



Introducing Religions

The evolution of Hinduism

Narrator

Mathura is believed to be the birthplace of Lord Krishna, a belief marked by this temple. The city has long attracted pilgrims including Sadhus, wandering holy men and Krishna devotees from across the world.

This is the site of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, it's a relatively new Hindu movement which now has around 500 centres in 108 countries, and it admits followers who are not born into Hinduism.

Bhakta Avatara

It has a mood of peace, serenity, at the same time, very intense ecstasy. That's the nature of Krishna because God is all-attractive. Krishna means 'he who is all-attractive.'

My guru said that Krishna consciousness was the highest level of spiritualisation.

Because we have this grounding we have this knowledge which gives us a proper perspective on everything and the experience of that knowledge then no matter what happens in our life we can relate to it in such a way we can maintain that peace and equanimity.

Narrator

In the heart of India's capital city, Delhi, is the Shri Lakshmi Narayan Temple. It was completed in 1939, and the building was funded by the Birla family of industrialists.

The doors are open to members of all castes, which is why Mahatma Gandhi agreed to inaugurate the temple.

The presiding deity here is Lakshmi Narayan. The temple is dedicated to Lord Narayan and his consort the Goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, and they are worshipped in the daily aarti.

Shashidhar Tripathi

The meaning of the word aarti is 'to look at God with humility'. When singing the praises of god, there is no place for pride. One must humble oneself.

In ancient times there was no electricity, you used fire for light. So, in an aarti we use fire so that people can look at, and meditate on, the benign image of God. When we see his form, then our concentration on him is increased. Whether it is Vishnu or Ram or Krishna, if we don't see their forms, how are we to focus on them better? This is why we have idol worship, or the worship of form.

Whatever we do, or eat, or wear, we always first offer it to the master of all creation. If a guest were to come to my home, I would feed him first and only then would I eat. In the same way, if we are celebrating a festival and we buy sweets, then the first thing to do is to offer it to the creator himself; and then we partake of it as a 'Prasad.'

Narrator

Today worshippers bring sweets and marigolds to be blessed, because it's Diwali.

Diwali means festival of lights and across the city people are preparing for this special time of year. Streets are being decorated and traditional clay lamps or dipa are being made.

Shashidhar Tripathi

The relevance of this has to do with the return of Lord Ram to his kingdom of Ayodhya, after vanquishing the forces of evil in the form of Ravana.

On his return, the inhabitants of Ayodhya decided to celebrate. In the evening they lit up the entire city with lots of little lamps, and that is Diwali.

Narrator

Modern Diwali is marked by the giving of sweets, but it's still very much a festival of light. The celebration illuminates the whole city. The traditional lamps are now joined by the noise and colour of fireworks.

Ish Tailor

We have 600 Hindu families residing in Preston and district, and they come from India and East Africa. They came here in the early 60s and 70s when they realised that they needed a place where they could worship.

Narrator

Initially the community worshipped in a converted school, but in 1974 they built a new temple.

Ish Tailor

The new temple was vision of the Hindu community. They wanted a centre where they could not only just practise their religion but also offer cultural, social, and other activities which would benefit not just individuals but also the members of the host community.

We follow Sanatan Dharma. Sanatan Dharma means it's eternal religion, it covers everything and it encompasses everyone. We have all the images which a Hindu would follow.

It is customary for a Hindu when he enters a temple to bow to all the deities who are in the temple because they are treated equally.

There are certain groups who begin to follow certain leaders or who have inspired them to move in that direction. So, there is no issue about not having a conflict with other groups. We believe that all paths lead to God and whoever serves God through different means still achieves the same goals as they would otherwise.

Narrator

A short distance away from the Gujrat Hindu Centre is the Swaminarayan Temple, a converted Jewish synagogue. The community was established in 1974.

Kailash Parekh

We are in the main, sort of, focus of the building here, the main shrine of the Swaminarayan Mandir in Preston. As you see in the central part we have the Lord Swaminarayan right in the middle. Obviously very majestic, you know, you would expect one in that position be covered in decorative – all the, you know, the jewellery, the ornaments. We have a hierarchy of the spiritual masters, the gurus.

This is the deity of Lord Krishna and his consort Rada Ji. And again, they are an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. And we respect Lord Krishna as a Incarnation and, hence, he is in our main shrine.

Narrator

Kailash Parekh was born in East Africa and came to England via India when she was five years old. Her family were converts to the Swaminarayan movement.

Kailash Parekh

When I was in India we weren't actually Swaminarayan, we were followers, well, my family had, you know, Lord Shiva, they were following Lord Shiva, they were following Krishna Ram, so we had all the deities within our shrine.

My Father was in search of a true guru, in the past he's had many but he wasn't spiritually satisfied. So, basically when Pramukh Swami Maharaj first visited Preston it was just like a

magnet and he immediately accepted Pramukh Swami Maharaj as his guru. And from that day on we actually followed the Swaminarayan Hindu movement.

I believe being a Swaminarayan you are much more disciplined in terms of your diet, your rituals and in your behaviour, as well, because we are leading by example of our guru. And so therefore we are very cautious to adhere to our dharma, you know, dharma being the righteous way. And so we have certain regulations, you know, coming to the temple every Sunday, we must attend, whereas the other temples they don't have a set time, you know, people can come and walk in and walk out, basically. But with the Swaminarayan Hindu community, we must meet every Sunday as a family. And in our Shikshapatri, the code of conduct, it says we must respect other gods like Lord Ganesh and Lord Shiva, Hanuman. So, in the other temple there are all these deities there, so, when I pass I always pay my respects. I go in and I pay my respects.

Narrator

Kailash's daughter, Neetal, is a student.

Neetal Parekh

Being a British Indian, we're living in a Western world, trying to lead an Eastern life. Because, basically, our parents want us to preserve our tradition and our roots in India, but then again, when I go to uni if I am there in a Punjabi suit and talking Indian, talking Gujarati, I am not going to be able to fit in and there is just not going to be a balance. So, it's very important to us to have a balance.

Narrator

Keeping a balance between strict religious discipline and peer pressure can sometimes be difficult.

Neetal Parekh

We are not allowed to drink, smoke. It's not hard for me because I have been brought up not doing it, and when I do go out with my friends, they smoke and drink and they are always offering, 'oh, go on, you might as well, you might as well.' But I have to keep firm, I have to say 'no, look, I don't want to do that. It's against my religion to do that.'

Kailash Parekh

I believe the Swaminarayan Hindu community has actually laid a very strong foundation for those younger generation.

In fact the changes I see coming is more development, more focus, more stronger in their faith. And that's the future.