

## YEAR 5 Unit C2 – The Hindu Community & Mandir

### Teacher's note:

This unit is part of a scheme of work designed to deliver the Agreed Syllabus. It has been written by a joint Hackney & Enfield curriculum development group.

The teaching objectives and learning outcomes are based on Agreed Syllabus level descriptions which are nationally agreed.

Teaching and learning activities plan for the two attainment targets for religious education - learning **about** and learning **from** religion. The planning promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils whether or not they are from a religious tradition.

On the right of this page is the full KS2 Hinduism programme of study from the Agreed Syllabus. The material picked out in **bold** features in this unit. Within each unit some of the content picked out in **bold** is a *major* focus, other content is a *minor* focus. A *minor* focus, and material alluded to by the teacher in one unit, will normally be revisited more fully in other units during the key stage.

Model individual, paired, group and whole class activities and tasks are included in the planning which teachers will need to adapt and differentiate to meet pupil needs

### Enfield Agreed Syllabus 2007 - KS2 Hinduism programme of study:

- **make connections between stories about eg Krishna and Rama, and the Hindu belief that God descends to earth when evil threatens to overcome good**
- **make connections between Hindu stories (eg Krishna and Sudarma, Krishna dancing with the gopis) and belief in a personal, devotional relationship between God and the individual**
- **make connections between Hindu belief in one God and the diverse forms in which God is worshipped eg Krishna, Rama, Lakshmi, Ganesha**
- **make connections between service (seva) to others and devotion to God**
- **make connections between Hinduism and other religions in relation to, for example, teachings about loving God and a responsibility to care for others, which motivate individuals, communities and Hindu aid agencies (eg Sewa International)**
- make connections between the existence of well-established Hindu communities in Britain and the building of traditionally-designed mandirs in London and other cities
- **make connections between devotion to God and how this is expressed in worship in the Hindu home and mandir eg puja, arti, prashad**
- **make connections between the belief that God is in everyone and everything and the implications for how Hindus should live their lives**
- **make connections between the themes of Hindu narratives about the gods and the parallel experiences for humans trying to live a good life eg the struggles to overcome evil in the Ramayana, Ganesha helping to overcome obstacles**

Teaching and learning should involve pupils in developing the skill of:

- **using specialist vocabulary in communicating their knowledge and understanding of Hindu beliefs, teachings, practices and symbols**

Teaching and learning should involve pupils in using and interpreting:

