम्	kam	घनीसासम्	ghaneesāsam
जडः	jadaha	कृप्पेरम्	krupperam
सोमम्	somam	रेपालम्	repālam
व्योम्	vyom	शम्बरम्	shambaram
नारम्	nāram	घनरसः	ghanarasaha
क्षरम्	ksharam	जलपीथम्	jalapeetham
सरः	saraha	कपन्धम्	kapandham
नीरम्	neeram	चन्द्रोरसम्	chandrorasam
उदम्	udam	गोकलनम्	gokolanam
सरम्	saram	सर्वतोमुखम्	sarvatomukham
ऋतम्	rutam	मेघपुष्पम्	meghapushpam
सलम्	salam	अभ्रपुष्पम्	abhrapushpam
ऊर्जम्	urjam	पीप्पलम्	peeppalam
घृतम्	ghrutam	काण्डम्	kāndam
वाजम्	vājam	कृपीटम्	krupeetam
सरिलम्	sarilam	सम्बलम्	sambalam
सम्बः	sambaha		



HINDUISM FOR SOCIETY

EDUCATION

THE WORLD'S FIRST UNIVERSITY

Around 2,700 years ago, as early as 700 BCE, there existed a large university at Takshashilā, in the north-western region of ancient India.

- Not only Indians, but students from as far off as Arabia, Babylonia, China, Greece and Syria came to study.
- 68 different streams of knowledge were on offer.
- A wide range of subjects was taught by experienced scholars: Vedic literature, logic, grammar, philosophy, medicine, surgery, archery, politics, military strategy, astronomy, astrology, accounts, commerce, divination, documentation, music, dance, and many more.
- The minimum entrance age was 16 and there were 10,500 students.
- The faculty of teachers included such renowned masters as Kautilya, Pānini, Jivak and Vishnu Sharmā.





HINDUISM FOR SOCIETY

MATHEMATICS

ZERO – THE MOST POWERFUL TOOL

India invented the zero, without which there would be no binary system, no computers! Counting would be clumsy and cumbersome.

Earliest records of the zero in writing include an inscription on the Sankhedā Copper Plate found in Gujarat, India, dated 585-586 CE. The concept of the zero – referred to as ‘shunya’ – can be found in Sanskrit texts as early as the 4th century BCE, and is clearly explained in Pingala’s Chandah Sutra of the 2nd century CE. The *Brahma-Phuta-Siddhānta* of Brahmagupta (7th century CE) also contains a lucid explanation of the zero. From here, it is said to have been rendered into Arabic books around 770 CE. These were then carried on to Europe in the 8th century.

100 BCE –

THE DECIMAL SYSTEM FLOURISHED IN INDIA

“It was India that gave us the ingenious method of expressing all numbers by means of ten symbols (the Decimal System)... a profound and important idea which escaped the genius of Archimedes and Apollonius, two of the greatest men produced by antiquity.”

PIERRE-SIMON LAPLACE

(French Mathematician & Astronomer, 1749-1827)

The highest prefix used for raising 10 to a power in today’s maths is ‘D’, for 10^{30} . As early as 100 BCE, Indian mathematicians had specific names for figures for up to 10^{53} .



एकम्	ekam = 1
दशकम्	dashakam = 10
शतम्	shatam = 100 (10^2)
सहस्रम्	sahasram = 1000 (10^3)
दशसहस्रम्	dashasahasram = 10000 (10^4)
लक्षः	lakshaha = 100000 (10^5)
दशलक्षः	dashalakshaha = 1000000 (10^6)
कोटिः	kotihi = 10000000 (10^7)
अयुतम्	ayutam = 1000000000 (10^9)
नियुतम्	niyutam = 10^{11}
कंकरम्	kankaram = 10^{13}
विवरम्	vivaram = 10^{15}
परार्धः	parārdhaha = 10^{17}
निवाहः	nivāhaha = 10^{19}
उत्संगः	utsangaha = 10^{21}
बहुलम्	bahulam = 10^{23}
नागबालः	nāgabālaha = 10^{25}
तितिलम्बम्	titilambam = 10^{27}
व्यवस्थानप्रज्ञप्तिः	vyavasthānapragnaptihi = 10^{29}
हेतुहीलम्	hetuheelam = 10^{31}
करहुः	karahuhu = 10^{33}
हेत्विन्द्रीयम्	hetvindreeyam = 10^{35}
समाप्तलम्भः	samāptalambhaha = 10^{37}
गणनागतिः	gananāgatihi = 10^{39}
निरवद्यम्	niravadyam = 10^{41}
मुद्राबालम्	mudrābālam = 10^{43}
सर्वबालम्	sarvabālam = 10^{45}
विषमज्ञगतिः	vishamagnagatihi = 10^{47}
सर्वज्ञः	sarvagnaha = 10^{49}
विभुतंगमा	vibhutangamā = 10^{51}
तल्लाक्षणम्	tallākshanam = 10^{53}

In *Anuyogdwāra Sutra*, written in 100 BCE, one numeral is raised as high as 10^{140} .



