Proposal for Hindu Temple Emoji

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Introduction:

At present, the place-religious[1] category in the Unicode chart contains emoji for "Church", "Mosque", "Synagogue", "Shinto shrine", and "Kaaba". This list does not contain places of worship for religions that originated in the Indian subcontinent. Emoji which can be considered within this category are "Sikh Gurdwara", "Buddhist Stupa or Pagoda", "Jain Temple", and "Hindu Temple". In this proposal, we suggest the addition of the Hindu temple emoji to the existing collection of Place-Religious emoji.

Hinduism[2] is a religion or "way of life" which originated in the Indian subcontinent and has over 1.1 billion followers worldwide. In terms of numbers, Hinduism is the world's third largest religion and its adherents and temples, are found all over the world[3]. The Hindu temple[4] or *Mandir* is a place of assembly and worship but is also used for various socio-cultural activities.

1. **Identification:**
   Short names and keywords for the proposed emoji are:

   A. **CLDR short name:** HINDU TEMPLE
   B. **CLDR keywords:** HINDU | TEMPLE | RELIGION

2. **Images:**
   We propose the following image for the Hindu temple emoji. The corresponding 72×72 PNG file has been submitted along with the proposal.

Figure 1. Proposed image for Hindu temple emoji.
Art by Shyam Wanare, released under the CC BY licence.

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1. http://unicode.org/emoji/charts/full-emoji-list.html#place-religious
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism
3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism_by_country
4. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_temple

3. **Selection Factors for Inclusion:**
   The rationale for including the Hindu temple emoji is analogous to the rationales for including the Church, Mosque, and Synagogue emoji.

   A. **Compatibility:**
      At present, there is no existing emoji, which represents the Hindu temple on any vendor platform.

   B. **Expected Usage Level:**

   1. **Frequency:**
      We expect a very high frequency of use for this emoji as compared to existing place-religious emoji. The Google Trends comparison between Hindu temple, Synagogue, and Kaaba (Figure 2.) indicates that the term for the proposed emoji has a higher interest over time and the interest is increasing over time. Along with this, interest in proposed emoji has a wide geographical distribution. This includes areas such as Australia, Bolivia, North America, Southeast Asia, and United Kingdom (Figure 3).
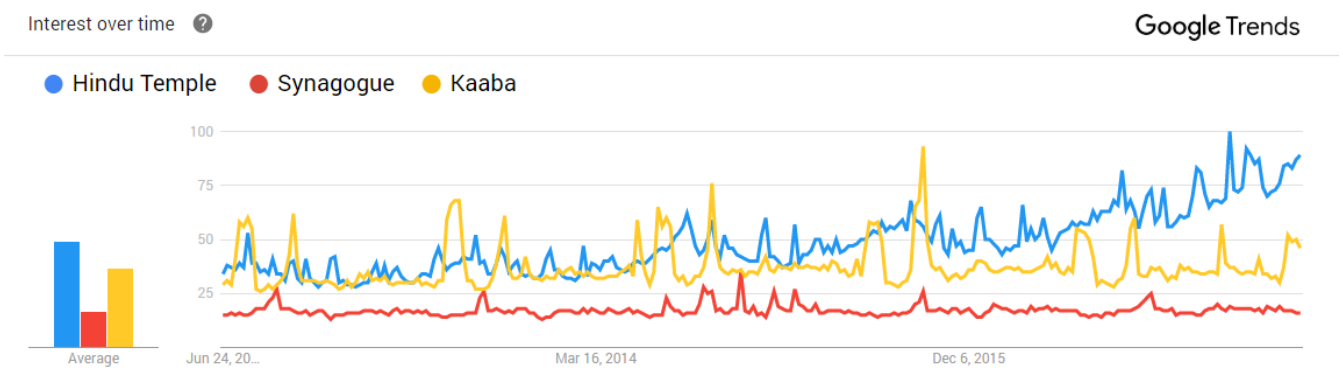

Figure 2: Google Trends Interest over time for "Hindu temple, Synagogue, and Kaaba[5]"

Figure 3: Google Trends on Interest by Region for "Hindu temple, Synagogue, and Kaaba[6]"

5. Interest over time on Google Trends for Hindu Temple, Synagogue, Kaaba - Worldwide, Past 5 years - https://g.co/trends/yczYP
6. Interest by region on Google Trends for Hindu Temple, Synagogue, Kaaba - Worldwide, Past 5 years - https://g.co/trends/9qXh5

2. **Multiple Usages:**
    The Hindu temple emoji can be interpreted and used in many ways. For example, it can be used to represent—among many other things:
    - To show activities such as worship, pilgrimage, festivals, etc.
    - To communicate socio-religious activities such as marriages, etc.
    - To represent a landmark in a message such as, "Wait in front of the temple".

