

# Why Indiana needs a Temple

(Articles by children of Indian Community)

## **By Aakriti Bhargava:**

Mandir or temple is the abode of God. The temple is the focus for all aspects of everyday life in the Hindu Community, and there is a large Hindu Community in Indianapolis and surrounding areas, which is increasing in size every year. Indianapolis needs a Hindu temple to fulfill their religious obligations of worship (upasana), observing holy days (utsava), practice virtuous living (dharma), and celebrate rites of passage (samskara). The temple will also be an effective center to promote rich culture and heritage of India. It will help provide continued education to younger Hindus to develop their self-confidence and strengthen their bhakti (devotion). Socially, a temple can effectively promote universal brotherhood and religious harmony among all people. Building a Hindu temple that will effectively serve the above-mentioned needs of Hindus in and around Indianapolis will be an important event for Hindu Community. It can be successfully done with the dedication, hard work, and generous donations from the members of our community.

## **By Amy Jani:**

It was a thought or maybe an afterthought, but the thought of having a temple in your city, my city, or our city is a thought in everyone's mind. Why do you think we all think alike? My city deserves the best, and the best cannot ask anyone, not even God, for lesser, worse, or weaker. The best normally tend to ask everyone, even God, for the better, the healthier, and the more durable. What other reason could there be to ask for a temple, a temple to pray, to ask and receive what we need or want, and to fulfill our likes and dislikes through a prayer in our own temple of God. We could get together to share our thoughts with God and also each other. We could get together on holy days and all other days, and as long as we are at our temple, in front of God, we could be assured that our minds are clear of evil and our bodies are protected from the eyes of the evil. We could have a temple as a place of relaxation. Whenever we are uneasy we should be able to go to our house of worship because that is the only house in the block that I know would bring me free from worries and shelter me when I am in trouble. As far as religion is concerned, most Americans have their house of worship as the church, the church of Christ. Their religion is Christianity. Our religion is Hinduism, and thus our house of worship is a Hindu Temple. If we lack knowledge about our religion, it is because of our own ignorance. If we ignore to build our Hindu Temple, we have failed to make an attempt in understanding our Hindu religion. The temple can provide us resources to better understand Hinduism. Surely, it is true that some of us claim that we are Hindus, but only a few of us know enough about our religion. As far as I am concerned, I only know the ABCD's because I am an American Born Confused Desi, and there are many of you that are like me who wish that someday we can really practice religion, the Hindu religion, in a temple in our city with the rest of the world.

## **By Gargi Arora:**

Religion can be classified as one of the most beautiful gifts to mankind. Religion can give a person enough faith, happiness, and reliance so he/she can face the next day. Religion has the power to identify people, and can be interpreted in a number of ways. I believe that religion should grow from within oneself. Some people listen to their mind, whereas others listen to their hearts. But religion stems from the place

where the mind and heart come together. Religion gives a person an identity and helps strengthen one's mind, body, and spirit. Hinduism, especially is a beautiful religion because it teaches one the importance of commitment through one's conduct and *karma*. This is why I believe that we need a mandir in Indianapolis. A mandir can help enforce the feeling of brotherhood, and unite one another. Collective prayer has a tendency to exert a socializing influence, which brings unknowing happiness to people. In addition, a mandir can be a beautiful new addition to the state of Indiana, and will depict the power and everlasting faith of Hindus in our communities. With constant prayer and faith in God, we can achieve this goal. One can learn the strength of prayer and religion by a famous proverb: "Greater than the need of food for the development of our body is prayer for strengthening the mind and the soul".

**By Gauri Bajpai:**

Hi my name is Nupur(Gauri) Bajpai. I am ten years old. I strongly believe that we need a temple in Indianapolis. It's easy to think I am saying this because I've been asked to say so. Well that's not true. I'm saying this for several different reasons. One reason is that I've been involved with Geeta Mandal all my life. As my parents tell me, I have been coming to Geeta Mandal since I was a baby. I have been involved with all of the sholkas and different cultural activities. Also my parents tell me that my sister and I learned the sholkas before we even learned how to read. I believe if we have a temple other children will come and have the same experience. They will get a chance to learn about our religion as I did. Also by coming to Geeta Mandal I made new friends with the same way of thinking. I enjoy the activities like Bal Vihar, Children's camp, and speech competitions with my friends. Also when my sister was little we had to go to Dayton, Ohio to do her Mundon and the first time she tasted Kheer. If we have temple in town we can celebrate these important occasions with more convenience. In the end a temple will give us a place to do prayers, ceremonies, celebrate festivals and learn about our culture.