HINDUISM FOR SOCIETY

GEOMETRY INVENTION OF GEOMETRY

The word Geometry seems to have emerged from the Sanskrit word 'gyaamiti' (ज्यामिति), which means measuring the Earth. And the word Trigonometry is similar to 'trikonamiti' (त्रिकोणमिति), meaning measuring triangular forms. Euclid is credited with the invention of Geometry in 300 BCE while the concept of Geometry in India emerged in 1,000 BCE, from the practice of making fire altars in square and rectangular shapes. The *Surya Siddhānta* treatise (4th century CE) describes detailed applications of Trigonometry which were introduced to Europe 1,200 years later, in the 16th century.



THE VALUE OF PI (π) IN INDIA

The ratio of the circumference and the diameter of a circle is known as Pi, which gives its value as 3.1415926536. The old Sanskrit text *Baudhāyana Shulba Sutra* (6th century BCE) mentions this ratio as approximately equal to 3. Āryabhatta in 499 CE calculated the value of Pi to the fourth decimal place as 3.1416. Centuries later, in 825 CE, Arabian mathematician Mohammed Ibna Musā affirmed: "This value has been given by the Hindus (Indians)."

PYTHAGORAS' THEOREM OR BAUDHĀYANA'S THEOREM?

The *Baudhāyana Sulba Sutra* reveals that the Pythagorean Theorem – the square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle equals the sum of the square of the two sides – was in fact formulated earlier by Baudhāyana. He explains: "The area produced by the diagonal of a rectangle is equal to the sum of the area produced by it on two sides."



HINDUISM FOR SOCIETY

ASTRONOMY

Indian astronomers have been mapping the skies for 3,500 years.

1,000 YEARS BEFORE COPERNICUS

Copernicus published his theory of the revolution of the Earth in 1543. Over a thousand years before him, in the 5th century, Āryabhatta had stated that the Earth revolves around the sun, “just as a person travelling in a boat feels that the trees on the bank are moving, people on the Earth feel that the sun is moving.” In his treatise *Āryabhatteeyam*, he clearly states that our Earth is round, it rotates on its axis, orbits the sun, and is suspended in space. He further explains that lunar and solar eclipses occur by the interplay of the sun, the moon and the Earth.

1,200 YEARS BEFORE NEWTON

The Law of Gravity was known to the ancient Indian astronomer Bhāskarāchārya. In his *Surya Siddhānta*, he notes: “Objects fall on the Earth due to a force of attraction by the Earth. Therefore, the Earth, planets, constellations, moon and sun are held in orbit due to this attraction.” It was not until 1687 – 1,200 years later – that Sir Isaac Newton formulated the Law of Gravity.

MEASUREMENT OF TIME

In *Surya Siddhānta*, Bhāskarāchārya calculates the time taken for the Earth to orbit the sun to nine decimal places, as 365.258756484 days.



The difference between this ancient measurement of 1,500 years ago and the modern accepted measurement (365.2596 days) is only 0.00085 days. Bhāskarāchārya was out by only 0.0002%!

34,000TH OF A SECOND TO 4.32 BILLION YEARS

India has given the idea of the smallest and largest measures of time:

1	Kratī	= 34,000th of a second
1	Truti	= 300th of a second
2	Truti	= 1 Luva
2	Luva	= 1 Kshana
30	Kshana	= 1 Vipala
60	Vipala	= 1 Pala
60	Pala	= 1 Ghadi (24 minutes)
2.5	Ghadi	= 1 Horā (1 hour)
24	Horā	= 1 Divasa (1 day)
7	Divasa	= 1 Saptāha (1 week)
4	Saptāha	= 1 Māsa (1 month)
2	Māsa	= 1 Rutu (1 season)
6	Rutu	= 1 Varsha (1 year)
100	Varsha	= 1 Shatābda (1 century)
10	Shatābda	= 1 Sahasrābda
432	Sahasrābda	= 1 Yuga (Kaliyuga)
2	Yuga	= 1 Dwāparyuga
3	Yuga	= 1 Tretāyuga
4	Yuga	= 1 Krutayuga
10	Yuga	= 1 Mahāyuga (4,320,000 years)
1000	Mahāyuga	= 1 Kalpa
1	Kalpa	= 4.32 billion years.



HINDUISM FOR SOCIETY

SURGERY

PLASTIC SURGERY IN INDIA 2,600 YEARS AGO

Shushruta, known as the Father of Surgery, practised his skill as early as 600 BCE. He used cheek skin to perform plastic surgery to restore or reshape the nose, ears and lips with incredible results. Modern plastic surgery acknowledges his contributions by referring to this method of rhinoplasty as the 'Indian method'.

125 TYPES OF SURGICAL INSTRUMENTS

"The Hindus (Indians) were so advanced in surgery that their instruments could cut a hair longitudinally."

MRS PLUNKET

Shushruta worked with 125 types of surgical instruments, including scalpels, lancets, needles, catheters and rectal speculums, mostly conceived from jaws of animals and birds to obtain the necessary grips. He also defined various methods of stitching: the use of horses' hair, fine thread, fibres of bark, and others.