- a range of sources including the Hindu scriptures, stories from the Hindu tradition, murtis, the mandir, artefacts, pictures and symbols, songs and music, festival food; the media and ICT/the internet, **to gain knowledge and understanding of Hindu beliefs, teachings and practices**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES Children should learn:	TEACHING ACTIVITIES	LEARNING OUTCOMES Children:	POINTS TO NOTE
<p>stories about Krishna teach Hindus about God</p> <p>Krishna's characteristics include kindness, understanding, forgiveness, love and power</p> <p>the love and devotion shown to Krishna is an example for Hindus to follow</p>	<p><b>SESSION 1</b> <b>Whole class:</b> We are going to watch a video about Krishna who is very important to Hindus. Hindus believe that stories about what happened during Krishna's life show people what God is like, how God loves them and how God wishes people to live their lives. Many Hindus believe that Krishna is God.</p> <p>The video has several characters: <b>Devaki</b> and <b>Vasudeva</b> who have just got married at the beginning of the video. <b>Kamsa</b>, the king, who became king by putting his own, old father in prison and who does some very wicked things in order to stay king. <b>Krishna</b>, his brother <b>Balaram</b> and some of the other boys in the village <b>Radha</b> and some of the other girls in the village where Krishna grows up <b>Yashoda</b> and her husband who bring Krishna up as their son (The teacher could display these names on an OHP)</p> <p>When you watch this video I want you to look out for the following things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characteristics of Krishna – what sort of person is he shown to be by some of the things he does and in the way he treats other people</li> <li>• Clues that show that Krishna is not just a human boy but is holy</li> <li>• Famous stories Hindus tell of Krishna overcoming evil in the world – how many can you spot?</li> </ul> <p>Children have a prepared note-taking sheet which the teacher reads through with them in advance of watching the video. They should only fill this in when the video has been paused for note-taking purposes and at the end: not while they are watching it. After asking the questions at each 'pause' allow children time to make some notes on their sheet.</p> <p>Show the video: Quest Animated World Faiths: Programme 6 - the Childhood of Krishna.</p> <p>Pause immediately after we have seen Yashoda and the other mothers discussing how mischievous Krishna is: he steals sweet milk however high up they hide it and he unties the cows. <i>What sort of little boy was Krishna?</i> (Krishna is mischievous and naughty but still very much loved, always forgiven for his pranks. For Hindus this shows that God is</p>	<p>identify some of the characteristics of Krishna</p> <p>identify episodes in Krishna's life which teach Hindus to show love and devotion to God</p>	<p><b>Resources:</b> Video: Quest - Animated World Faiths Publisher: C4 Schools ISBN: 1 86215 287 X</p>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	TEACHING ACTIVITIES	LEARNING OUTCOMES	POINTS TO NOTE
Children should learn:	<p><b>Session 1 continued...</b> lovable and fun-loving, not solemn. God understands humans and is loving and forgiving.)</p> <p>Pause again after the holy man has said that “Whenever there is too much evil in the world, Vishnu takes human form to deal with it. He has come as Krishna to rid the world of evil” <i>Yashoda looks into her sons mouth and what does she see? What does that tell her about Krishna? What has the holy man who visited them told them about Krishna which shows he is no ordinary human child?</i></p> <p>Pause the video again after he has overcome the great serpent, Kaliya, but didn't kill it “for the sake of his (the serpent's) wives and children”. <i>What does this story tell Hindus about Krishna &amp; his characteristics?</i> (He was merciful, kind he listens to pleas from the serpent's wives and children and doesn't kill it. He is also brave and fearless.)</p> <p>Pause the video again after we have seen Krishna dancing with Radha and the other village girls. <i>Why do the girls not get cross with Krishna when he steals their clothes while they are bathing?</i> (Each one of them loves him. Krishna says “I love you all and where there is love there cannot be evil.”) <i>What happens when they are dancing?</i> (Each girl thinks that she alone is dancing with Krishna) <i>What do you think this means for Hindus?</i> (The village girls show love and devotion to Krishna. That is how Hindus should be devoted to God. They dance in a circle together but each one feels she alone is dancing with Krishna. Hindus believe God loves each one individually and each has an individual relationship with God.) Watch to the end of the video.</p> <p><b>Paired activity:</b> When the video has finished, pupils work in pairs to complete their sheets and compare notes.</p> <p>The teacher asks children for a summary of the story of how Krishna saved the villagers by holding up the mountain. <i>What did Krishna say was not a good enough reason for worshipping God? And what did he say was the best reason for worshipping God?</i> (They should not worship because they <u>fear</u> God but because they love God. Krishna shows Hindus that God is loving and loveable.)</p>	Children:	

LEARNING OBJECTIVES Children should learn:	TEACHING ACTIVITIES	LEARNING OUTCOMES Children:	POINTS TO NOTE
<p>Hindus believe that God descends to earth when evil threatens to overcome good</p> <p>evil can thrive through the action or inaction of human beings</p> <p>human beings have a key role in overcoming evil</p>	<p><b>SESSION 2</b></p> <p><b>Whole class:</b> Use pupils note-taking sheets to recap the key points from the video shown in session 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p><b>Characteristics of Krishna:</b> Krishna is God, come to earth in human form to rid it of evil Krishna (God) is loving, kind, forgiving and loves and knows each person individually Krishna (God) is mischievous. For Hindus this shows that God is lovable and fun-loving, not solemn. God understands humans and is loving and forgiving when they do wrong.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Clues that Krishna is divine:</b> The stories about Krishna show that God is all powerful (he overcomes poisonous serpents and great winged birds, for example) but not remote from human concerns and problems. From his birth onwards, it is obvious to Hindus that Krishna is God, divine – he is saved as a new-born baby by a sudden storm and by the sea parting to let him through. The village girls show devotion to Krishna. <i>How do you show devotion to someone?</i> Hindus believe that they should show their devotion to God in everything they do eg by singing songs, chanting God’s name, offering gifts such as flowers to God, offering themselves to God and living in the way God wishes them to live.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Famous stories Hindus tell of Krishna overcoming evil in the world:</b> Krishna overcoming the monster in various forms eg as a huge bull, as a python, as an enormous bird. Krishna overcomes Kaliya the cobra who is poisoning the river. Finally Krishna fights the wicked king Kamsa and wins. He restores goodness to the world by setting Vasudeva and Devaki free and by putting the rightful king back on the throne.</p> </li> </ul> <p>The old man comes to Yashoda to tell her how special Krishna is. He says “God has come to earth as Krishna to rid the world of evil.” <i>What represents evil in these stories?</i></p> <p>On an OHP, show the statement “all it takes for evil to succeed is for good people to do nothing.” <i>What do you think this means? Can you think of an example of this?</i> Allow children time to reflect on what examples of evil there have been in recent times. A reflective atmosphere could be created or</p>	<p>use stories about Krishna to explain the Hindu belief that God comes to earth in order to overcome evil</p> <p>reflect on how evil can happen because of the action or inaction of humans</p> <p>discuss how evil can be overcome through human action</p>	<p><b>In this unit we are trying to develop concepts through discussion and through reflective writing tasks. At no point during this unit should time be spent by pupils drawing or colouring in murtis.</b></p>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	TEACHING ACTIVITIES	LEARNING OUTCOMES	POINTS TO NOTE
Children should learn:	<p><b>Session 2 continued...</b></p> <p>enhanced by perhaps playing appropriate music and lighting a candle.</p> <p>Teachers might then wish to show the statement by Pastor Niemoeller. This gives children a powerful example of evil in the world.</p> <p><i>What might evil look like in our world today?</i>  <i>Are there any people you would describe as evil?</i>  <i>How do you think evil can be destroyed by good?</i></p> <p>These questions should help children to recognise that some of the things that happen in the world which might be described as 'evil' are because of the actions or <u>inaction</u> of humans. Equally, the goodness which can stop that evil also comes as a result of the good, caring, brave actions of people, individually or together.</p> <p><b>Individual activity:</b>  Children use a writing frame to reflect on how evil can be overcome by goodness.  I think evil in today's world looks like.....  I think the way evil can be overcome is by.....  An extension activity for the more able could be to write a playlet or short story showing an example of how good can overcome evil.</p>	Children:	

