

**The Hindu Temple Society  
of the Capital District, NY Inc.**

**Origin and History of our Temple  
(In brief)**



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## Temple Logo and Motto



This logo was creatively designed in 1975 by Smt. Malati Narsu, wife of the first HTS Board Chairman, Pratap Narsu.

### OUR INSIGNIA

This syllable is considered to be the primordial sound of creation and the symbol of impersonal aspect of God.

### OUR MOTTO

'Ekam Sat ViprA bahudhA vadanthi' – *'Truth is One, But the Wise Men Approach it by Different Ways'*

# Dedications

The Hindu Temple Society is indebted to:

1. All our dedicated volunteers who willingly spend many hours to serve our Temple and Cultural Center. There are too numerous of them to list them here, but their services are priceless.
2. Our visionary founders and leaders who perceived the need for a Temple and dedicated their energy and resources to make it happen.
3. Our Constitution and Governance Policies authors who have spent countless hours to lay the road for the governance of the institution for all these years. MR Balakrishna, Nagaraj Patil, Ram Chugh, Madabhushi Raghavachari, Ramani Mani, Rasik Shah and Sastry Sreepada.
4. Acknowledge immense contributions and services rendered by Ram Chugh in developing “Bereavement Support Guide” and publishing “Reflections” quarterly magazine.
5. Our leaders (BOT Chairs, BOD Chairs, and BOG Chairs), listed in Chapter 4) and all the Board members for their dedicated services to grow our institution.
6. Our illustrious priests (listed in Chapter 4) who guided the Temple’s growth over the years, and also fulfilled spiritual needs of our community.
7. Our devotees who poured their energy and resources to grow the Temple Society and make it a welcoming place for all.
8. The dedicated members who spent many hours to professionally design the Temple website, and who spend many hours to populate and maintain it. The team of dedicated volunteers who count hundi collections every month.
9. Mukai Krishnamoorthy for his pains taking effort to enter nearly 10 years of data into QuickBooks following the construction of new Temple.
10. K Bala for a couple of major program initiatives including Interfaith program, organization of concerts, Adopt a Highway Program, religious discourse by guest speakers Swami Dayananda Saraswati.
11. Sastry Sreepada for major initiatives including Compilations of Bhakti Maala-Vedic Chantings, weekly and daily prayers as well as Kumbhaabhishekham Program.
12. Jaya Kumar Thirumalai, who has diligently spent many hours each week for so many years to enter data in the QuickBooks accounting system and handling the bank deposits.
13. Anuj Goel, who diligently issues every week our e-bulletins for so many years.

# Forward

## **Tharunidhar (Tarun) Narravula (2021 BOT Chair) and Dr. Swatantra Mitta (2021 BOD Chair)**

We are delighted that the “Origin & History of our Temple (in brief)” is in your hands. It was our long-cherished dream to document our history, and we made repeated efforts to talk to some of our Temple Incorporators and other senior members to gather the historical documents and a written record of their recollections, but the effort was met with limited success. Our past chairmen, Manu Amin and Sury Putta provided some historical documents; we also interviewed Ramani Mani, S. Ravipati, Kishan Battu, to get some specific details. We still did not have sufficient material to get started.

In early 2021, our past Chairman Dr. Shashi Patel relocated to Florida. In the process of emptying the home, he found a huge collection of historical documents from his association with Temple for many years. We picked up this treasure-trove of documents, which provided a jump start for this effort.

The next step was to go through multiple boxes of documents to sort and identify important historical records. At the request of then BOT Chairman to Senior Meet group to undertake this arduous task, two Senior Meet members volunteered to spend many hours over several weeks to identify history-worthy documents.

The purpose of this document is:

- a) to tell a story to our next generations about the evolution of temple from a humble beginning to a vibrant and sustainable institution
- b) to present the struggles faced by the volunteers and the sacrifices made by the donors to overcome the odds to turn dreams into reality
- c) hoping that future generations learn from this history and realize the responsibility in maintaining as well as sustaining the institution but not take it for grant as an entitlement
- d) to list all important milestones and events based on facts with documentation but not intended to credit individuals

We dedicate this document to all volunteers and donors who are not recognized by name.

We are fortunate that Rasik Shah, MR Balakrishna and Prakash Joshi agreed to be editors and undertake the final task of putting together this readable record. Rasik and Balakrishna have been involved with Temple since its inception in 1975, thus bringing years of personal involvement with Temple & HCC operations; Prakash served as the first Temple Manager who served for 10 years in its formative years. These editors went through all the available Temple’s historical documents and put together this historical narrative of our institutions.

We sincerely hope this historical account of Hindu Temple Society (HTS) will illustrate the vision and untiring efforts of our senior leaders and inspire our devotees to work towards continuing growth of our Society.

DR. J. S. D. S.

## Chapter 1: Inauguration of Old Temple 1976

After the liberalization of Immigration Laws in United State (1960), many Indian professionals (mostly Scientists, Engineers, Doctors) settled in the Capital District Area of upstate New York. For most of Hindu immigrants, the nearest Hindu temple was in Pittsburgh, PA, which is about 400 plus miles away from Albany. They felt that they were missing going to the Temples for worship every once in a while, as in India, where there are Temples located in almost every corner of a village and town. There was a sense that, with children growing up here, we needed to do something sooner or later to fill this void.

Therefore, a small group of people met in a Hindu member's homes (in 1975) to explore the possibility of building a temple in the Capital District. It was decided that, as a first step, we should send out a questionnaire to some 80 plus known Hindu families living in the capital district to solicit opinions along with Pledge Cards/Donation Forms to assess how many people were interested in building the Temple in the area and willing to support. Over 95 percent expressed strong support for the Temple idea and their desire to support in the form of donations and pledges. The planning group received donations and pledges amounting more than \$20,000.

Professor Swaminathan of the College of St. Rose offered free use of college facilities for conducting meetings, cultural activities, religious services etc. He also served as a mentor and spiritual guide for the Temple project.

A first General Body meeting held on December 21, 1975 (Exhibit 1) resolved to build a Hindu Temple in the area, approved the creation of an Ad Hoc Committee of Trustees consisting of 11 Members to prepare an implementation report, and authorized the Ad Hoc Committee to receive voluntary donations to cover the expenses for study and preparation of the report. The Ad Hoc Committee members were: Pratap M Narsu, M.R.Balakrishna, K.R.Shankar, C.K Nagaraja, Vedula Sarma, Krishnaveni Sarma, Ravipati (Ramu) Sitaramaiah, Sudhir Kulkarni, Rasik Shah, Nagaraja Patil, Navnith Kukadiia. The Ad-hoc Committee Report was submitted to the Temple General Body which accepted the Report. The main conclusion of the report was that it is feasible to build a Temple and operate it with the growing Hindu population in the four-county area consisting of Albany, Schenectady, Saratoga and Rensselaer Counties.