300 DIFFERENT OPERATIONS

Shushruta describes the details of over 300 operations and 42 surgical processes. In his compendium *Shushruta Samhitā*, he meticulously classifies surgery into eight types:

आहार्यम्	āhāryam	= extracting solid bodies
भेद्यम्	bhedyam	= excision
छेद्यम्	chhedyam	= incision
ऐष्यम्	aeshyam	= probing
लेम्यम्	lekhyam	= scarification
वेद्यम्	vedhyam	= puncturing
विश्राव्यम्	vishrāvyam	= evacuating fluids
सीव्यम्	sivyam	= suturing

Ancient texts reveal that early Indians were among the first to perform amputations, caesarean surgery and cranial surgery. For rhinoplasty, Shushruta first measured the damaged nose, skilfully sliced off skin from the cheek or forehead, and sutured the nose. He then used medicated cotton pads to heal the wound.



HINDUISM FOR SOCIETY

CONTRIBUTIONS

“It is true that even across the Himalayan barrier, India has sent to the West such gifts as grammar and logic, philosophy and fables, hypnotism and chess, and above all, numerals and the decimal system.”

WILL DURANT (American Historian, 1885-1981)

SCIENCE

“Many advances in the sciences that we consider today to have been made in Europe were in fact made in India centuries ago.”

JAMES GRANT DUFF (British Historian, 1789-1858)

LANGUAGE

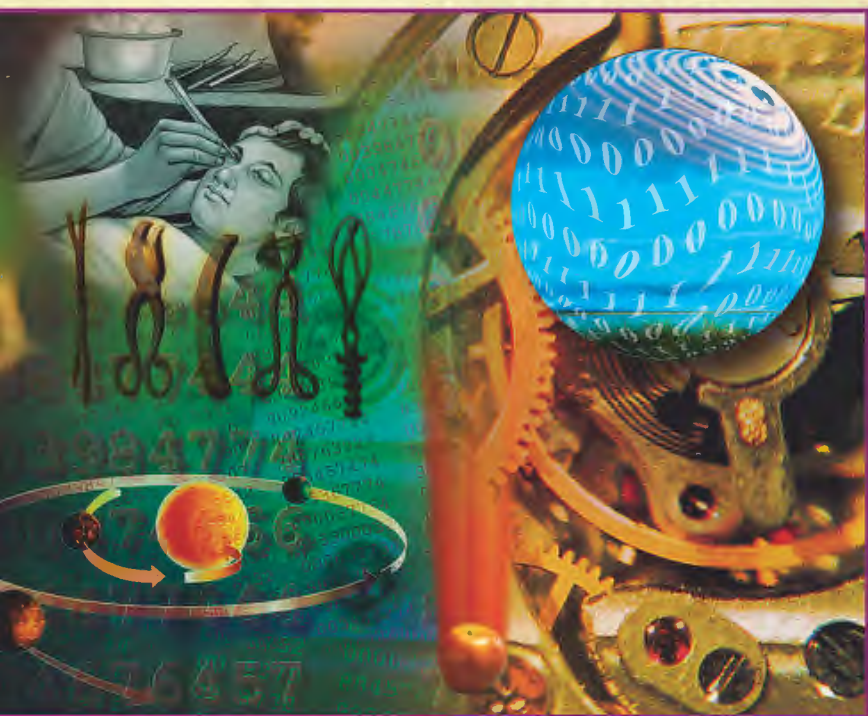
“The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of wonderful structure – more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either.”

SIR WILLIAM JONES (British Orientalist, 1746-1794)

PHILOSOPHY

“If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions, I should point out to India.”

MAX MÜLLER (German Philologist & Indologist, 1823-1900)



RELIGION

"There can no longer be any real doubt that both Islam and Christianity owe the foundations of both their mystical and their scientific achievements to Indian initiatives."

PHILIP RAWSON (British Orientalist)

ATOMIC PHYSICS

"After conversations about Indian Philosophy, some of the ideas of Quantum Physics that had seemed so crazy suddenly made much more sense."

WERNER HEISENBERG (German Physicist & Philosopher, 1901-1976)

SURGERY

"The surgery of the ancient Indian physicians was bold and skilful. A special branch of surgery was devoted to rhinoplasty or operations for improving deformed ears, noses and forming new ones, which European surgeons have now borrowed."

SIR WILLIAM HUNTER (British Anatomist & Physician, 1718-1783)

LITERATURE

"In the great books of India, an Empire spoke to us, nothing small or unworthy, but large, serene, consistent, the voice of an old intelligence which in another age and climate had pondered and thus disposed of the questions that exercise us."

RALPH WALDO EMERSON (American Essayist, 1803-1882)



HINDUISM FOR THE WORLD

Hinduism accepts and prays for all. As its ancient texts teach: वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् । “The whole world is one family.” Hindu ideals and prayers can thus help change our world for the better, for they strive to sustain the whole of creation.