3. **Use in Sequences:** Not Applicable.

C. **Image Distinctiveness:**
    Hindu temple architecture[7] is distinctively unique and can be easily differentiated from the existing place-religious emoji and other buildings or place emoji.

D. **Completeness:**
    The Hindu temple emoji would be an important addition to the Place-Religious category. It would join the Church, Mosque, Synagogue, Shinto shrine, and Kaaba emoji and would fill the gap of missing places of worship for religions originating from the Indian subcontinent.

E. **Frequently Requested:**
    The Hindu temple emoji is one of the top requested emoji for 2017 in Emojipedia[8]. There are questions on Quora[9] questioning the absence of this emoji and there are frequent requests from Twitter users[10]. Examples of some such requests are shown below (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Tweets requesting a Hindu temple emoji.

7. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_temple_architecture
8. http://blog.emojipedia.org/top-emoji-requests-2017/
9. https://www.quora.com/Why-there-is-no-Hindu-temple-emoticon-on-WhatsApp-while-it-has-all-other-religions-worship-places-emoticon
10. https://twitter.com/search?q=Hindu%20Temple%20emoji

4. **Selection Factors for Exclusion:**

    F. **Overly Specific:**
        The Hindu temple emoji would not be overly specific as it can be used to represent a wide range of places and activities.

    G. **Open-Ended:**
        This criterion is not applicable. The Hindu temple emoji is unique and will add diversity to the existing Place-Religious emoji.

    H. **Already Representable:**
        This criterion is also not applicable. There is no emoji available in Place-Religious category that represents a Hindu temple.

    I. **Logos, Brands, UI Icons, Signage, Specific People, Deities:**
        The proposed emoji is free of copyright concerns and does not contain references to deities, logos, and specific peoples, historical or living.

    J. **Transient:**
        Hindu Temples have existed for hundreds of years, and new temples are constructed every year. Therefore, these socio-cultural complexes and the activities they represent cannot be transient.

    K. **Faulty Comparisons:**
        This criterion is not applicable.

5. **Sort Location:**
    The proposed Hindu temple emoji should be placed in the "Travel & Places" section.
    A. Proposed Hindu temple emoji should be placed in "Place-Religious" category.
    B. Proposed Hindu temple emoji should come after the Synagogue emoji.
    C. Proposed code point for the Hindu Temple emoji is U+1F54E

6. **Representation and Recognisability**
    After the initial submission, the emoji subcommittee informed us that an earlier proposal was considered in L2/14-235 and requested evidence on the suitability image. The query requested clarification on whether the image would (a) mean "Hindu temple" to anyone who saw it, and (b) that it would be the best such symbol (for example, are there regional differences in such expectations?). The following section details our response to these queries.

    We are confident that the proposed image is appropriate for the "Hindu Temple" emoji and would be easily identified as a Hindu temple by a majority of people who have encountered a Hindu temple. Our claims are based on the following rationale.