Further, at the General Body meeting held in January 1976 the First Board of Trustees consisting of Pratap Narsu (Chairman), M. Ganjhu (Vice Chair), Ramani Mani (Secretary), C. K Nagaraja (Treasurer), and T.A Subramanian, M.R. Balakrishna, Rasik Shah, V. Sarma and Gokuldas Modasra as Trustees.

Subsequent General Body meeting, held on March 14, 1976, adopted the first constitution of the Hindu Temple Society (HTS), and authorized the Board to take steps to incorporate it. It also authorized the Board to purchase a suitable property, preferably in the Town of Colonie, which was accessible to everyone, and also take necessary steps to apply for IRS Tax Exemption Section 501 C (3) certificate.

The society hired an attorney to file the Incorporation papers with the NYS Department of State. Some 15-plus members signed the incorporation document (Exhibit 2) on March 19,1976. HTS obtained IRS Tax exemption under Section 501(c)3 dated October 2,1976.

In May 1976, after looking at various sites, BOT decided to purchase the site at 450 Albany Shaker Road, Loudonville, NY, consisting of 8.08 acres of land, 100-plus-year old farm house and a barn. In order to purchase the property, Temple needed 25% of the purchase price of \$53,000. We had only about \$2,000 on hand and \$20,000+ in pledges. Temple needed \$13,250 for down payment, closing costs of \$1,500+ and funds needed for remodeling. Mr. C.K. Nagaraja (Treasurer) was able to negotiate a loan of \$15,000 from Marine Midland Bank at favorable terms to be repaid over a period of 15 years. BOT approved a resolution authorizing Chairman Pratap Narsu to sign the note for the same. Pratap Narsu and M.R. Balakrishna had secured the first Mortgage of \$39,700 (25 year at 8.5 per cent) from the Schenectady Savings Bank.

Now the major task was to organize and mobilize people who were familiar with demolition and construction. Unlike other immigrants who came to the USA before, there were very few craftsmen like carpenters, plumbers and electricians in our community; most people were professionals and for them demolition, repair and restoration ideas and skills were totally new. Fortunately, Pratap Narsu had previously served as a Building Inspector for the City of Schenectady.

After getting the Building Permit from the Town of Colonie, demolition work started earnestly in May 1976, with a lot of enthusiasm and support from Indian residents. The momentum was so great that many members started coming to the site with their family to witness the progress of construction work and brought snacks. Some of the members who spent considerable sustained effort for demolition and reconstruction are: Pratap Narsu, Ravipati Sitaramaiah, Rasik Shah, K.R. Shankar, Muralidhar, Sury Putta, Gokuldas Modasra, C.K. Nagaraja, T A Subramanian, Ramani Mani, M.R. Balakrishna, A. R. Mulukutla, G. Sadasivam and many more.

Mention must be made of key remodeling tasks performed by several volunteers. Gokuldas Modasra took care of plumbing and heating work, which involved cutting of radiator pipes and rerouting. Ranjit Mangroo, a Guyanese member, provided labor for all new electrical wiring and 200 AMP panel. Removing walls of various small rooms to create a large prayer hall and building of new structural supports was a great challenge considering the age of the farmhouse. Erection of steel beam supporting prayer hall floor was even a greater challenge. Only C K Nagaraja was familiar with the steel beam design and erection. Mr. Sadashivam (a licensed Professional Engineer) provided all structural design of support structure including the columns and footings in the basement and steel (24-inch I-beam about 36 ft long). Pratap Narsu installed wood paneling in the main hall and M.R. Balakrishna built stage and molding for the wood panel. Hard work of 25 plus families resulted in completion of remodeling work.

Finally, all remodeling work was completed by August 20th, 1976, and Certificate of Occupancy (CO) was obtained after successful completion of all inspections from the Town of Colonie Building Department. A beautiful prayer hall was ready before the scheduled date for the opening ceremony. The Old Temple was inaugurated in a grand ceremony on Ganesh Chaturthi by then Lt Governor Mary Anne Krupsak on August 28,1976 (Exhibit 3). We invited Swami Atmananda, priest from the New York Ganesha Temple, Swami Sarvagathananda of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Center at



Boston, and Mrs. Pronoti Chakrabarti, a well-known exponent of Indian classical music and her Bhajan Group to grace the occasion. It was a memorable event for whole Hindu community. The hall was packed to its capacity to celebrate the event.

Following the inauguration, the next task was to upgrade the kitchen, dining hall and bathrooms. In the meantime, as members fulfilled their pledges, the financial position of the Temple improved. We were able to pay off the Marine Midland Bank loan just after five years.

M.R. Balakrishna served as the first interim priest in 1976 and Mr. Muralidhar served as a volunteer priest from 1977 onwards. Religious services on Sundays included poojas, followed by bhajans aarti and prasadam. Later, monthly Satyanarayana Poojas and major Hindu festivals, house poojas requested by members, were added. First Hindu wedding ceremony took place in the Temple in 1977. It was conducted by Mr. Muralidhar. We also started celebrating Diwali with fireworks. Temple's other major activity was an annual fund-raising dinner and a cultural program coordinated by Dr. G. N. Rao.

In 1985, BOT decided to hire a full-time priest to take care of growing religious service needs, since both Balakrishna and Muralidhar were full time employees of the NY State. Shri Kumaraswamy Dixitar, a priest of Gavi Gangadhareshwara Temple, Bangalore, was selected as a full-time priest in July of 1985. He was interviewed by Mr. Balakrishna and his brother-in-law. Mr. Muralidhar resigned from his position as Part Time Priest in 1985. Mr. Dixitar joined officially as a full-time priest in September 1985. His family joined him about six months later. The priest quarter was remodeled in 1986 with a new kitchen, separate heating zone for 2nd floor and addition of a bath room. Priest family also used the front room when it was not used for meetings.

As the community interest grew, we started Heritage Classes, which were coordinated by Drs. Sugandhi. Few other teachers (Mr. and Mrs. Janaki Krishnamurthy, Smt. Mangala Puranik and others) joined them later in 1990 to assist in teaching. Temple's main prayer hall served multiple purposes. It was used as a concert hall, conducting discourses and talks as well as for dining. The diversity and quality of musical concerts increased considerably over the years and several well-known artists from India have found, though small, an ardent music loving community in the Capital District.

HTS has come a long way. It became an established fully functioning dynamic institution. It catered to the spiritual and cultural needs of people in and around the Capital District. Its tenth anniversary was the time to reflect on what was just an idea of a Temple in the Capital District, conceived by a handful of people in 1975, not only became a reality within one year but also grew by several fold during the first ten-year period.

Our sincere thanks go to the members for their generous contributions and invaluable services during period 1976-1986. Some of them served the Temple in one or more official capacities like Ad Hoc Committee, Incorporators of the Temple Charter, Board of Trustees, Long Range Planning Committee, or any of the Sub-committees. There are some who did not hold any official title but continue to serve the Temple behind the scenes.