CARE FOR ANIMALS

Hinduism strives to preserve all species, not just humankind. One of its central beliefs remains:

ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।

“The whole of creation is filled with the presence of God.”
Isopanishad

To see divinity in animals is to truly respect them. As the crown of creation, humans must protect and tend to other animals, not exploit and eat them. If humans stopped killing animals for fun or food, for products or pleasure, our world would become less violent. A meat-free, animal-friendly world would help restore the peaceful nature of humanity and our world.

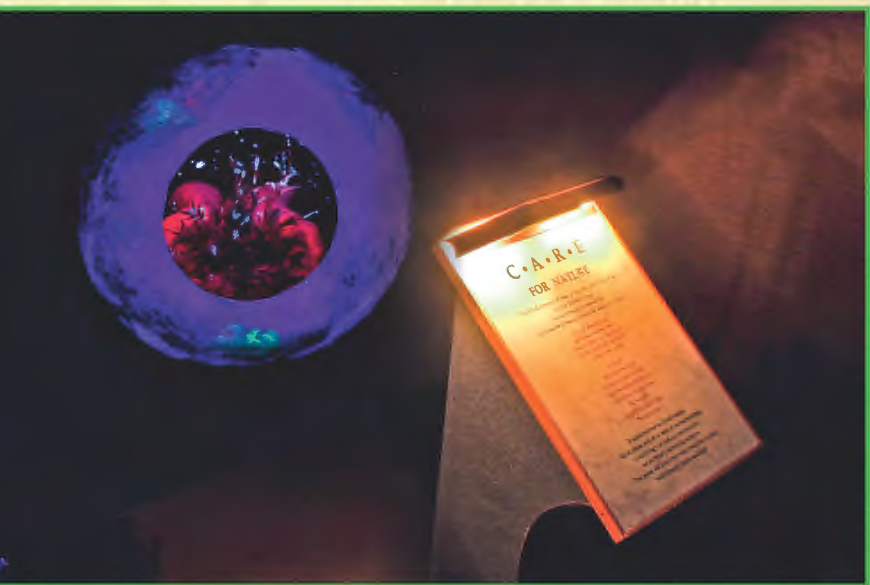
CARE FOR HUMANITY

Hinduism believes: यत्र विश्वं भवति एकनीडम् ।

“The whole world is one nest.”

Atharva Veda

We are the birds of the same nest.
We may wear different skins,



We may speak in different tongues,
We may believe in different religions,
We may belong to different cultures,
Yet we share the same home – Our Earth.
Born on the same planet, covered by the same skies,
gazing at the same stars, breathing the same air,
we must learn to happily progress together
or miserably perish together.
For humans can live individually, but can only survive
collectively.

CARE FOR NATURE

The Hindu concept of peace is not just a state of non-war, and not just limited to humans or countries and communities. It extends to nature and encompasses the whole of creation.

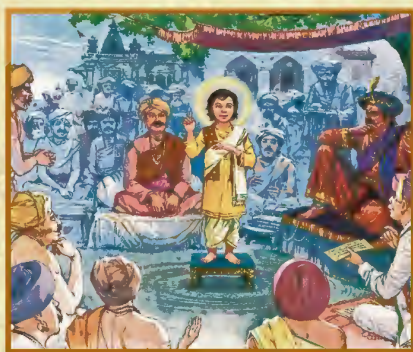
हरिः ॐ द्यौः शान्तिरन्तरिक्षं शान्तिः
पृथिवी शान्तिरापः शान्तिरोषधयः शान्तिः ।
वनस्पतयः शान्तिर्विश्वे देवाः शान्तिर्ब्रह्म शान्तिः
सर्वं शान्तिः शान्तिरेव शान्तिः सा मा शान्तिरेधि ॥
ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ॥

“O Lord!

May there be peace in Heaven and on Earth.

May the skies, the waters, the plants and the trees be peaceful. May peace prevail in all.”

This prayer warns man not to disturb nature, nor to abuse, pollute or destroy our surroundings. In declaring war with our environment, we are simply destroying ourselves. True peace will dawn only when humans live in peace with themselves, nature and God.



THE SWĀMINĀRĀYAN TRADITION

Hinduism is a family of many diverse religious traditions, each with its own beliefs, practices and sacred writings.

One of these traditions is the Swāminārāyan Sampradāya. With its roots in the Vedas, and with a wealth of sublime knowledge and continuous nourishment from a succession of enlightened gurus, the Swāminārāyan Sampradāya has grown into an active, worldwide fellowship.

Understanding it will help one understand Hinduism and its relevance in our modern world today.

THE FOUNDER

BHAGWĀN SWĀMINĀRĀYAN (1781-1830 CE)

Bhagwān Swāminārāyan was the manifestation of Supreme God, to whom the Mandir is dedicated and whose sacred image is enshrined in the main sanctum sanctorum.

He took birth on 3 April 1781, in the north Indian village of Chhapaiyā, near Ayodhyā.