    A. **Shared Morphological Features:** The proposed image for the emoji is inspired by the Nagara style of temple architecture. Most Hindu temples share a common architectural grammar, and a particularly unique feature within this grammar is the *Shikhara*[11] (also known as *Vimana* or Spire). This is architectural feature is common to all ancient as well as contemporary styles of Hindu temples (see figure 5). Given that, *Shikharas* come in various shapes and sizes, a large tapering structure has been used to represent the prototypical temple.
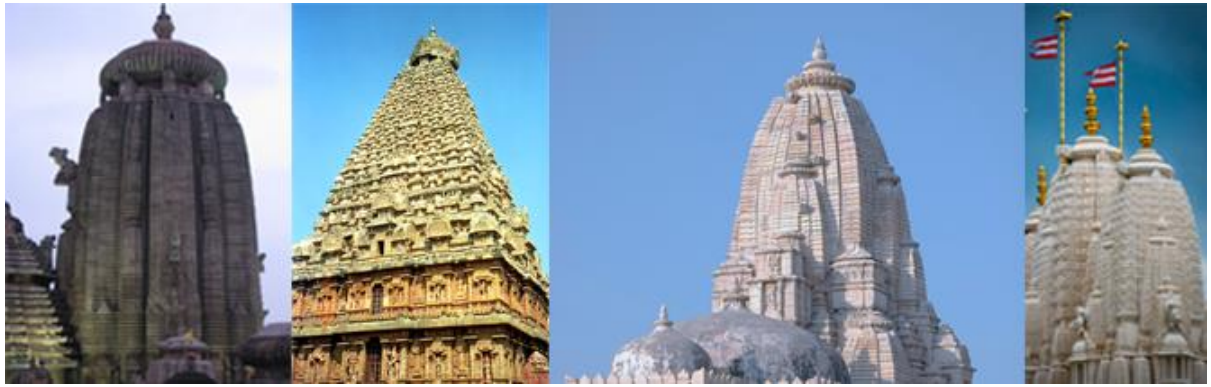
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11 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shikhara

Figure 5: Various Shikharas[12] of existing temples.

B. **Importance of this visual feature:** The primary deity of the temple is placed directly below the *Shikhara*; and for this reason, is an important structure within the temple complex. Furthermore, the *Shikhara* is also the first encountered visual feature when an observer faces a Hindu temple from afar and is therefore likely to be remembered. Hence, we propose that this feature is appropriate to represent the Hindu temple.

C. **Semantic Reinforcement:** Saffron colour is often associated with Hinduism and has a special significance within various Hindu traditions. Consequently, the temple in the proposed image has been coloured saffron. This will further enhance the recognisability and intuitiveness of the visual. Besides the colour, most Hindu temples have a flag at the apex of the temple, which has been included in the proposed image.

D. **Existing Representations:** Archaic as well as contemporary representations of Hindu temples across various media predominantly use the *Shikhara* to distinguish and identify the Hindu temple (see figure 6 and 7). The proposed image is analogous to existing representations and therefore, is appropriate enough to be easily recognisable.
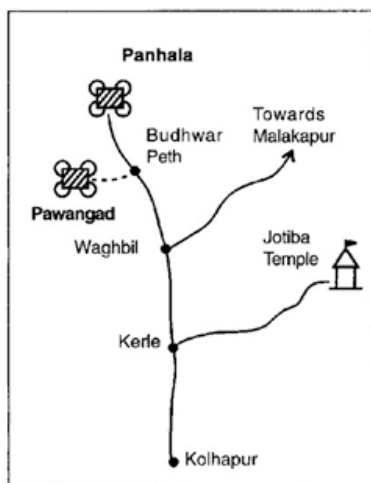

Figure 6: Left: The Hindu temple as depicted in a map[13]in a book. Right: Stamps commemorating Hindu temples issued by the Government of India.

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12 From left to right: a. Lingaraj Temple (Odisha, India); b. Brihadeeswarar Temple (Tamil Nadu, India); c. Meera Temple (Rajasthan, India); d. Shri Swaminarayan Temple (Georgia, United States). Sources: a. Wikimedia Commons contributor User:Tinucherian CC BY 3.0 b. Wikimedia Commons author Ryan CC BY 2.0 c. Wikimedia Commons author Koshyk CC BY 2.0 d. Wikimedia Commons author BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha CC BY-SA 3.0
13 Book Source: Chile, Bhagwan; Famous Forts In Maharashtra, Shivsparsh Prakashan, Kolhapur

Figure 7: Left: A newspaper cartoon[14] depicting a Hindu temple, Mosque, and Church amongst other buildings. Right: A painting[15] by James Fergusson depicting the Ratha Yatra Festival in Puri with the temple in the background.

14 Image Copyright BCCL 2015, used under fair use doctrine. Source: The Economic Times, May 19, 2015
15 Public domain image. Source: Wikimedia Commons.