**By Gopal Kaushal:**

With the tremendous growth of the Hindu community in Indiana, it has become clear that for a new temple facility must be made. The current facility must be replaced sometime in the near future due to the fact it has become too small to accommodate the community. Many community members who regularly attend religious functions can clearly see the need for a new temple. The main hall is always overcrowded. Facilities at the current temple also do not suit the community's needs. As custom dictates, we all must sit on the floor during a worship service; however, eating afterwards is a rather difficult task. Not only is it difficult, it might be uncomfortable for the elders. After they get their food, there is almost nowhere for them to eat. If the temple is to be constructed, it should most definitely be in Indianapolis. This is because Indianapolis is the "hub" of Hindu culture in Indiana and Indiana's largest town that would grant the community a larger forum and access to other states. Most likely it would also be safer to build a temple in a larger, more liberal city. Either way, if a temple is not built in the future, we must make it a point to better utilize the current facilities. This means using the three additional rooms surrounding the halls and stage area. The construction of a new temple is not a matter of pride, but one of necessity.

**By Keya Dave:**

Religion plays a very important role in my life. I believe that my religion, Hinduism, is a solid foundation for my life now and in the future. Living here in America makes it a challenge to maintain our religion and customs but really, to think about it, it doesn't matter where you live to sustain and cherish your religion. Religion lies

within your self, and I believe that it is my duty to live up to the expectations of my religion. My parents try to teach me as much as they can about our religion, and I am always eager to learn all the new things. I consider our religion to have so many wonderful aspects and if we truly try to understand it, it will most definitely benefit us in the long run. Here in Indianapolis, the only thing that I attend religious wise is Geeta Mandal. To have a temple here would be prominent. As time passes and new generations arrive, it is more important than ever to preserve our religion. Building a temple here would be a great start for all of us. Just the fact that we will be having a temple here immerses me with joy. Our temple would be a place for all of us to go to realize who we are and where we came from. This is especially an amazing thing for the youth. I believe that having a temple is a direct connection to religion itself into our lives. This means so much to me. I truly believe that by having a temple, we have finally reached a destination. This is a start of a something we will treasure.

**By Padma Tumuluri:**

The TOP reasons why Indianapolis needs a Hindu temple:

12. It will become a popular cultural destination as a "Point/Site of Interest" on all highways leading into Indianapolis.
11. It will enhance the architectural landscape of Indianapolis and its surrounding metro areas.
10. It will complement the current diverse listing of local religious centers (Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Sikh, etc).
9. It will evolve into a resource center for non-Hindus to explore and learn more about the religious aspects of Hinduism.
8. It will significantly reduce the Indian community's current dependence on neighboring cities (Dayton, Louisville, and Chicago, for example) for temple services and programs--a true blessing with today's gas prices!
7. It will provide a quiet, peaceful place for individual reflection and contemplation.
6. It will offer a lively forum for spiritual and philosophical debates on a wide range of topics.
5. It will provide the Indian people in Indianapolis with a central location to come and participate in community-wide festivals and ceremonies--such as Ram Navami and Janmastami.
4. It will increase the religious awareness in the Hindu community of Indianapolis.
3. It will give the Hindu community in Indianapolis, opportunities to conduct and participate in special rituals such as Homas and Yagnas for the benefit of all creation.
2. It will allow the Indian community to retain the beneficial services of a full-time priest for performing a wide range of poojas from archanas to shraddhas--and more.
1. It will serve as a concrete example and living legacy of the Hindu faith to future Indian-American (as well as other non-Indian) residents of Indianapolis.