This is His life in brief:

AGE EVENT

- At 7 Mastered the Vedas, Rāmāyan, Bhāgawatam, and other Hindu scriptures
- At 10 Won a theological debate in Vārānāsi
- At 11 Renounced home and began His 7-year journey around India
- At 14 Mastered Ashtānga Yoga, the pinnacle of yogic endeavours
- At 18 Completed His journey and settled in Gujarāt, western India
- At 20 Anointed as spiritual head; founded the Swāminārāyan Sampradāya
- At 25 Initiated 500 sadhus (ordained monks) into the holy order of Paramhansa
- At 29 Began social reforms for the uplift of women, children and the underprivileged
- At 39 Spiritual discourses began to be compiled into what became known as the Vachanāmrut
- At 41 Began establishing mandirs
- At 45 Gave the Shikshāpatri, a code of moral discipline
- At 49 Left for His divine abode – Akshardhām – promising to remain present on Earth through a succession of enlightened gurus



THE SWĀMINĀRĀYAN TRADITION

In a short span of 49 years, Bhagwān Swāminārāyan revealed a new tradition of Hindu thought, ushered in many social and religious reforms, and was recognised and worshipped as God in His own lifetime.

MIRACULOUS CHILDHOOD

Miracles were a part of His life, but He only performed them to establish righteousness. In early childhood, Bhagwān Swāminārāyan saw a fisherman fishing in the village lake. Young Swāminārāyan cautioned the fisherman that it was a sin to kill. He then set his divine eyes upon the catch, and one by one, the fish were revived and jumped into the water. The miracle overpowered the fisherman who begged forgiveness for his sins and pledged not to kill or hurt any creature.



TEENAGE ASCETICISM

When only 11 years old, Bhagwān Swāminārāyan renounced His home and became a yogi. He climbed the Himālayas barefooted and reached Pulhāshram where He performed severe austerities. For 3 months, He stood on one leg, meditating amid snow storms and torturous weather. It was a form of prayer to bless the world with purity and goodness. For this sole purpose, He spent his teenage years, until the age of 18, travelling through 7 countries, crossing more than 7,000 miles.



THE SWĀMINĀRĀYAN TRADITION

MATCHLESS PRAYER

“If a devotee is to suffer from lack of food or clothing or the pain of a single scorpion sting, let me instead suffer that pain ten million-fold on every pore of my body – but may the devotee be protected from all misery.”

Bhagwān Swāminārāyan

Aged 21, Bhagwān Swāminārāyan was ceremoniously instated by Rāmānand Swāmi as the spiritual leader of the fellowship. Amid the great festivities, Bhagwān Swāminārāyan requested two boons from His guru. To this day, this prayer is unique in the annals of religious history.



500 PARAMHANSAS

Bhagwān Swāminārāyan initiated 500 ascetics into the Paramhansa Order. They were ascetics of the highest degree. Selfless and spiritually motivated, these paramhansas practised strict disciplines and continuously moved through society – from village to village, farm to farm, hut to hut, person to person – carrying the message of purity. They helped abolish superstitions, addictions and malpractices such as dudhpiti (female infanticide) and sati (widow-burning). They also dug wells and set up alms-houses in times of drought and famine. These paramhansas were the people of this earth, who carried the heavenly light of God.



THE SWĀMINĀRĀYAN TRADITION

FIVE VOWS OF SADHUS

Swāminārāyan sadhus endeavour to observe five vows as a part of their spiritual discipline. These are:

- **NISHKĀM** – vow of non-lust; complete abstinence from sexual indulgence
- **NIRLOBH** – vow of non-greed; not owning, keeping, or even touching money, nor coveting fine objects
- **NISSNEH** – vow of non-attachment; remaining detached from relatives and material possessions, most importantly one's own body
- **NISSWĀD** – vow of non-taste; to overcome cravings for tasty food
- **NIRMĀN** – vow of non-ego; to be devoid of all false pride, hence also anger and jealousy





