

A short history of the Cincinnati Hindu Temple

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(October 2nd 2004)

History of the Temple:

Earlier to 1977 several Hindu families in Cincinnati used to worship gods of their choice, and perform *Puja* ceremonies, in their own houses and visiting temples in other cities of USA whenever they had some opportunities. However in 1978 a concept of starting community religious activity in Cincinnati itself was generated. On the *Basant Panchami* day of 1978, such a community *Puja* was organized by Dr. & Mrs. Kapildeo and Kiran Sinha and performed by Dr. Kanwar Bhatnagar of Louisville. Thereafter every month, the *Pujas* were performed periodically in the basements of some residents. In this connection particular mention may be made of families of Dr. & Mrs. Lakshmi Shankar & Prem Srivastava, Dr. & Mrs. Gangadhar & Chandra Choudhary, Dr. & Mrs Harlal & Swarna Choudhury, Dr. Jag Bhushan & Rosemary Lal, and Drs. Kedar & Bina Verma. The first official *Puja* was organized at Dr. Gangadhar Choudhury's residence in March 1978 and he himself acted as the priest, All *Pujas* were performed by Dr.Gangadhar Choudhury only till the first resident priest was selected. Later with participation of more members the main activity moved to the basement of First National Bank (now Firststar Bank) of Ludlow Branch, Cincinnati, and the group of devotees was formalized as a religious organization under the name of Hindu Society of Greater Cincinnati. The emblem of the Society was conceived and drawn by Mrs Neelima Kumar and painted by Mohan Sanwal. Its first constitution was adopted in March 1979, and was registered in the State of Ohio on April 17, 1980. Dr.Gangadhar Choudhury and Mr Vinay Kumar acting as election officers, conducted the first elections on June 15, 1980 under the newly formulated constitution. The IRS tax exemption status was obtained in March 1981. With the help of Mr. Ram Jindal, an old house was bought at Martin Luther King Drive on September 16, 1982 and paid in full by the donations collected from the community members. It was renovated and used as the Hindu Temple until 1995. The inaugural *Puja* in the temple was performed by Swami Bhashyanand ji of Vedanta Society of Chicago on January 23, 1983. During August 1985, Acharya Ravindra Nagar was appointed as the first resident priest by the then President Dr. Laxmi S Srivastava and various cultural activities commenced regularly as per the Hindu calendar.

On September 17, 1986, approximately about 100 acres of land (the present site) was bought during the presidentship of Dr. L.S.Sivastava and on October 12, 1986 Swami Jyotirmayanand of Miami performed *Bhumi Puja* on the new site. On May, 14 1988 Pandit Bhagawati Charan Sharma was appointed as the new resident priest and he is still continuing as the chief priest of the temple. Pandit Jyotirmayanand ji was again invited to lay the foundation stone of the New temple in a well attended ceremony on an auspicious day of June 13, 1992. By the end of 1993, the construction of the basement of the temple and laying of roads were completed largely from the donations of the community members, and loans from banks and other sources. During 1994 – 95 various sections of the building were gradually added. The new temple was formally inaugurated on November 18-19, 1995 under the presidentship of Dr. Rakesh Govind. The deities from the old temple were removed and ceremoniously installed, in the lower floor of the new temple. Religious activities of various sorts were being conducted regularly with the grant of limited occupancy for the lower floor on Nov.9 1996.. The full occupancy was granted on May 6, 1997. Finally the permanent deities, as desired by different sections of the Hindu community were installed during May 22- 26 1997, with religious ceremonies conducted by special priests invited from different places in U. S. A, and India. *Murthi Prana Pratiishtapana Mahotsava* and *Mahakumbhabisheka* was organized at the new temple under the presidentship of Mukund Patel. A new concept was developed to bring harmony and unity in the diversity of several deities by desiring to have a central 'OM'. A new spiritual experience was aroused in the Hindu community of Cincinnati and around. The centrally placed crystal "OM", which is a symbolic representation of the creation of the Universe, which represents the central theme spirit and

significance of all the deities, and which is also considered as the focal point of Spiritualism according to Vedas, has been obtained from Italy and unveiled on April, 29, 2000. The special glass crystal "OM" is an unique in its concept and structure. It was done by the world renowned 'Master Glass Sculptor' Maestro Pino Signoretto of Favor Vent, Italy. The generous contribution for this project was made by the family of Mr & Mrs Satguru and Usha Srivastava.

Since then the activities of the temple have been growing steadily, special classes are conducted for children on every Sunday, special prayers (*Pujas*) are offered on special occasions, Socio-religious activities like marriages etc are conducted as required by individual members, and annual *Melas* and festivals are organized for the community as a whole. The temple currently maintains a gift shop with articles of spiritual interest, runs a monthly publication called "ARADHANA", and maintains a web site www.cincinnati temple.com for any type of information required. Extensions to the main building have been added recently and new deities of Chitragupta and Jagannath, Balbhadra, Subhadra have been added. There are proposals for a library, an Arts center, and for special programs for seniors, and organizing awareness of true Hinduism among the community members.