If Hindus Can Worship Anywhere, Why Go to a Place of Worship?

| Key Vocabulary | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| sacred | Something holy, religious or special. |
| deity | A god or goddess. |
| Brahman | The one ultimate reality in Hindu Dharma. |
| mandir | A special place for Hindu worship. |
| mantra | Special sets of words or sounds that are repeated. |
| рија | An act of <mark>worship</mark> in Hindu Dharma. |
| shrine | A holy place to pray. |
| pilgrimage | A sacred journey that people take for a reason, usually for spiritual or religious purposes. |
| worship | Showing a god or goddess how great you think they are through your words, actions and thoughts. |
| arti | A ritual performed in a <mark>mandir</mark> where a lamp or flame is waved. |
| Brahmin | A priest. |

Hindu Dharma

Hindus have many gods and goddesses who represent different aspects of the ultimate reality, known as **Brahman**. This is why Hindus worship these many different gods and goddesses in the form of murtis (idols).

Hindus believe that **Brahman** is the supreme spirit which exists in every living thing and is beyond the universe. They believe Brahman is the foundation of all life.

Worship

Hindus can have a shrine at home or go to the mandir to worship. They pray for various reasons: asking for help, giving thanks, praise, worship or seeking forgiveness.

A shrine usually consists of idols or maybe pictures of the deities. There are no set rules. Hindus usually make offerings to the **deity** they are praying to. They might repeat the god or goddess's name, sing hymns, chant mantras or carry out a puja using:

- a bell to show that you are ready to pray and to invite the god to the home;
- an incense burner to feel the presence of the god or goddess;
- kumkum powder red powder put on the forehead of worshippers and the murti to show respect;
- a murti a statue of the deity being worshipped;
- a food offering usually fruit is offered to the god or goddess during the puja.





Mandirs

Many Hindus believe going to the mandir helps them to focus on their prayers, making sure they are not distracted. Some also go to the mandir because there are so many different forms of Brahman so the mandir helps Hindus worship the different manifestations (forms).

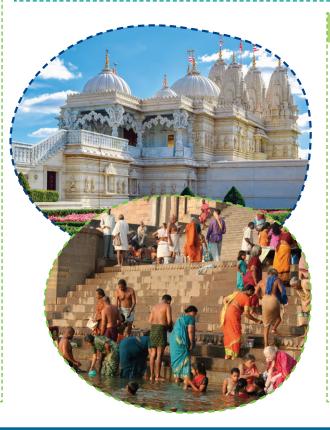
Mandirs are also used for weddings, parties and death ceremonies. Some mandirs even have yoga and meditation sessions.

When Hindus go to the mandir, before they enter, they must remove their shoes as a way of showing respect to the **deities**. They would then ring the bell when they approach the **shrine** and give any offerings they have brought (fruit, flowers, nuts) to the **Brahmin**. Prayers in a **mandir** are led by a **Brahmin**. The **Brahmin** will carry out an **arti** a few times a day and the offerings brought by worshippers are given back to them as prashad. **Puja**, just like in any home, also takes place in the **mandir**.

Features of a Mandir

Mandirs don't all look the same and that is what makes them unique. At a mandir, different parts of the building have a special meaning. The central shrine inside the mandir represents the heart of the Hindu worshipper. If the mandir has a tower, this symbolises a connection with heaven. Special thought goes into where a mandir is built and the ground always needs to be checked and blessed first.

The architecture of a **mandir** is an important reason why worshippers are drawn to praying there. It is believed that the architecture itself brings a positive energy.



Pilgrimage

Hindus travel to special places on **pilgrimages.** The most famous are in India. Some of these are:

- Ganges River 40 million Hindus travel to the Ganges yearly. They believe that performing special rituals in the river will end the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.
- Varanasi Varanasi is on the Ganges. It is believed that bathing here cleans a person's sins.
- Kumbh Mela Festival Every 12 years, millions of people bathe at the place where the Ganges and Yamuna rivers meet.



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