<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b> Children should learn:	<b>TEACHING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>LEARNING OUTCOMES</b> Children:	<b>POINTS TO NOTE</b>
<p>Hindus believe in One God</p> <p>about the Hindu idea of One God in many forms</p> <p>puja (worship) is one of the ways in which Hindus show devotion to God</p> <p>that actions in worship often have symbolic meanings</p> <p>that the key features of a mandir reflect Hindu belief</p>	<p><b>SESSION 3</b> <b>Whole class:</b></p> <p>In the previous two lessons we have been exploring some of the ways in which Hindus understand God in the form of Krishna. Hindus believe in One God, who created everything. God contains every characteristic of the universe - male and female, beautiful and ugly, creative and destructive, all and nothing.</p> <p>*This is a description of me: in one day I am a driver, a teacher, a partner, a friend, a customer..... <i>What are some of the different roles you have in one day?</i></p> <p>Give children 2 minutes in their pairs to list some of their roles. One person can be many different things and still be one person. Hindus believe it is impossible for humans to fully understand all the aspects of the One God. For Hindus, the different aspects and characteristics of God are revealed through many gods and goddesses, so that humans can begin to understand God.</p> <p>You have probably learnt about some of these Hindu gods already. <i>Can you remember any of their names?</i> Eg the god Krishna, and associated with Diwali - the god Rama, the goddess Lakshmi, the gods Ganesha, Hanuman Hindus learn a little bit more about God through each of these.</p> <p>Show the video: What's It Like – Programme 1...To be a Hindu. Start from the narrator arriving outside the mandir and explaining that when her parents first came to England there was no mandir. Show up to and including the giving of prashad to the congregation.</p> <p>Children are prompted to look out for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Things you would expect to see at a mandir - outside and inside</li> <li>• Things you would expect to hear at a mandir</li> <li>• Ways in which members of the community show devotion/love to God and what some of their actions mean. Look out for things worshippers do individually and things they do together as a community.</li> </ul> <p>After watching the video, give children time in pairs to complete their note-taking sheets. Pupils could use information texts to extend their understanding of the <u>meaning</u> of what they might see and what happens at the mandir. For example they could look up some of the new Hindu vocabulary to which the video introduces them: puja, prashad, murti,. We recommend the following texts: Where We Worship: Hindu Mandir and keystones: Hindu Mandir.</p>	<p>show understanding of the idea that one person plays many roles</p> <p>understand how God is thought about in Hinduism</p> <p>explain how Hindus show devotion to God through puja</p> <p>identify and explore the symbolic meaning of some actions used in worship</p> <p>identify some features of a mandir and explain how these express belief</p>	<p><b>Resources:</b> Video: What's It Like...? – To be a Hindu Publisher: C4 Schools This video is no longer stocked by C4 Schools but a copy can be obtained from the RE Adviser</p> <p>* The video Pathways of Belief: Hindusim –Programme 1.God – One God, Many Aspects gives a very useful introduction to the Hindu concept of One God in many forms. This video is used in the Y4 unit, Living as a Hindu. However until such time as the scheme of work has been implemented fully, Y6 children in 2001 and 2002 will not have covered that unit and so could be shown the video here without fear of repetition. Optional Video: Pathways of Belief- Hinduism, (Programme 1.God – One God, Many Aspects) Publisher: BBC Schools</p>