At this time, the dream of having a new Temple/Cultural Center was not only reasonable to consider but also feasible. There was a new dynamism, willingness and excitement to build a new

Temple/Cultural Community Center to meet the growing needs of our community. It was the collective strength, unity, willingness and generosity that had made the Temple what it is today. It was our hope that same will continue and nurture the future growth of HTS.

DRAFT

## Chapter 2: Inauguration of New Temple 1992

HTS members informally discussed the need for a new Temple, its size and architectural style etc. ever since 1977 but not much progress was made till 1985. Planning of a new Temple building started seriously soon after its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. New temple construction concept took a quantum jump under the chairmanship of Dr. Shashi Patel with substantial donations from him and Dr. N. Bala, Dr. Govind Rao, Dr. Swatantra Mitta, and others (See Exhibit 3: Temple Incorporators).

In September 1986, Dr. Manu Amin, Chairman, released the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary brochure of the HTS. He also sent the following appeal to the community members:

### ***Bhakta Jano:***

*On behalf of Hindu Temple Society, I proudly present this brochure on its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As you are aware, about a year ago the general body of the Temple Society gave a mandate to the executive committee to plan and construct a new temple and cultural center in the capital district. A lot of time, thought, effort and discussion have been put toward this goal.*

*The project is catching up momentum. Barun Basu, an architect, who has been involved in designing several temples in the U. S. A., had come to Albany on a couple of occasions with a view to give us ideas about the design of both structures on the present grounds of the temple. Rough designs of both structures were carefully reviewed by the executive board, and the committee has delegated a member to negotiate with Mr. Basu about the final design of the plans.*

*At present we do not have enough resources to build both structures simultaneously. The committee resolved to start the construction of the temple as phase one of the overall project. The existing temple will be used as a cultural center in the interim period until the new cultural center is built.*

*On Sunday, September 13, 1986, an auspicious ceremony of "BHUMI PUJA" is to be conducted by the priest at the site of the new temple ground. This involves our resolve to put our efforts and resources for the construction of the new temple until completed. This is not a ground-breaking ceremony which will be conducted at an appropriate time after the approval of the plans by the town authorities.*

*No religion can flourish without the support of its members. We need your moral and financial help. We feel that the community should get involved whole heartedly in the project of this magnitude. In order to achieve our goal, the temple construction committee will be expanded to involve a broad section of the community.*

*We are delighted to announce the arrival of a full-time priest for the temple. He will be involved in conducting a number of services in the temple and in your homes. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Muralidhar, who has devotedly and regularly given his services to the temple for the past ten years. The community greatly appreciates his contribution to the temple. The committee*

*also appreciates the time and effort put in by a number of persons in making the bazaar a great success. The committee would like to request the community to pay their yearly membership dues, which are \$45. Those who are not yet members, are also urged to contribute. The contribution is tax-deductible. We are optimistic, and God willing, we hope to complete the first phase of the project by the fall of 1987.*

***Yours Sincerely, Manu Amin, Chairman.***

It was a huge task to undertake construction of new temple, when we had only about \$200,000-\$250,000 in our bank account. The General Body, in November 1986, authorized to plan and construct a new Temple and Cultural center. A plan for the new two-story building to accommodate approx. 250 people with an initial project cost of \$350,000 was proposed. Barun Basu Associates (BBA) was the architect for the new Temple. The Board at the special meeting held on March 15, 1987 discussed the proposed plan for the temple and cultural center and after some deliberations authorized Mr. Barun Basu, Architect, to develop a simple plan consisting of two floors – Main Temple Hall and Basement Hall which will be used for dining and cultural activities. The Main Hall will accommodate about 150-200 persons and Basement Hall will accommodate about 200-250 persons. He was asked to prepare the revised plan with a total project cost ceiling of \$350,000.

The original plan presented by the architect was an ambitious one- the cost would have been more than \$500,000, but it would have provided for a larger capacity of 400 persons in the lower level, and about 250 or more at the main floor. It was felt that a two-story structure would be most ideal to provide greater visibility and appeal while providing needed space for meditation, Sanctum Sanctorum for various deities; and finally, for dining and cultural activities. At the first-floor level there will be separate Garbha Gudies or Sanctum Sanctorum for Lord Lakshminarayana, Lord Kedaranatheshwara (Lord Shiva) and Parvati, Lord Ganapathi and Lord Subramanya, Lord Venkateshwara (Balaji), Goddess Shridevi and Bhoodevi, Lord Nageswara, Lord Radha Krishna, Lord Shri Rama, Goddess Sita, Lakshmana, and Hanuman; Navagrahas; Goddess Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswathi; and Lord Mahavir.

The Board estimated that community could raise not more than \$200,000. As a result, BOT Chairman appealed to the members of the community in August 1988 to consider following options: (I) maintain status quo (old Temple), (II) proceed to make a new two-story Temple + Cultural Center (CC), (III) renovate the existing facility, or (IV) sell part of the property to raise funds to build a single-story Temple along with CC. Option (II) was supported by a majority of the community members.

Mr. Basu developed a plan, which was submitted to four area contractors, to build a two-story structure. However, because of financial constraints, a decision was made to delete the whole basement plan, which included the Cultural Center Hall, bathrooms and all other facilities. Still the building's electrical / heating / cooling systems were kept for two-story structure, so even after removing the basement the lowest estimate we got was \$653,000.

We received bids from 4 general contractors, including the one from Center Star Construction (President: Kumar Chawla) at cost of \$630K in August 1990; the higher cost was due to revisions mandated by town's building codes and higher construction costs.

In February 1989, a special meeting was called to discuss selection of idols for the new Temple which was still to be constructed. Several members came forward to sponsor idols of Laxmi Narayana, Shiv Linga, Subramaniam, Ganpati, Venkateshwara, Navgraha, Ram Parivar, Durga, Laxmi and Sarasvati. BOT also expressed its commitment to install Radha-Krishna, Mahavir Swami and Swaminarayan in the new Temple. In October 1991, location of the idols or deities was agreed to and signed by all 15 elected members of Board of Trustees (Exhibit 4).

Priest Dikshitar was authorized by the Board of Trustees (BOT) to proceed with the purchase of various idols from Coimbatore, India. The total cost of idols was \$12,000. The present idols of Radha Krishna in the old Temple donated by Dr. and Mrs. Goel would be formally installed in the new Temple. It is very gratifying to note HTS had already received pledges and contributions for most of the idols from members and friends. The BOT in its monthly meeting held on March 1, 1987 approved a resolution formalizing the agreement made with the members of the Jain Community to build a shrine or Mandir for Lord Mahavir as a part of the New Temple Project paving the way for a united effort and commitment required to start the project and complete within a period of one year.