THE SWĀMINĀRĀYAN TRADITION

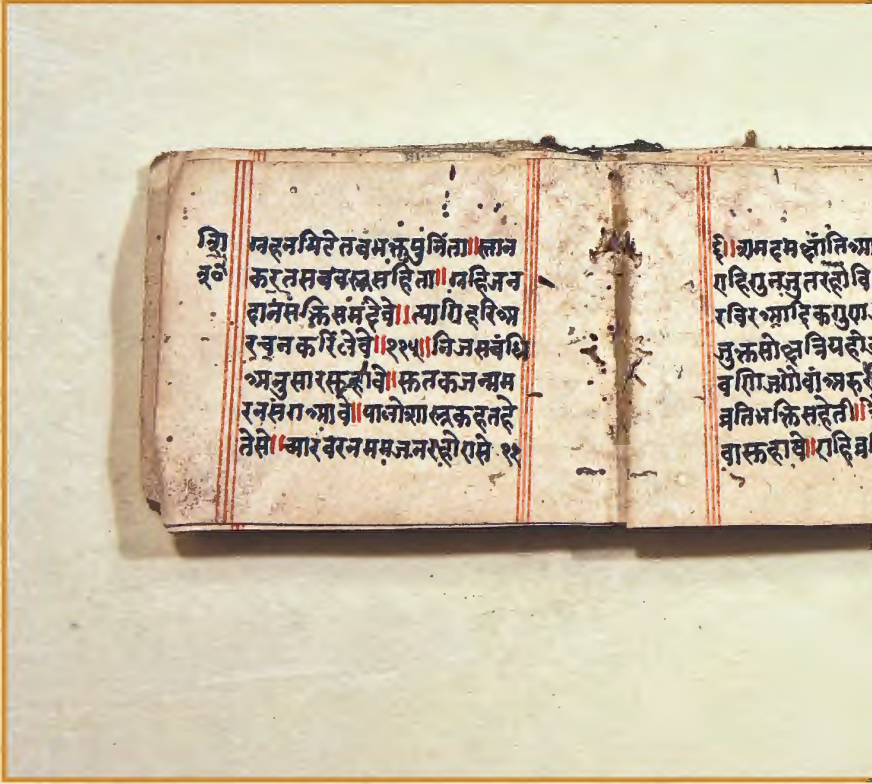
UPLIFTING SOCIETY

Poor and downtrodden, Sagrām previously plundered for a living. During a devastating famine one year, he became homeless and penniless. In search of food, he and his wife set out for Surat, a large industrial city in Gujarat, western India. Along the deserted trail, he saw a silver anklet. Instantly, he covered it with dust, lest his wife behind him was tempted to pick it up. But she proved to have even greater moral strength. Seeing her husband's actions, she said, "Sagrām, why did you just cover dust with dust? Since I have become a disciple of Bhagwān Swāminārāyan, I see others' possessions as mere dust." By introducing such lofty morals among even the downtrodden, Bhagwān Swāminārāyan raised the moral fabric of society.



All followers of the Swāminārāyan tradition endeavour to observe five fundamental vows. This means they:

- **DO NOT STEAL**
- **DO NOT EAT MEAT**
- **DO NOT CONSUME ALCOHOL OR OTHER INTOXICANTS**
- **DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY**
- **MAINTAIN PURITY OF CONDUCT**



THE SWĀMINĀRĀYAN TRADITION

THE SHIKSHĀPATRI

The Shikshāpatri is a book of moral conduct composed by Bhagwān Swāminārāyan in 212 succinct Sanskrit verses. It offers practical guidelines on a range of personal, social and spiritual matters for everyday righteous living – from how to meditate to how to mediate, from how to sit to where to spit, and from whom to honour to whom to avoid. Written in 1826, it has been read daily by Swāminārāyan devotees ever since.



DHARMA

One should desist from those acts that are contrary to spiritual tenets even if they may be very rewarding, for Dharma alone yields all desired results.

NON-VIOLENCE

One should never commit homicide for any reason, be it wealth, lust, or even a kingdom.

NO MEAT, NO ALCOHOL

One should never eat meat, not even by way of offerings in a sacrifice. Nor should one drink liquor or any other intoxicating beverage even if it be an offering to the deities.

FINANCE

One should not undertake business transactions or the purchase of land even with one's son or friend except by written document attested to by a witness.

RESPECT ALL RELIGIONS

When one passes by the mandirs of Shiva or other deities, one should bow down with due reverence to the images therein.

DEVOTION

One should offer devotion to God identifying oneself with Brahman and with a conviction that one is separate from the three bodies – gross, subtle, and causal.



THE SWĀMINĀRĀYAN TRADITION

THE VACHANĀMRUT

The Vachanāmrut is the principal religious text of the Swāminārāyan Sampradāya. A historical collection of 273 spiritual discourses delivered by Bhagwān Swāminārāyan in the Gujarati language, it is a catechism filled with incisive logic, striking metaphors and analogies, and divine revelations providing profound and practical answers to the mysteries and questions of life. For example, it addresses:

- How to overcome frustration
- How to identify real friends
- How to quell anger
- How to eradicate ego and jealousy
- How to develop faith
- How to recognise a true guru
- How to realise God



GLORY

“I have delivered this discourse before you... having heard and having extracted the essence from the Vedas, the Shastras, the Purāns and all other words on this earth pertaining to liberation. This is the most profound and fundamental principle; it is the essence of all essences. For all those who have previously attained liberation, for all those who will attain it in the future, and for all those who are presently treading the path of liberation, this discourse is like a lifeline”