<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b> Children should learn:	<b>TEACHING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>LEARNING OUTCOMES</b> Children:	<b>POINTS TO NOTE</b>
<p>members of the Hindu community contributed to the building of the mandir in various ways</p> <p>servicing the community through the mandir is a way of showing devotion to God</p> <p>the mandir complex is used for a range of community purposes</p>	<p><b>SESSION 4</b></p> <p>Children are given photocopies of a newspaper report on the opening of the Swaminarayan Mandir in Neasden. The teacher draws to the attention of the class, the quotation from Yogesh Patel: “ It has been a real labour of love for all the people who have worked here.” (page 6, penultimate paragraph).</p> <p>In pairs, using 3 colours, children highlight on the text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>examples which show that the mandir was a labour of love for those who helped to raise the money and those who worked on its construction (helpers from all walks of life worked unpaid “They are demonstrating their commitment to service to the community.” Children contributed by collecting 125 tonnes of cans for recycling to raise money as their contribution.)</li> <li>examples of how the mandir is used by the community and why it is special to them (for weddings, for festivals eg Divali, for individual prayer, for congregational prayer. The mandir “is more than a house of worship or a place of prayer. It is where time stops. The mind becomes still and the soul floats freely to seek the hidden harmony in man, nature and God.” First paragraph p 7)</li> <li>the fact they find most surprising and interesting about the construction of the mandir</li> </ul> <p>Children then prepare questions to ask their guide on the visit.</p> <p><b>Plenary:</b>  <i>What are some of the ways in which members of the community contributed to building the mandir?</i>  <i>Why do you think so many people, adults and children, worked so hard in so many ways to help build the mandir?</i>  <i>Why do you think it is so important to the community to have this new mandir?</i>            Show children an OHP identifying the key purposes for the Hindu community of the mandir.</p>	<p>discuss how contributing to the building of the mandir is for Hindus a form of service to the community and devotion to God</p> <p>give examples of how the mandir complex is used by the community and why it is special to them</p>	<p><b>Resources:</b> Newspaper reports (included with this unit)</p>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	TEACHING ACTIVITIES	LEARNING OUTCOMES	POINTS TO NOTE
<b>Children should learn:</b>		<b>Children:</b>	
<p>about the Hindu idea of One God in many forms</p> <p>about some of the ways that Hindus show devotion to God in the mandir</p> <p>that the key features of a mandir reflect Hindu belief</p>	<p><b>SESSION 5</b></p> <p>Optional visit to the Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Neasden.</p> <p>Activities in the mandir might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking for and identifying carvings in the prayer room which tell key stories from the life of Krishna eg Krishna holding up the mountain, Krishna dancing on Kaliya's hood</li> <li>• Looking for and listing the different ways in which Hindus show their devotion to God when they are in the prayer room</li> <li>• Identifying some of the other murtis eg Ganesha, Rama and Sita, Hanuman</li> <li>• Interviewing their guide to find out more about the community and how important the mandir is to them</li> <li>• Find out some of the things the community did to show their care for the environment when they were building the mandir</li> </ul> <p>If the class visits the exhibition, ensure that they focus on the display which explains Hindu teaching on caring for the environment and caring for humanity.</p> <p><b>Follow-up activities:</b> Pupils write thank-you letters to the mandir. The key purpose should be to identify some of the things that they have learnt about Hindu beliefs, the mandir and the community during the unit of work.</p>	<p>make links between shrine figures and the beliefs which underlie them</p> <p>identify some features of a mandir and explain how these express belief</p> <p>give examples of some of the ways Hindus show devotion to God</p>	

**Teachers' OHP: Characters in the 'Childhood of Krishna' video  
(Animated World Faiths)**

**Devaki and Vasudeva** - who have just got married

**Kamsa** - the king, who became king by putting his own, old father in prison and who does some very wicked things in order to stay king