BOT, Fund Raising, Administration and Construction Committees released an appeal to all members and devotees to come forward and give generous support for this divine project : to quote:

*"It is an excellent opportunity for a family or group of families or friends to join together and sponsor a component or a part of the project which can be of size varying from \$10,000 to \$50,000. For example, any one of garbhagudies or sanctum sanctorums (there are ten available) can be sponsored by individual families or a group of families. In addition, there are several components of the building which can be considered for sponsorship.*

*This is the appropriate time and opportunity for you to give that special gift or donation on behalf of your loved ones. Please contact any member of the Board, Fund Raising Committee or your Area or Community Coordinator if you are interested in giving special gifts or want to sponsor any part of the project mentioned above".*

In November 1990, the HTS Constitution was amended by the General Body to appoint a nine-member Board of Governors (BOG) with an aim to monitor and speed up the progress of the Temple's construction and its functioning and fundraising efforts. The donor/pledge list was duly updated every month by the Treasurer and figures were shared with the BOT and BOG.

Priest Dixitar was authorized to procure all the essential items and articles from philanthropic donors on behalf of the Temple (1991).

The new temple construction started in 1990, finished in the fall of 1991 and it opened in 1992. The first Kumbhabhishekam ceremony was held in January 15, for Lord Ganesha under the guidance of Shivaguru Shivacharya. This was followed by Kumbhabhishekam for Lakshmi Narayana, Shiva and Parvati, Subramanya in July 1992. Kumbhabhishekam ceremonies were held between 1993-1994 for

the remaining Navagrahas, Nageshwara, Goddess Saraswathi and Goddess Durga, Rama Parivar, Radha Krishna, Shrinathji, Mahavir and Iyyappaswamy. HTS raised \$300,000 from the first Kumbhabhishekam in June, which still left about \$115,000 gap. M.R.Balakrishna served as the Construction Committee Lead person coordinating the Architect, Contractor and arranging meetings and coordination with the Town of Colonie Building and Planning Departments.

A grand celebration to inaugurate the new temple was held during November 1-3, 1991, which also coincided with the annual Diwali program. Temple raised over \$500K to help meeting the total cost of construction of \$700K. Dr. Shashi Patel, BOT Chairman, sent an appeal to all Hindu residents to come forward to donate enthusiastically, to make the Temple debt free and dedicate it as a gift to their children and future generation.

Kumbhabhishekam for Lord Lakshmi Narayana and Lord Shiva-Parvathi was held in June 1992. This event generated about \$75K for the Temple. After the completion of the construction of new Temple and its inauguration, Dr. Shashi Patel, Chairman, BOT, shared his heartfelt feelings to all the devotees as below:

*“The Temple represents the changing status of recent Hindu immigrants who have struggled to preserve our culture. They seem to have partially succeeded. The Hindu temple has become a landmark achievement in the history of the capital district. It is a looking glass through which the large American community perceives the Indian culture. To foster better understanding about our culture and religion among our children, classes are being held in the Temple in music, language, and dance, as well as Gita studies. The children are also participating in the religious festivals and prayer studies”*

With the funds raised in 1992 and subsequent Kumbhabhishekams, HTS was able to pay off loan with the contractor in 1993. Thus, Temple was debt-free, which was a big accomplishment and important milestone for the community, and everyone involved was very happy that we accomplished that, thanks to the leadership of Dr. Shashi Patel.

#### **Vimana Gopuram Project** (*Sanctum Santorum construction*):

Creation of Temple Vimana Gopuram was proposed to improve the aesthetics and decors inside the new temple hall. After the inauguration of the new Temple, it was felt that mere concrete enclosure/rooms for the main sanctum (Navagrahas, Nageshwara), and two side sanctums (Durga and Saraswathi Sannidhies), lacked traditional temple appeal. Therefore, it was decided to build Vimana Gopuram inside the temple. Dr. K. Perumal was given the responsibility for Vimana Gopuram under the guidance of Kumaraswamy Dixitar and M.R. Balakrishna, Chairman.

Six Shilpies (temple construction skilled craftsmen) were hired from India in 1994 on temporary R1 Visa. They worked in the fall season to do the rough work (1994-95) and the beautiful color painting was completed in 1995. Vimana Gopuram Kumbhabhishekam was celebrated in a grand manner and the Shilpi Sri. Selvaraj along with his associates were recognized and honored. It is worth mentioning that all funds needed for the project, over \$50,000, were raised by new donations.

Our Temple Vimana Gopuram appeared in the beautiful compilation of top Hindu Temples of North America in 1996.

### **First Jeernodhara Kumbhabhishekam)- June 2004**

Traditionally, every Hindu Temple undergoes an elaborate purification ceremony to restore the sanctity and spirituality of the Temple Sannidhies (Sacnctorums) every 12 years. This is also done after major Temple renovations. The ceremony is pretty similar to one done during the initial installation and prana pratistapana (process of infusing life into the Murthies (statues) after necessary purification and Havan ceremonies). For every Hindu the Murthies are living Gods not just stone idols. The ceremony was held over a period of five days with daily poojas, havans, under the direction of Shri Kumaraswami Dixitar assisted by Balu Dixit and four learned priests well versed in Kumbhabhishekam. Kumbhabhishekam - a highly specialized detailed ceremony involving pouring of sanctified and energized water from Kumhas (pots) on the Murthies (idols). In essence the poojas and Havan and Vedic Mantras cited by the officiating priests transfer energy from fire to pots and then to water. Spiritually energized water in the Kumbhas (pots) water is used then in the Abhishekam (ritual transfer of energy from water).

### **Jeernodhara Kumbhabhishekam - 2016**

The third Kumbhabhishekam was celebrated from June 22-26, 2016 on a grand scale lasting over 5 days under the guidance of several learned priests: Sri Sridhara Jayateerthachar, Sri Vavilala Srinivas Sharma, Sri Pandit Ghanashyam Sharma, Sri Vavilala Damodar Sharma, Sri Chandra Shekhara Sharma Kashavajjala and Sri Ganesan Shivacharyar. All the devotees enjoyed the ceremonies with Yagas/Havan's every day, which laid the foundation for the concept of new temple expansion.

## **Chapter 3: Inauguration of Hindu Cultural Center 2007**

It was a big satisfaction for the community that HTS have finally a fully functioning Temple. As soon as Temple was completed, the community felt that the capacity of the prayer hall was limited and we cannot accommodate a whole lot of people there; on many occasions a single community can fill up the whole hall, whereas we have eight or ten major communities in the area.