**By Renu Razdan:**

Every second Sunday of the month, an organization called The Geeta Mandal of Indianapolis gathers around in order to take a few hours to offer their prayers to their Bhagwan, God. This gathering takes place in The India Community Center, in which there are the beautiful idols of Sri RadhaKrishna. This center is Geeta Mandal's current place of worship and has been for the past 16 years. What exactly does the word worship imply? For Hindus, to worship means to participate in religious rites of prayer towards a deity. If one asks what a typical Indian place of worship is like, it will be described as a temple. A temple is defined as a place or building dedicated to the worship or the presence of a deity. The India Community Center is a satisfying structure in which Geeta Mandal meets, however is it a temple? No, this center is not a building completely devoted and dedicated to the worship of the idols, and it was not fully intended to be when it was built. This is why the Hindu Community of Indianapolis is inching towards the making of a true temple. To have a full fledged temple in Indianapolis would be an astounding accomplishment for our community. Our community has slowly grown more and more advanced as far as keeping in touch with our Indian culture. Hindi movies are now being shown in the theatres, Indian grocery stores are spread throughout the city, and we are famous for our restaurants. It is about time we established our very own temple as well. A temple would be the key to fulfilling the continuation of our traditions, culturally and religiously. In a temple, we can take religious and cultural classes which will enhance our knowledge. For example, a few years ago, we had started a local Bal vihar group for youth ages 5 and up. We would meet every weekend, and would memorize how to recite short shlokas and sing a variety of bhajans. Unfortunately, we had to stop this because there was no central location for us to meet in, due to the unavailability of The India Community Center. With a temple, we will be able to have Bal Vihar classes on a regular bases. In such classes, gradually young adults can grasp the deeper aspects of the Hindu religion with the proper teachers. A temple would obviously be ideal for such teachers and pupils to hold these Bal Vihar meetings. A temple has many attributes to offer not only to youth, but to people of all ages. A temple can provide everyone with a deeper connection to God at any time. On Birthdays or special occasions we can easily make a stop to the temple. A temple is a house of God, and a true house of God welcomes its devotees at all times. In a time of tragedy, having a temple will provide solace at any time that one needs to be at peace. Having this opportunity to be connected with God in the proper surrounding of a temple at any time, would help all of us survive through daily hassles and life's struggles. How convenient it would be for our community if we could express our affection, devotion, and respect to our culture and religion in a temple at any time. A temple is a symbol and a representation of our presence in this city. It would address the unification of our community as a whole to gather and meet as one with god.

**By Sudhir Belagaje:**

There are several important factors that affect the health and prosperity of any culture such as prominence in the community and overall awareness towards that culture. As a culture spreads in a foreign land, these factors are usually addressed individually. For the Hindu culture in central Indiana, a plan for a temple is being acted upon. Initially, this project may seem like an instance where one or perhaps two of the factors can be addressed. However, a temple would play a more significant role than that. The importance of a temple lies in its unique ability to cover a wide range of critical factors simultaneously. One such critical factor is community awareness. A temple would undoubtedly stand as a symbol of Hinduism and Hindu culture in central Indiana to outsiders unfamiliar with the culture. Subsequently, this effect could spur outside interest to learn about Hindu culture. It

is often said that discrimination is caused by a fear of the unknown. As illustrated above, a temple could possibly cure such problems. The importance of a temple in this respect cannot be understated as America is in a period of increased cultural awareness. It is clear that the extent to which a culture can spread is linked to the strength and vivacity of the youth who support it. On this front, a temple would aid in several different ways. Explicitly, it would provide a means for the youth to learn more about their Hindu culture. There is a strengthening effect because more people will have a basic understanding of Hindu religious values which could result in the further imbedding of Hinduism in American society in the future. This benefit is clear when one considers that the imbedding of a culture or religion in any society occurs after their religion has remained strong over a sustained period of time. Another benefit of internally strengthening the Hindu culture and religion comes with the natural contact Hindu youths would have with each other through a temple. The factors discussed, while not exhausting the full set that a temple would address, do reflect the broad range of those factors involved with a temple. The true importance of a temple lies in this unique ability. It is therefore with the strength of the Hindu culture and religion in mind that a temple must be built.

**By Tripti Singh:**

To make the Hindu temple of Indianapolis a reality, our community needs to get involved. Several grown-ups are donating money and committing their time making the project successful so far. However, a group of valuable people needs to get involved as well even by themselves. This group is the youth of Indianapolis. There are a substantial amount of tasks the youth can accomplish to help progress the temple. The first step is to get involved. Involvement of all those who have the capability to help is essential. This would bring our Hindu community much closer and stronger for future projects and plans. If the youth gets involved as early as possible, an ample amount of sentiment will be gained for the temple. Not only would we receive our temple in less time, but a promise by today's generations to keep the temple maintained for the next twenty, thirty, or forty years will be acquired. Some time from now, one could look back and recall the effort he/she put in the temple's early days, leaving him/her feeling it is their own responsibility to assure the temple's proper care and respect. Though my religion sets me apart from most people in this country, it gives me a glow showing others how a minority like myself, can survive with high values and morals. Through Hinduism, I have learned to forgive and teach the right, respect my elders, have an open mind for all circumstances, and never to give up. In other words, Hinduism has taught me keys to live life successfully. To build a temple seems more like a responsibility to me rather than a burden. I think I owe it to the generations before me, my own, and the ones yet to come.