**Krishna**

**Balaram** - Krishna's brother

Some of the other boys in the village

**Radha** - one of the village girls, Krishna's favourite

Some of the other girls in the village

**Yashoda** and her husband who bring Krishna up as their son

## **Pupils' video note-taking sheet: the childhood of Krishna (Animated World Faiths)**

**Some of the characteristics of Krishna are.....**

*(Look for some of the things he does and the way he treats other people)*

**Clues that show that Krishna is not just a human boy but is holy (special)  
are.....**

**Famous stories Hindus tell of Krishna overcoming evil in the world include.....**

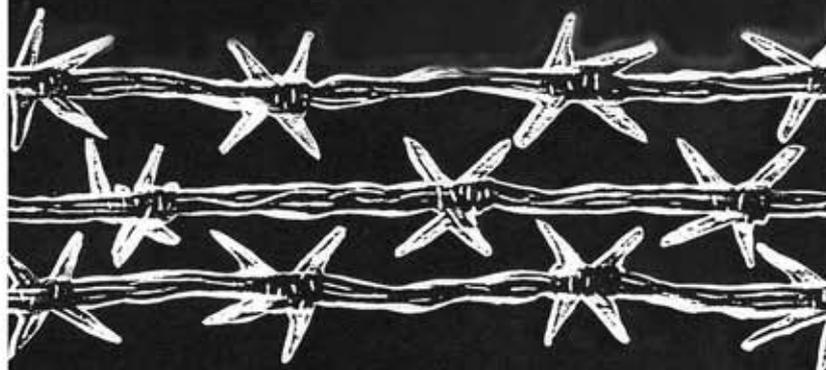
**"All it takes for evil to succeed,  
is for good people to do nothing."**

'First they came for the Jews  
and I did not speak out –  
because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for the communists  
and I did not speak out –  
because I was not a communist.

Then they came for the trade  
unionists and I did not speak out –  
because I was not a trade unionist.

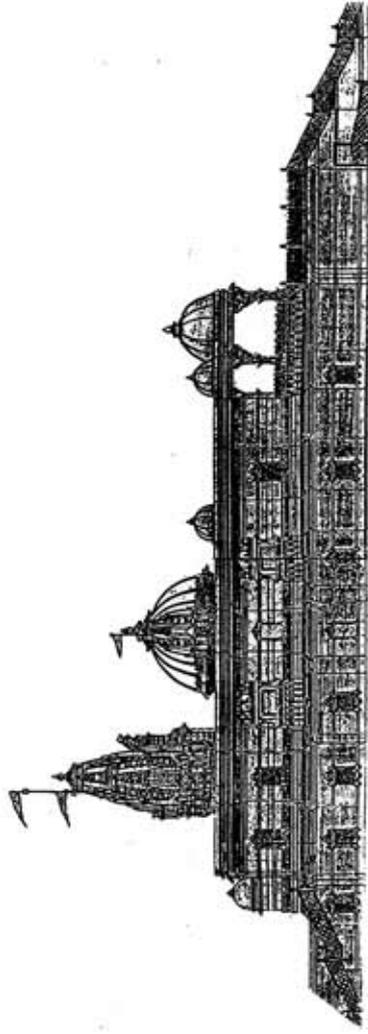
Then they came for me –  
and there was no one left  
to speak out for me.'



Pastor Niemoeller (*victim of the Nazis*)

## Pupils' note-taking sheet: the Mandir

Things you would see at a mandir - outside and inside:



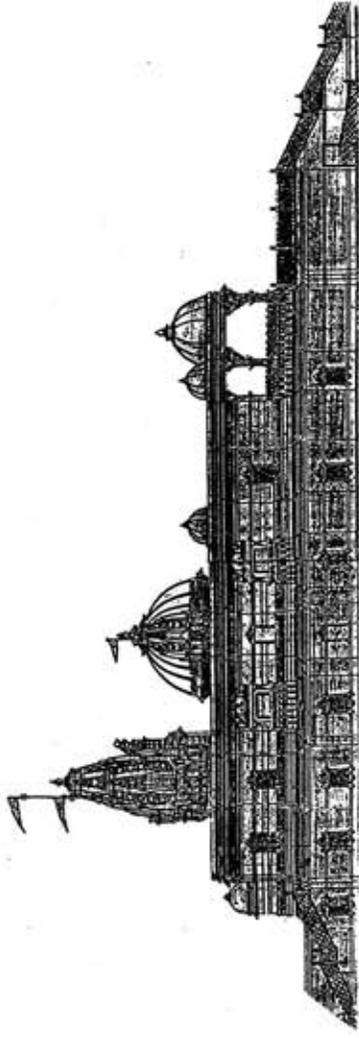
Things you might hear at a mandir:

Ways in which members of the community show devotion/love to God (individually and as a community) and what some of their actions mean:

## Pupils' note-taking sheet: the mandir: (Teachers' answer sheet)

Things you might see at a mandir - outside and inside:

Name: *Shri Sanatan Hindu Mandir*  
Om symbol on the notice board outside  
People remove their shoes & put them in racks  
Shrines with offerings of flowers and fruit  
Murtis - Rama, Krishna, Hanuman - garlanded and beautifully clothed  
(the murtis "represent different sides of God and the relationship between God and people")  
The symbol of the swastik  
People greeting each other with their hands together  
Prashad distributed  
("a gift from God. Usually the food has been brought in by someone and offered to God. It is then given out to the community")  
Prayer beads



Things you might hear at a mandir:

*Worshippers playing the cymbals and tabla, singing and clapping hands*

*The bell rung as worshippers begin their puja*  
*People chanting 'shanti' (peace)*

Ways in which members of the community show devotion/love to God (individually and as a community) and what some of their actions mean:  
*Worshippers touch the step as they enter & press their hand to their heart*

*People go to each shrine, bow before God and offer gifts to God - a way of saying thank you for all that God has created*

*People walking around a shrine - symbolising God being at the centre of their life - and touching each side of the shrine with their head & their heart*

*Puja - a special offering to God*

*People praying individually or together - "the main thing is whether it comes from the heart or not"*

*The priest reads from the Vedas, people sit and listen - "it's a collection of thoughts to teach us how to practise a way of life"*

IT MIGHT have used up more than 60,000 cubic feet of stone and thousands of trees but there is not a single nail or piece of metal in the main fabric of Europe's biggest Hindu temple.

The Swaminarian Mandir will be opened on August 18 by the guru who inspired it, Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

The ceremony will be on the anniversary of the birthday more than 200 years ago of Lord Swaminarayan the founder of this tradition of Hinduism.

The temple, or Mandir, will be completed more than three years after planning permission was first granted.

But the style, called Shilpashastra Vedic architecture from a 5,000-year-old tradition dating back to the beginnings of Hinduism, dictates no metal should be used – because five millenia ago rust-proof steel was a long way from being even a twinkle in a Sheffield engineer's eye.

The intricately-carved pillars, still covered to protect them from the elements, contain scenes from Hindu scriptures. Craftsmen had initially tried to use power tools to speed their work. But most have found them impossible to use and have reverted to generations-old hand techniques to execute their artistry.

There will be the usual fire escapes, lifts, heating and ventilation that any building complying with European legislation must have – under the guidance of Austin Tureman Associates, consulting engineers.