As a result, HTS members had several brain storming sessions and finally it was decided that we will go with a separate Cultural Center building so that we can have activities and programs like music Concerts, Dance Programs, yoga, dance classes, language classes, and many more. For Cultural Center, HTS Boards had to decide between one story or two-story structure. They agreed to go with a two-story structure with about 12,500 square-foot at each level, and also decided to only complete the upstairs, which will include auditorium, dining hall with commercial kitchen, three classrooms, elevator, office room, audiovisual room. We had to put an elevator because the Town of Colonie insisted on it. The Board decided not to finish the basement to save money. This provided space for future community activities, plus additional space in the basement for major event such as Diwali when we have to accommodate more than a thousand people. Vidya Sagar Sood and Mohan Jaggi guided the Boards with their construction expertise.

Barun Basu Associates (BBA) was consulted in 2000 for a preliminary discussion on building a Cultural Center adjacent to the new Temple. BBA submitted a preliminary blueprint, which was reviewed by the Construction Committee in September 2000. Proposed budget at the time was between \$750K and \$1 million. Meanwhile, negotiations between BBA and the construction committee delayed the final contract. By 2004, the estimated cost of construction increased to \$1.3 million. We had \$561K on hand, and an additional \$ 425K in pledges. In September 2004, HTS received bids from 4 builders and awarded contract to J. Luk Construction Co.

### **BOT Trustee Resignations in 2004**

Not every community member was in favor of building a Cultural Center. At the general body meeting on October 5, 2004, there was a sudden resignation of eight BOT trustees and the then Priest Shri Kumaraswamy Dixitar. The primary concern of the Trustees who resigned centered on the issue of building a Cultural Center that they perceived would be an unsustainable institution and would be a burden to community. The group did not feel its long-term viability, its effect on the temple community, and its future financial health. They strongly felt that the temple must address the need to put in place financial solutions so as not to pass on the burden to the next generation. As per the then constitution, the remaining 7 trustees could not form the Board. Two members (Arvind Goswami and Sanjay Shah) were co-opted to form an 9-member Board, and Sundresh Heragu was elected as the acting chairman. In order to make this ad-hoc Board legal, the resigned eight Trustees came back in two weeks, met formally and elected the Board with 9 Members, Sundresh Heragu as the Chairman and Ravi Pillar as Vice Chair. Also, the issue did not create any hurdle in going forward with the plan to build Cultural Center.



## **HCC Construction Resumption**

The HCC construction activity resumed after a brief suspension. By December 2006, the projected cost to get Certificate of Occupancy increased to \$1,883,240 and the final projected cost increased to \$2,115,145. In December 2009, BOG sent this appeal to the community:

*Dear Friends: We are writing to seek your active participation to support our Temple and the Cultural Center. We strove hard to build these facilities which are serving our community well. We had many legitimate questions regarding the operation and sustainability of these facilities when they were conceived. We have come a long way in answering those concerns but more need to be done. Despite our initial concerns these facilities are operating and serving our community well even during the last two years of worst economic times. We exceeded our short-term expectations with positive incomes during the last two years.*

*Friends, we are the first-generation immigrants in this country who have the great opportunity to establish our cultural facilities which will be serving for many generations to come. We would like you to share this opportunity and be a part of this contribution as many future generations will recognize and appreciate your initiatives for preserving our culture.*

*In this vein, we would like you to stand by your pledges whether they were made orally or in writing and encourage all your friends to join you in contributing to this noble project. We have a current non-interest-bearing loan of about \$425,000 and we would like to payoff this loan and make our temple debt free. Also, we have initiated several projects to improve the temple facilities and services. We can do all this with your contribution to the Temple/Cultural Center. We hope to have a recognition wall to identify all donors soon before the third anniversary day of our cultural center. For your convenience, we have enclosed a form for making your donation and you may choose projects for allocating your donation to different projects identified in the form. Your contribution received by January 15 by a check dated December 2009 will be credited to 2009 tax year.*

*We wish you a new year full of good health, happiness and prosperity.*

*Sincerely, Board of Governors*

A 7-member construction committee was formed with following members (M.R. Balakrishna (Chairman), Arjun Patel, F.R. Prabhakar, Raj Anand, Sury Putta, Rasik Shah, Kuldeep Gupta) to coordinate with the contractor (J Luke Construction Co). After the planning for a two-story Cultural Center with 12,500 square-foot upstairs and 12,500 sq. ft. downstairs was completed, we went with the designer and building contractor. The initial estimate was \$1.75 million. This cost estimate needed to be revised for a major issue faced during the construction.

## **Financial Crisis During Construction**

We had initially earmarked around \$50,000 for the foundation work, but as contractor prepared to dig foundation, we discovered that we had to deal with the water issue. The architect Barun Basu

suggested we consult a soil engineer to come up with a solution for the water problem; it was decided to fill the area with 5 to 6 feet of granite stone underneath the floor, causing the cost to go up by \$250,000. As a result, the final cost went up to \$2.3 million to complete the construction.

This \$250,000 cost increase in the middle of construction presented a very big financial challenge to the community. We were debating about borrowing money by pledging Temple building as collateral, delaying the project, or asking community members to loan the money. We were also concerned about the lead time to borrow money, delaying the completion of Cultural Center. We were fortunate that six really generous members came forward (Dr. Govind Rao, Dr. Swatantra Mitta, Dr Mohan Potluri, Dr. Krishna, Manoj Ajmera, Unidentified Donor) to loan the money to fill the funding gap. It is even more gratifying that most of the donors later converted the loan to donation. It was a big relief to the Temple and Cultural Center, otherwise the loan would have to be carried forward on the books.

We also had to address other needs of the Cultural Center basement by launching a new project called basement project to build separate bathrooms, three classrooms, yoga and dance studios, a food warming / catering area, and the utility room. This required around \$250,000 cost. The flooring was not to the satisfaction because the floor in the dance and yoga rooms was uneven, requiring a great deal of maintenance. We fixed the flooring problem at a cost around \$45,000. Three people (Arjun Patel, MR Balakrishna and Rasik Shah) worked very hard for this project. The final project cost was \$ 2,115,145. The construction work started in May 2006 and completed in May 2007. Opening ceremony of the Cultural Center took place on Sunday, July 1st, 2007.

We wish to acknowledge all the people who generously contributed, and we have displayed their names on beautiful plaques in the hallway of the Cultural Center. We held a special donor recognition day in 2012, including a beautiful culture program and special dinner.

