



HINDU SOCIETY
HARARE

Shree Omkar Mandir - The Hindu Temples in Harare

The pioneers of the Hindu Community of Harare were very small in number and financially not well established but they made up for this with immense courage and astute foresight. The proof of this lies in the temple on Cameron Street which is considered an important part of our heritage and history. The inauguration stone was laid by the Late Mr Lalji Dayalji Vashi on 14 February 1929.

The decision to have an "OMKAR" as a centrepiece was remarkably bold and judicious. The temple became a place of prayer for all sects of Hinduism, uniting the entire community.

As time passed, the community grew and the majority began to settle in Ridgeview. The need arose for a larger temple at the Anson Road Cultural Centre. A thought hatched to amplify the strides made by our pioneers. Initial efforts to obtain the services of Hindu architects were not successful. Prof Hasu Patel, introduced the members to Mr Mike Pearce, a well-established local architect, whose mother was a student of Hindu temples! Mr Pearce studied the books his mother had and presented ideas that did not quite satisfy the Executive Committee members of the Society at that time. Arrangements were made for Mr Pearce to visit the Jain temple in Tanzania and the Swaminarayan temple in South Africa. Mr Pearce returned from the trips well versed and more confident. He produced the drawings in record time and his interpretation was well received.

Once again it required mettle to proceed with a project which at initial estimates was to cost Z\$750,000, an enormous figure by any imagination! The structure was a highly complex one and contractors hesitated to venture into a fixed price contract. With building costs rising rapidly and the Committee introducing additional features, Mr Pearce eventually sourced a contractor willing to take the work on. With the assistance of the bill of quantities, Mr Pearce assured the members that the costs would be kept to a minimum.

Fund raising began in earnest amongst the communities of Harare, Mutare, Chinhoyi and Kwekwe. A single contribution of Z\$500,000 from Mr Laxmanbhai Ranchhod was extremely welcome. With the generous support of the communities approached the temple was finally completed in 1992.

At the onset, an "OMKAR" was once again chosen as the centre piece. There was considerable debate, deliberation and controversy. It was decided to obtain murtis, which were installed with much pomp and fanfare! The installation is described as the Sthapna. The "OMKAR" remained as the centre piece. Priest's quarters were added and the eventual cost was double the initial estimate!

If I am informed correctly, these are the only "OMKAR" mandirs in the world!
The Hindu Temples of Harare are the pride and joy of the community!

Manu P Patel