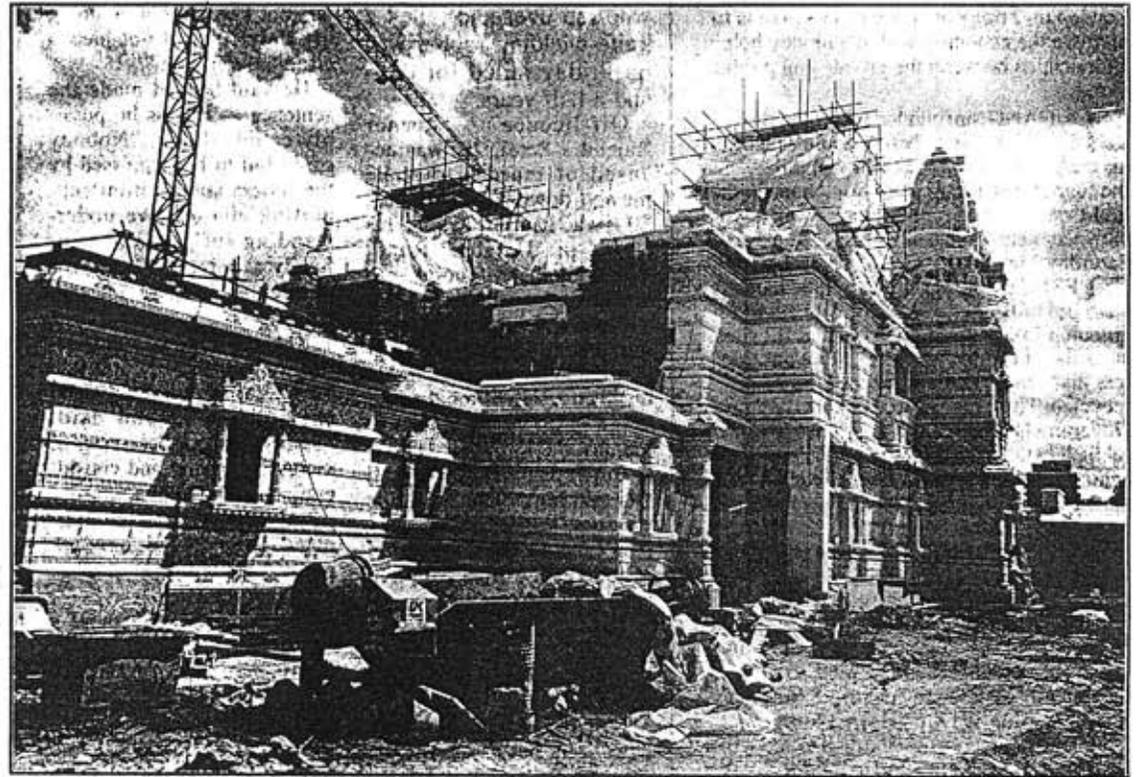
Beside the magnificent temple will be a community complex, featuring a social centre, sports halls, library, kitchens, clinic, main prayer hall, conference centre and marriage centre.

There will also be an exhibition of religious artefacts, audio visuals and learning materials in the room below the central prayer room, containing the sacred statues. Worshippers use this room for private prayer with Lord Krishna and then file slowly through to the 1,000 capacity main assembly hall in the community complex.

The whole project would have cost more than £16million to build at current prices – providing normal prices were paid. But most of the materials have been provided at cost price and all the labour, both in India and Britain, has been free.

# Europe's biggest temple for Hindus

- The temple is 195 ft long and 70ft wide – almost the size of a football pitch.
- 35,000 cubic feet of Bulgarian limestone was used on the external walls, and 25,000 cubic feet of Italian Carera marble inside, with 1,500 cubic feet of granite on the foundations.
- 1,000 builders have worked 12 hours a day on the building in Britain over a three-year period. The work of a similar number in India had to be shipped over and pieced together like a jigsaw.
- Helpers from all walks of life including engineers, doctors, cleaners, architects, electricians, newsagents and multi-millionaires have all worked unpaid. They are demonstrating their commitment to service to the community, a basic part of Swaminarayan life.
- At the busiest period of work, stone was being carved at 15 different sites in West India.
- Up to 25,000 people will use the temple on prominent festivals such as Diwali. The new building will have 550 car parking spaces and Gibbons Recreation Ground will be hired as an overspill.



Cranes, cement mixers and plastic sheeting are used in the building of a temple built in a style originating 5,000 years ago

Even some of the cost of the materials has been raised through classes at the nearby Swaminarian School – Europe's first Swami primary, teaching the National Curriculum, as well as Hindu language, culture, and traditions – with the money being ploughed into buying materials.

Pupils at the school have also become the country's second most successful can recycling collectors – after Blue Peter – as a way of raising money for the work. They have brought in 125 tonnes of cans in a year.

Construction is being supervised by sadhus, or

"saints", the equivalent of Christian monks thoroughly versed in the rules of such architecture.