## **HCC Activities**

Cultural Center consists of an auditorium, stage, library, Green Rooms, Class Rooms, Commercial Kitchen, lobby, Dining Hall, full basement. With these facilities, we have had eight or 10 events happening in a single day. Cultural Center has fulfilled more than the visions of the founders of the Hindu temple; it has become a center for multitude of activities:

1. Sunday Brunch (largest volunteer-run activity for social interactions while raising substantial funds)
2. Education (Discourses, Meditation, Yoga, Library, Gita discussion)
3. Cultural activities (Dance, Music, Art, Language)
4. Children and Youth activities (Heritage Classes, Bal Vihar, and Youth Summer Camps)
5. Free Medical Clinic, Support Groups and Counseling
6. Senior Activities
7. Women's club
8. Weddings and Private Functions
9. Inter-Faith and Outreach, Soup Kitchen, festivals

## **South End Parking Lot Land Purchase**

Our parking space was sufficient for everyday use. However, during major festival, devotees had to rely upon street parking in the neighborhood, which was not very convenient. We noted that 1.5 acres of undeveloped land adjoining the south end of the Temple was on sale by owner. BOT was negotiating its purchase with the owner for over two years but the asking price of \$200K+ was beyond our budget. However, during the construction of HCC, we noted the wet land issue, and the owner also realized that approximately half of his land was not suitable for any use (wet land). In 2009 the owner came forward with an offer of \$50,000, which was accepted immediately, and the total land purchase amount was donated by Dr. Govind Rao. The additional land was later-on merged with the main HTS deed to bring the total area of the property to approximately 9.5 acres.

## **Solar Roof Project**

The Temple Society decided to go green by installing solar panels on the roof of Cultural Center building and signed a contract with Albany Solar Inc. in 2012 to install a 25kW photovoltaic (PV) system to generate solar electricity for our use. Due to other engineering reasons, it was decided to install the PV system on a canopy steel structure erected on the south side of the Hindu Cultural Center, and the AC electrical output of the PV system to be connected to the electrical power system of the Hindu Cultural Center. Transfer of the ownership of the solar system to Hindu Temple took place in 2019. The above PV Solar project is generating enough power to reduce HCC utility costs by about 50 Per Cent.

## **Temple Expansion Project**

Over the years, crowds for festivals consistently exceeding (2X-4X) the approved facility capacity of 265 persons. The devotee participation in the second Kumbhabhishekam in 2016 accelerated the need for temple expansion. The initial designs for the expansion were finished in 2017 and were also approved in GB. The first fund raising event for expansion was conducted in HCC on October 13, 2017. From there on, every year the monies are deposited into the expansion fund and this account accumulated about \$700,000 as of to-date. Initial cost estimate was about \$2.5 million but because of COVID-19 and prevailing market conditions including supply chain disruptions and labor cost escalations may significantly increase these costs north of \$3.5 million. Once both COVID situation and market conditions stabilizes, the expansion effort will resume.

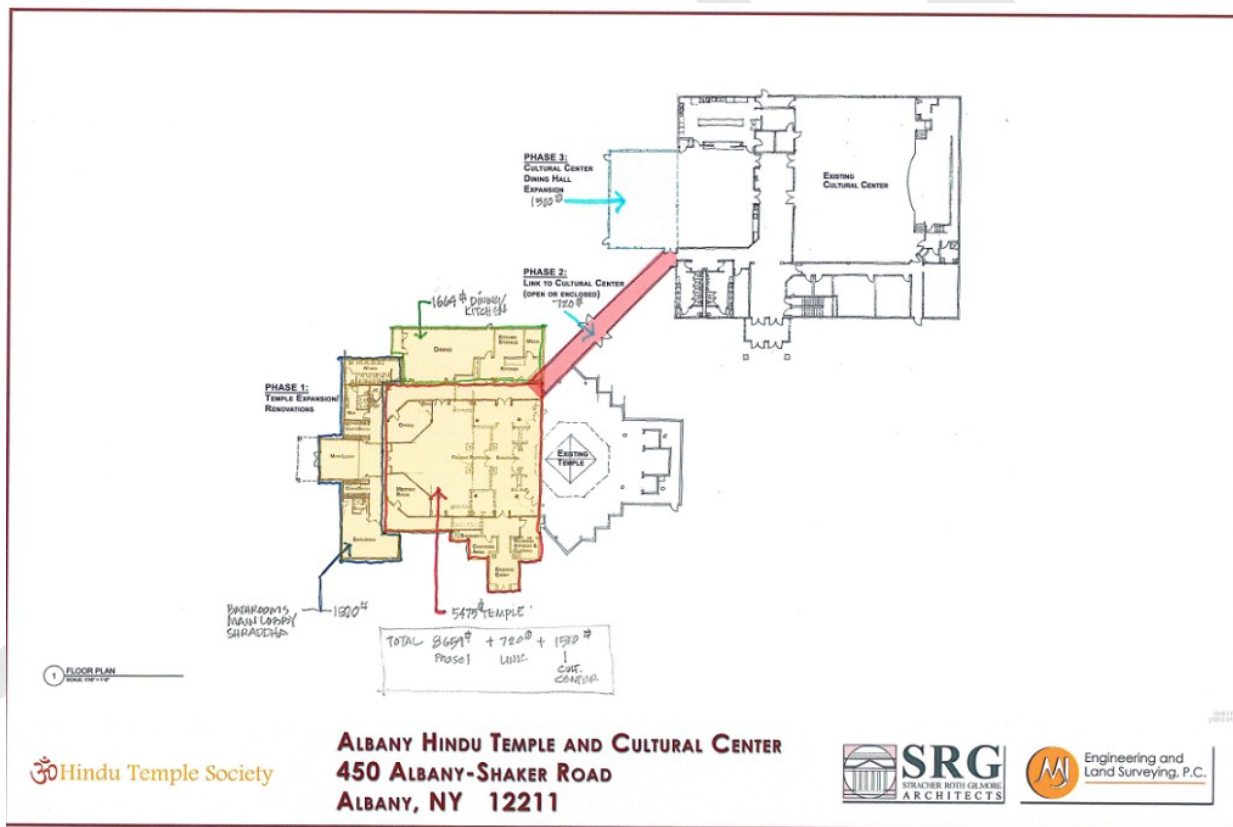
## **2015 GB Approvals**

General body adopted a resolution when the quorum was present by a majority vote that only the interest/dividend income from Temple and HCC reserve funds can be used toward the projects, annual operation and maintenance of temple and HCC respectively and principle amounts should not be touched unless approved jointly by the three boards, BOT, BOD and BOG, during a catastrophic event such as hurricane, fire, or earthquake etc.

Some of the highlights of this expansion include:

1. Main prayer hall that is about 3 times bigger than the existing hall
2. Bigger dining hall with a new kitchen
3. Office rooms and storage rooms
4. Bath rooms relocation and additional parking spaces
5. New plumbing for the building
6. Connectivity to HCC will be part of phase II

The following are the preliminary designs for the expansion.



## Chapter 4: Temple Management Boards & Priests

### HTS Boards

The current and future generation Indian community will continue to enjoy the benefits of various religious and cultural activities at the Temple and Cultural Centre. Please remember that this became possible only through the hard work and financial support of our first-generation immigrants. This history will be incomplete without acknowledging the commitment of the elected and nominated members of the Hindu Temple Society who served in the board as the Chairperson of various boards.