BHAGWĀN SWĀMINĀRĀYAN

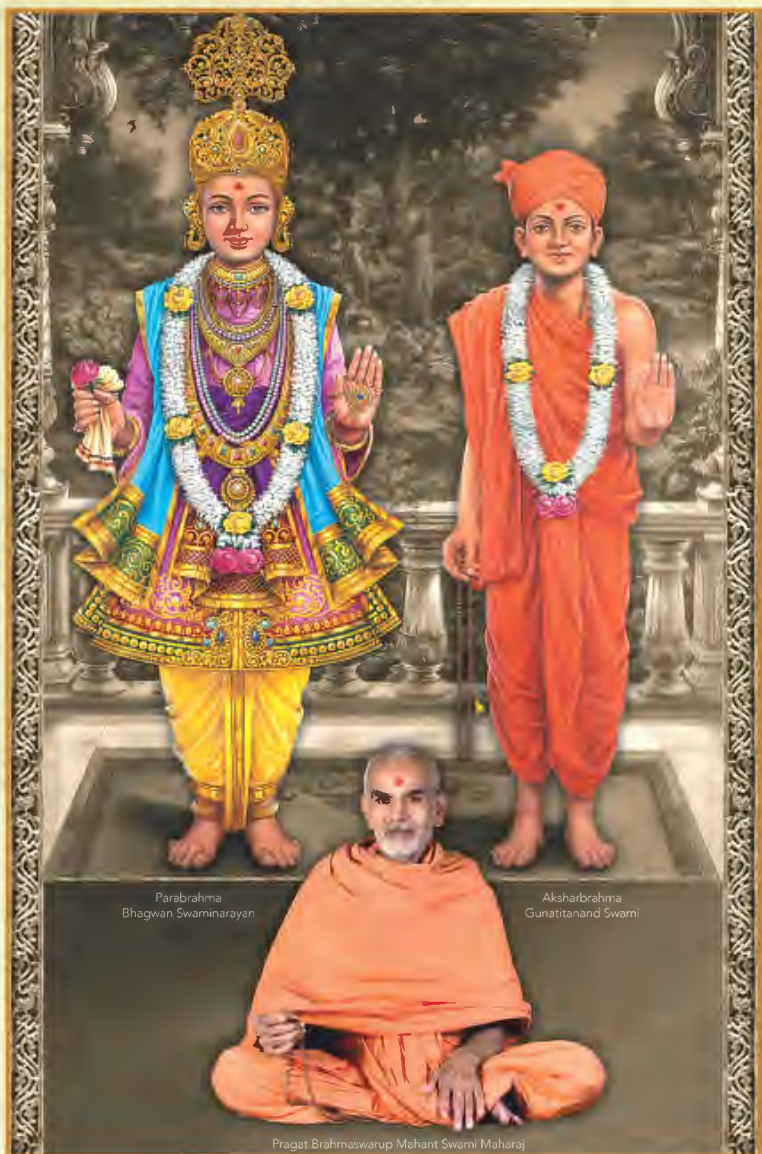
Vachanāmṛut Gadhadā II-28

ESSENCE

“Intense love for the Satpurush (guru) is the only means to realising one’s ātmā (soul)... and it is also the only means to having the direct realisation of God.”

BHAGWĀN SWĀMINĀRĀYAN

Vachanāmṛut Vartāl 11



THE SWĀMINĀRĀYAN TRADITION

THE SPIRITUAL SUCCESSION

The Swāminārāyan tradition did not fade with the passing of Bhagwān Swāminārāyan in 1830. God, by His divine presence, continues to provide energy and experience through the succession of enlightened gurus.

The guru is not elected or selected, but divinely revealed. His saintly qualities are the true signs of spirituality.

The current guru is His Holiness Mahant Swāmi Mahārāj. He preserves the purity of divine knowledge and sustains the path of enlightenment for millions.



THE THEOLOGY

The foundational theology of the Swāminārāyan Sampradāya is the worship of Akshar and Purushottam – Bhagwān Swāminārāyan along with His ideal devotee, Gunātītānand Swāmi. This supports the traditional Hindu doctrine of the worship of God with His ideal devotee, as in Krishna with Rādhā, Rāma with Sitā, and Shiva with Pārvati.

Thus, in every Swāminārāyan mandir – whether it be a traditional stone mandir or a small ghar mandir (family shrine) – the central images are predominantly of Akshar and Purushottam, surrounded by images of the spiritual guru-lineage. These enlightened gurus are worshipped not as God, but revered as guides to God.



WORLDWIDE ACTIVITIES

Today, after over two centuries,
the Swāminārāyan Tradition thrives
through many denominations,
one of which is BAPS Swāminārāyan Sansthā (BAPS).

Firmly rooted in the beliefs and values
revealed by Bhagwān Swāminārāyan,
BAPS has grown into
a worldwide community-based Hindu organization
striving to fulfil
the spiritual and social needs of our society.
It engages in a variety of humanitarian activities
through a worldwide network of
over 3,850 centres and 55,000 volunteers.
Affiliated internationally with the United Nations’
Economic and Social Council,
BAPS is respected in the UK as
one of its largest and most active Hindu groups.

BAPS is guided and inspired by its leader
His Holiness Pramukh Swāmi Mahārāj,
who teaches:
“In the joy of others, lies our own.”



WORLDWIDE ACTIVITIES

ENRICHING HINDU FAITH

Providing spiritual strength and enrichment to thousands of people at various stages on their spiritual journey through camps, classes, conventions and regular weekly assemblies.

FOSTERING EDUCATION

Building, funding and managing over 100 schools, colleges and student hostels, as well providing scholarships and careers guidance.

DISASTER RELIEF

Distributing food packets, clothes, medicines and supplies during times of natural disaster and other calamities.

PROMOTING HEALTHY LIVING

Promoting healthy living through regular awareness lectures, interactive health fairs and public screening sessions.