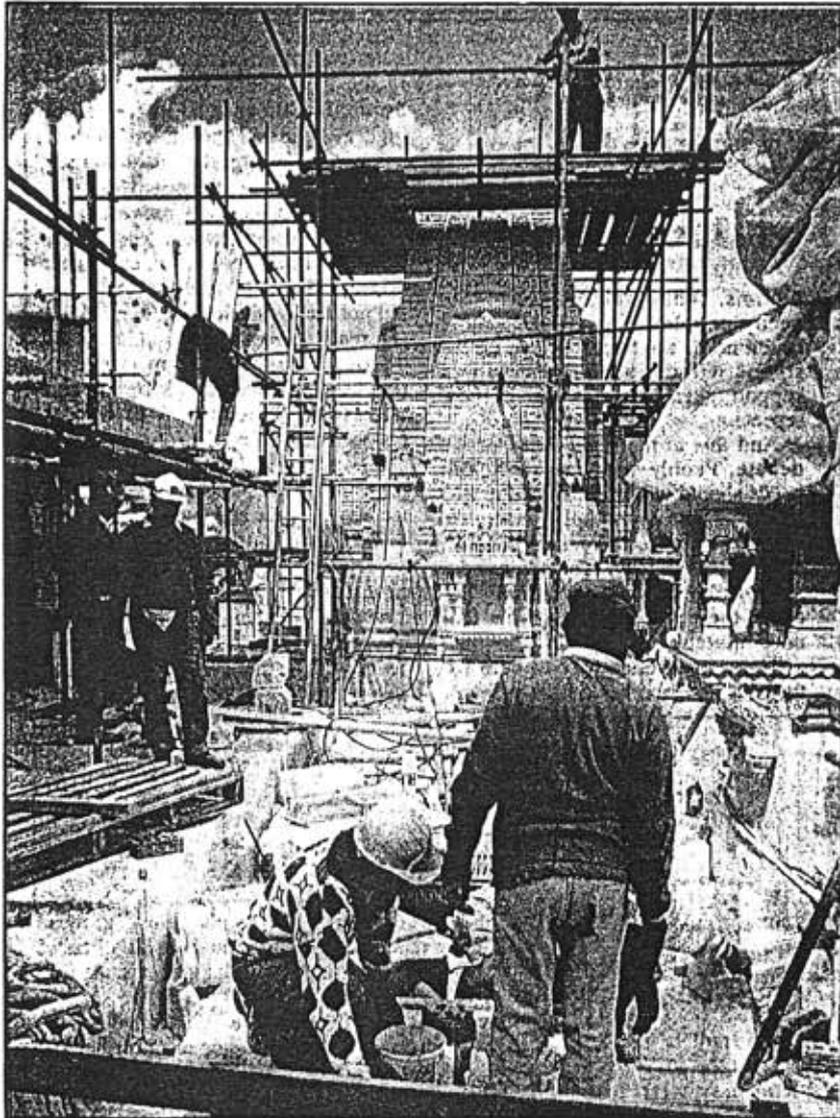
But the technical side has been managed from day one by trained engineer Madhusudan Patel, of Ebrington Road, Kepton, who has worked unpaid throughout. "I have not suffered financially," he said. "By the grace of our Guru we have found a solution."

The plot, originally the site of the Arlington Garage, was bought at a cost of millions of pounds in 1990. The foundation stone was laid on the granite base in 1992, on Lord Krishna's birthday. The

existing temple, a converted warehouse across Meadow Garth, will be demolished once the sacred statues are transferred.

Yogesh Patel, who has acted as a co-ordinator and public relations officer, runs a grocery in West London. He said: "This type of carving is a dying art in India. It has been a real labour of love for all the people who have worked here."

"We have been inspired by Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the fifth spiritual successor of Lord Swaminarayan. It was his decision this temple should be built."



High above ground the main spire of the temple nears completion



Carved sections of stonework from India are delivered for assembly on site

**MANDIR** is the holy name for a Hindu temple. But the architects of the project add: "It is more than a house of worship or a place of prayer.

"It is where time stops.

"The mind becomes still.

"And the soul floats freely to seek the hidden harmony in man, nature and God."

The Swaminarayan Mandir in Brentfield Road, Harlesden, will host regular three-hour worship for 1,000 people weekly, and up to 25,000 on feast days.

Its architecture is traced back through Hindu sacred texts and includes carved curves, domes, peaks, pillars and platforms.

Its features are based on a body and "just as a body is incomplete with missing organs, the Mandir is inauspicious without all its perfect parts".

This explains why worshippers' shoes must be removed on entering.

The foundations represent the feet; the Simhaasan or throne is the heart.

The Garbhagriha, an inner sanctum like a cave, is the stomach or womb which gives life, containing the 15 deities and eight types of Murti – the divine presence of God, one in the form of stone, one in wood, one in metal, one in earth, one an engraved likeness, one made of sand and one of gems.

The eighth is in the mind of the worshipper as he meditates on the Divine.

A golden vessel of elixir, the immortal drink, at the top of the highest spire, is the head.

Cream-coloured Bulgarian limestone was chosen for the exterior because it was cheaper to send it to India to be worked on and then sent to Britain than it was to buy Portland Stone in Britain and work on it here.

It has been carved in Kandla in West India, along with the marble, which was from Carrara in Italy – chosen for its purity of colour.

These types of stone had to undergo tests for density, compression, flexibility, water absorption and freezing before they could be chosen.