#### ***Board of Trustees (Chairperson):***

1976	Pratap M. Narsu	2000	Dr. Shashi Patel
1977	Pratap M. Narsu	2001	Dr. Shashi Patel
1978	C. Rao Surapaneni	2002	Sury Putta
1979	C. Rao Surapaneni	2003	Dr. Swatantra Mitta
1980	A. Ramayya Mullukutla	2004	Shambhu Mehta & Sundaresh Heragu
1981	M.R. Balakrishna	2005	Sundaresh Heragu
1982	Sury Putta	2006	Sundaresh Heragu & Ravi Pillar
1983	Dr. Guttu N. Rao	2007	Ravi Pillar
1984	Jagdish Bandari	2008	Jayanth Kumar
1985	Raj K. Anand & T.A. Subramaniam	2009	Jayanth Kumar
1986	Manu Amin	2010	Jayanth Kumar
1987	Manu Amin	2011	Jayanth Kumar
1988	Dr. Shashi Patel	2012	M.R. Balakrishna
1989	Dr. Shashi Patel	2013	M.R. Balakrishna
1990	Dr. Shashi Patel	2014	Dr. Govind Rao
1991	Dr. Shashi Patel	2015	Dr. Govind Rao
1992	Dr. Shashi Patel	2016	Suresh Bhate
1993	Dr. Guttu N. Rao	2017	Dr. Govind Rao
1994	Dr. Guttu N. Rao	2018	Tharunidhar Narravula
1995	M.R. Balakrishna	2019	Tharunidhar Narravula
1996	Shanti Lunia	2020	Tharunidhar Narravula
1997	Dr. Manu Amin	2021	Tharunidhar Narravula
1998	Dr. Shashi Patel	2022	Vikram Agrawal

1999	Dr. Shashi Patel		
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**Board of Governors (Chairperson):**

1993	Dr. Kishan Rao Battu	2008	Ram Chugh
1994		2009	M.R. Balakrishna
1995		2010	M.R. Balakrishna
1996		2011	Dr. Srinivas Mitta
1997		2012	Kajal Lahiri
1998		2013	Murali Dharan
1999		2014	Sury Putta
2000		2015	Kurthish Dharia
2001		2016	Sury Putta
2002		2017	Sury Putta
2003		2018	Sury Putta
2004		2019	Prakash Joshi
2005		2020	Kurthish Dharia
2006	Ram Chugh	2021	Kurthish Dharia
2007	Ram Chugh	2022	Ram Lalukota

**HTS Board of Directors (Chairperson):**

2007	Dr. Shashi Patel	2015	Dr. Swatantra Mitta
2008		2016	
2009	Dr. Shashi Patel	2017	Vikash Agarwal
2010	Dr. Shashi Patel	2018	Vikash Agarwal
2011	Dr. Shashi Patel	2019	Vikash Agarwal
2012	Dr. Shashi Patel	2020	Dr. Swatantra Mitta
2013	Dr. Swatantra Mitta	2021	Dr. Swatantra Mitta
2014	Dr. Swatantra Mitta	2022	Dr. Swatantra Mitta

We would also like to acknowledge the office bearers, elected/nominated members of the HTS boards, priest and volunteers who have been assisting Temple at various capacities. Please provide your

feedback so that we can incorporate any missing information in the future edition of the “History of Hindu Temple”. Thank you.

## **Temple Priests**

Our Temple is thankful to our illustrious priests who guided the growth of our Temple to provide a place of worship, and who reached out to our community to provide variety of services such as in-home poojas, conducting last-rite services, and providing spiritual comfort to our devotees in their hour of need.

### **Honorary Priests**

M.R. Balakrishna 1976  
Muralidhar 1977-1985

### **Full-Time Priests**

Kumaraswamy Dixitar 1985-2004  
Balu Dixit 2001-2005  
Balakrishna Kambampati 2005-2008  
Narasimhan (Simha) 2009  
Sampath Kumar Bhat 2008-2012  
Nagaraja Bhat (Rajaji) 2009-2012  
Madhavan 2012  
Sampathkumar Bhattacharya 2012  
Srinivasa Sharma Vavilala 2013-todate  
Shridhara Jayatheerthchar-2013-todate  
Ghanashyam Sharma 2013-todate

## **Exhibits: Noteworthy Historical Records**

- **Exhibit 1: GB Resolution to Build Hindu Temple**
- **Exhibit 2: Temple Incorporators**
- **Exhibit 3: Dedication Ceremony Invitation**
- **Exhibit 4: BOT Decision on Location of Idols (10/30/1991)**
- **Exhibit 5: History of Temple Constitutions**



# Exhibit 1: GB Resolution to Build Hindu Temple

Resolutions Adopted at the First General Body Meeting

on

The Proposed Hindu Temple  
held at  
The College of St. Rose  
City of Albany  
December 21, 1975

Where as the residents of the tri-City area have expressed deep desire for a Hindu Temple in the area to meet their religious needs,

## Resolution One

We, the residents of the greater Tri-City area in meeting assembled on December 21, 1975, at the College of St. Rose in the City of Albany, New York, at this time do hereby resolve to form the Hindu Temple Society to build a Hindu Temple in the area and maintain it and conduct religious, cultural and educational activities.

## Resolution Two

We, the residents of the greater Tri-City area, hereby approve formation of an Ad Hoc Committee consisting of eleven members to prepare a report on the further steps to be initiated from implementation goals of the Hindu Temple Society as expressed in Resolution One (above) and submit their report no later than February 15, 1976 to the next General Body. The Ad Hoc Committee will include in their report among other things, feasibility, scope, size, and possible location (site) of the temple, legal steps including incorporation of the Hindu Temple Society, architecture and fund-raising aspects and membership dues structures. The Committee will be dissolved following submission of the report to the next General Body and will be replaced by an Executive Committee or <sup>other</sup> Committee at that time.

## Resolution Three

We, the residents hereby authorize the Ad Hoc Committee to receive voluntary donations for the purpose of reimbursing expenses related to the study and preparation of the report on the proposed Hindu Temple as per Resolution Two above.