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Raising public awareness about an environmentally-friendly lifestyle at home, work and the Mandir.



NURTURING CHILDREN

Helping young boys and girls make the most of their childhood while preparing them for the future through regular camps, workshops, conventions and classes.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Enhancing communication, trust and understanding within families through seminars, workshops and outings.

SERVING THE NEEDY

Reaching out to underdeveloped regions to help people free themselves of addictions, provide healthcare, and encourage education.

BUILDING BRIDGES

Actively promoting building bridges across generations, cultures and faiths to ensure our society is enriched and empowered by understanding and trust, mutual respect and peaceful cooperation.



OTHER IMPORTANT FEATURES

Apart from the exhibition, BAPS Shri Swāminārāyan Mandir has many other features which visitors can view to gain a living experience of the Hindu faith.

THE UPPER SANCTUM

Above the exhibition lies the sanctum sanctorum – the heart of the Mandir. It is a sanctuary of Italian and Indian white marble with an array of intricately carved pillars and ceilings. At its centre lies a cantilevered dome.

The focus of the sanctum is the shrines that house the murtis (sacred images of the Deities) in gilded, throne-like canopies. Here worshippers come to pray, meditate and participate in devotional ceremonies.



THE MURTIS

The murtis within the upper sanctum shrines are marble and metallic images ceremonially infused with the divine presence of God. These sacred images are attended to with utmost reverence and devotion, and are worshipped daily with five ārtis and other ceremonies. They form the very soul of the Mandir, helping Hindus enhance and develop their loving relationship with the Divine.

BAPS Shri Swāminārāyan Mandir is dedicated to Bhagwān Swāminārāyan and so houses various images of His form along with His spiritual successors, including Gunātītānand Swāmi and His Holiness Pramukh Swāmi Mahārāj. Other murtis include those of prominent Hindu deities such as Shri Rādhā-Krishna, Shri Sitā-Rāma, Shri Shiva-Pārvati, Shri Ganapati and Shri Hanumān.



THE ABHISHEK MANDAP

The Abhishek Mandap is a ritual chamber on the lower floor of BAPS Shri Swāminārāyan Mandir, opposite the exhibition. Clad with Brazilian and Italian marble and embellished with intricate traditional designs, it houses the sacred image of Shri Nilkanth Varni, the teenage form of Bhagwān Swāminārāyan.

Here, worshippers daily perform the abhishek – a ritual pouring of water over the gilded brass image. It is a form of prayer and tribute to commemorate Bhagwān Swāminārāyan's arduous journey as a child, when he walked for over 7 years and almost 8,000 miles around India, barefooted and alone, blessing the land and liberating numerous spiritual aspirants along the way.

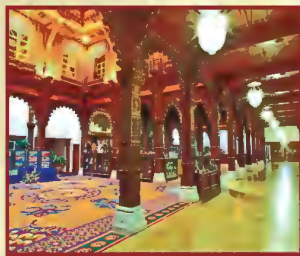
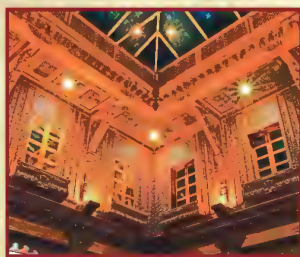
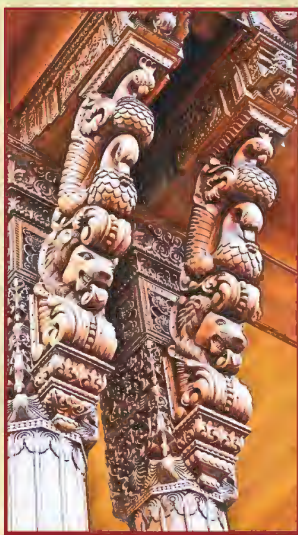




OTHER IMPORTANT FEATURES

THE HAVELI

Adjacent to the stone Mandir is the intricately designed traditional Haveli, a unique activity centre fashioned with exquisite wooden carvings using English Oak and Burmese Teak sourced from sustainable forests. For each tree felled, ten saplings were planted. The building houses a large prayer hall, gymnasium, library, crèche, and other facilities, and incorporates many environment-friendly features.





THE INSPIRERS

His Holiness Pramukh Swāmi Mahārāj (1921-2016) (*right*) was the fifth spiritual successor of Bhagwān Swāminārāyan. It was his vision, inspiration and tireless efforts that created the Mandir. His selfless services to society, saintly virtues and profound devotion to God earned him the respect and reverence of millions around the world as one of the great Hindu teachers of our time.

Pramukh Swāmi Mahārāj was succeeded by His Holiness Mahant Swāmi Mahārāj (*above*). He leads an austere life of celibacy, without personal wealth or gain. Despite his increasing age, he continues to dedicate his life for the well-being of others, travelling throughout the world to foster love, peace, harmony, righteousness, faith in God, and service to humanity.

In the joy of others lies our own.

His Holiness Pramukh Swāmi Mahārāj





BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir
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