## Exhibit 2: Temple Incorporators



### Exhibit 3: Dedication Ceremony Invitation



The Board of Trustees  
of the Hindu Temple Society of the Capital District of  
New York, Inc.  
requests the pleasure of  
your company with family and friends  
at the Dedication Ceremony of  
**THE HINDU TEMPLE**  
450 Albany-Shaker Road, Loudonville, New York  
by Lieutenant Governor, the Honorable Mary Anne Krupsak  
on the morning of Saturday, the twenty-eighth  
of August, nineteen hundred and seventy-six  
at ten-thirty o'clock  
Congressman, the Honorable Samuel S. Stratton  
has kindly consented to grace the occasion

**Exhibits 4: BOT Decision on Location of Idols (10/30/1991)**

October 30, 1991

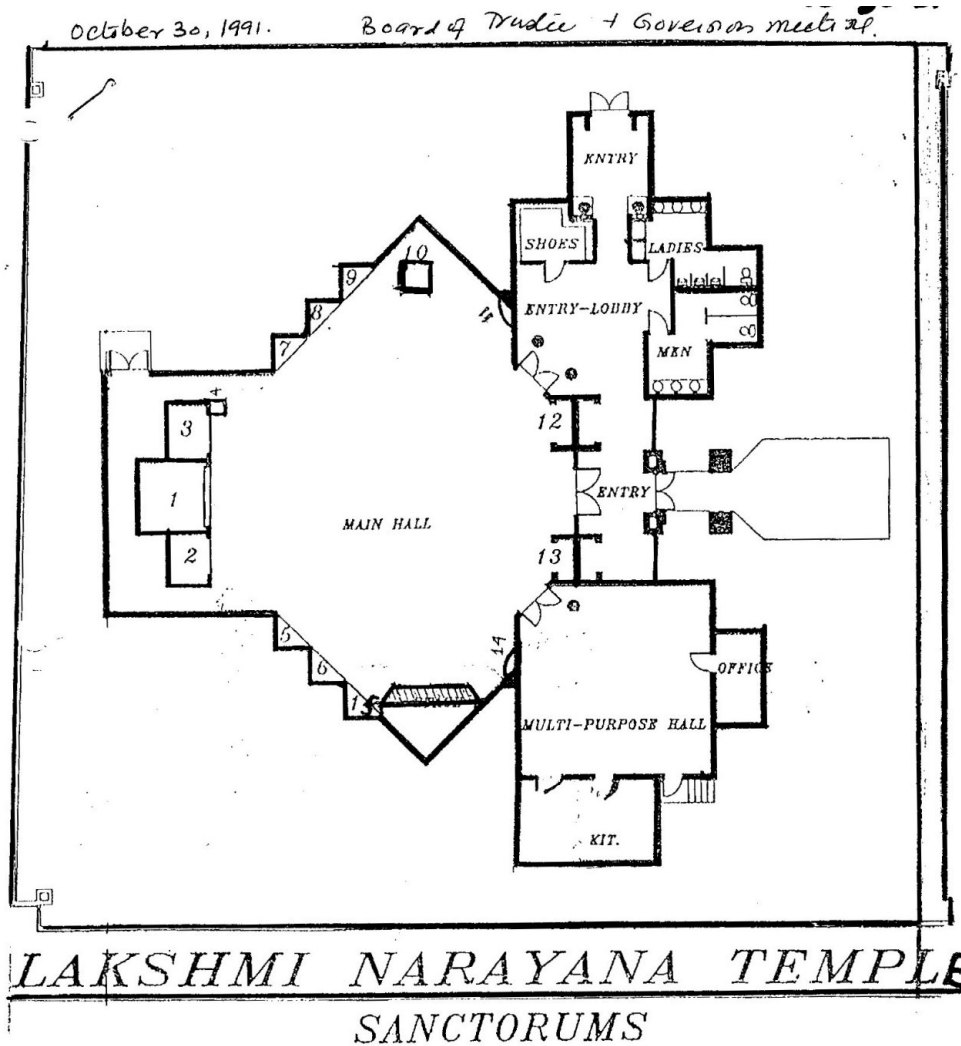
The location of idols as depicted in the attached floor signed by all fifteen elected members of Board of Trustees is an integral part of the Constitution of Hindu Temple Society located at 450 Albany Shaker Road, Albany, New York.

There shall be no permanent addition or deletion to this floor plan:

accepted: on October 30, 1991

1. Yogesh K. Gupta
2. M. R. Balakrishna
3. K. Nageswara Rao
4. N. Balasubramaniam
5. V. Shrinivasan
6. M. Subramanian
7. Mangala Sivadhi
8. Shanti Lonia
9. R.K. GHOSHAL
10. Manoj Anand
11. Srinivas Rao Mitta
12. Rastik P. Shah
13. S. GUPTA
14. K. Bala.
15. Shashi Batei

Yogesh K. Gupta  
M.R. Balakrishna  
K. Nageswara Rao  
N. Balasubramaniam  
V. Shrinivasan  
M. Subramanian  
M. Sivadhi  
Shanti Lonia  
R.K. Ghoshal  
Manoj Anand  
Srinivas Rao Mitta  
R.P. Shah  
S. Gupta 10/30/91  
Not Present  
S.D. Batei



- |                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Lakshmi Narayana                 | 8. Shrinathji    |
| 2. Mahaganapathi                    | 9. Swami Narayan |
| 3. Shiva                            | 10. Navagraha    |
| 4. Parvati                          | 11. Nageswara    |
| 5. Rama, Sita<br>Lakshmana, Hanuman | 12. Saraswati    |
| 6. Mahavir                          | 13. Durga        |
| 7. Radhakrishna                     | 14. Buddha       |
|                                     | 15. Subramanya   |

THE GENERAL BODY ALSO ADOPTED A RESOLUTION WHEN THE QUORUM WAS PRESENT BY A MAJORITY VOTE THAT NO CHANGES IN PRESENT TEMPLE DEITIES CAN BE MADE EXCEPT RELOCATION AS PART OF THE APPROVED TEMPLE EXPANSION PLAN.

### 2018 GB Approvals

1. Addition of Satyanarayana Sanctum as part of temple Expansion plans
2. Inclusion of Saibaba Sanctum as part of temple Expansion plans

## **Exhibit 5: History of Temple Constitutions**

1. First Constitution: adopted at the Third GB Meeting on March 14, 1976; amended in 1990 to create “The Board of Governors”.
2. Revised Constitution: “The Constitution and By-Laws” Adopted in November 2005. This revision incorporated the articles dealing with the annual election process, specifically the articles defining Nomination and Election process, which was adopted in previous years.
3. “Governance Policies and Procedures For The Hindu Cultural Center of the Capital District, NY”, October 23, 2007, accompanied first by “Memorandum of Understanding” of September 8, 2008, superseded by the updated “Memorandum of Understanding” of December 29, 2011.
4. The last revision of the HTS Constitution was in 2005. After the Cultural Center was built in 2007, Governance Policies and Procedures & Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (item 3 above) were developed and approved for guiding the operation of HCC. Subsequently, the HTS Boards decided that the HTS constitution should be revised again to include HCC in the constitution, incorporating applicable sections from the Governance Policies and Procedures, as was done during the 2005 revision by formalizing NEC. Two distinct Constitution Review Committees (CRC) were formed over the past several years, but the last proposed Revised Constitution did not get approved by General Body.

Hindu Temple and Hindu Cultural Center acknowledge immense contributions and services rendered by Ram Chugh and Rasik Shah for completing 2005 Constitution, and for composing “Governance Policies and Procedures for The Hindu Cultural Center”