When worship becomes a target of hate: The growing fear of being Hindu in America



Aweek after an alleged mass-shooting plot targeting a Hindu temple in Aurora, Illinois, the incident remains a sobering reminder that religious freedom cannot be taken for granted. As Indian-Americans prepared for the Hindu festive season, the alleged plot — with investigators reportedly uncovering weapons, ammunition and white-supremacist material—sent ripples of fear through a community already confronting questions of identity and belonging amid America's charged immigration debate.

Thanks to the swift intervention of local police and investigative agencies, a larger shooting plot aimed at Indian-American devotees was foiled in time. But "the possibilities" haunt the diaspora across America, many of whom expressed strong reactions. Reacting strongly, one Chicago resident asked: "Do we need to carry guns for self-protection?"

Perhaps not, say most of those across America, from the East Coast to the Midwest, whom this writer reached out to. Instead, they counsel restraint, continued integration into mainstream American society and interfaith solidarity. Still, on a realistic note, the Aurora shooting incident has reinforced one concern: there is an undercurrent of a nationwide surge in anti-Indian or anti-Hindu hate.

It cannot be viewed in isolation from temple vandalism at regular intervals, attacks on Indian-Americans and rhetoric that casts South Asians as outsiders. Recent controversies, including the targeting of South Asian students in Texas by a Republican political candidate, underscore the risks of turning immigration debates into racial scapegoating.

Speaking to this author, US Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, who was present at the temple at the time of the incident, said: "On the first day of Navaratri, my family and I were worshipping at our Hindu temple in Aurora when a white supremacist armed with an AR-15-style rifle and hundreds of rounds of ammunition attempted a mass shooting targeting Indian Americans, but his gun jammed.

That malfunction saved countless lives, including those of my own family, and I am especially grateful to the suspect's co-worker who alerted police after learning he planned to return and try again, allowing officers to arrest him before he had the chance. Children are not born to hate; they are taught to hate, and we must hold Big Tech accountable for profiting from the online hatred that fuels radicalisation and close the loopholes that shield these companies from responsibility."

Congressman Krishnamoorthi also sought an FBI probe into this 'potential hate attack' and urged the agency to prioritise combating domestic violent extremism. However, he was quick to add, "Above all, public officials of all parties must condemn hatred wherever it appears, and Americans of every race, religion, and background must stand together and speak with one voice against hate targeting any community."

The concerns of Congressman Krishnamoorthi predated the Aurora incident. FBI data recorded 32 anti-Hindu hate-crime offences across the United States in 2025, reflecting a wider climate of concern over religiously motivated hostility.

From anti-India graffiti at a Hindu temple in Southern California to vandalism at temples in Greenwood, Indiana, and incidents involving a Hindu temple near Spanish Fork, Utah, Hindu communities have faced disturbing acts of desecration and intimidation. In North Carolina, a Hindu temple in Cary, near Raleigh, also reported vandalism of a religious statue in January 2026.

Texas, meanwhile, has seen controversies over racial stereotyping and anti-India rhetoric. Although these incidents differ in nature and motive, their cumulative effect has heightened anxieties among Hindu Americans and the wider Indian diaspora about religious safety, public hostility and their place in American society.

Prominent community leaders from the Indian diaspora spoke to this writer, echoing concerns as they prepared for the long month of Hindu festival celebrations in temples. Chicago-based Rakesh Malhotra, president of the Global Indian Diaspora Foundation, said: "No one should fear for their life while praying, yet the alleged plot against a Hindu temple here in Aurora shows how real that danger has become. Solidarity has to become protection now."

Malhotra urged Indian-American organisations to conduct joint temple security assessments, encourage reporting of threats and build interfaith ties. Indian diplomatic missions, he adds, should raise the issue with US authorities and support affected families, though responsibility for protection rests with US officials.

He particularly stressed the urgency of revisiting the House Resolution (2024) that was pushed by Representative Thanedar, "condemning anti-Hindu hatred, fund security grants for vulnerable congregations and demand effective enforcement against threats of violence."

Texas is home to one of the largest Indian-American communities in the United States, alongside New Jersey and the New York metropolitan area. From Houston and Dallas to Austin and San Antonio, Indian-Americans contribute significantly to the state's economy and civic life through medicine, technology, entrepreneurship, philanthropy and public service. Yet, recent developments have raised concerns about racial stereotyping and the place of Indian Americans in the state's social and political landscape.

These include the vandalism of a statue of Lord Hanuman and the controversial social media posts by Bo French, the Republican nominee for Texas Railroad Commissioner, who targeted a photograph of South Asian students celebrating a University of Texas football victory, suggesting that Americans were being displaced by foreigners.

Against this backdrop, the Aurora shooting incident has added to the unease within a community that has made deep economic and civic contributions to the Lone Star State. Writer, columnist and Houston-based Sunanda Vashisth said: "The hate-filled rhetoric targeting Hindus of Indian origin and Indian-Americans on social media cannot be dismissed as harmless speech. Words create permission structures for violence. As someone who studies hate speech and genocide, I know how quickly de-humanising rhetoric can migrate from screens to streets. The attack on the Aurora temple that was thankfully foiled, must be understood in this larger context." She added: "Consider Bo French, the Republican nominee for Texas Railroad Commissioner. After the Longhorns defeated Ohio State, he posted a photograph of South Asian students celebrating in burnt orange at a University of Texas football game. He called the scene a 'problem' and suggested Americans were being displaced by foreigners. The photograph told us nothing about the students' citizenship. Their skin colour, apparently, told him everything… When a Hanuman statue in Sugar Land, built on private property to promote unity and fraternity, is targeted with racist hostility, the pattern becomes harder to ignore." When this writer travelled south of Washington, D.C., two significant Indian diaspora enclaves — Virginia and North Carolina — were also grappling with stress, identity fears and racial scapegoating threatening the long-standing diversity they have enjoyed in America. Despite palpable fears in their voices as they spoke out, prominent community figures reaffirmed their belief in American diversity and democratic values, seeking a strong response from US authorities. In Virginia, Richmond-based president of Atlas Ventures, Rumy Mohta, said: "The Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community is deeply disturbed by the attempted mass shooting targeting Hindus in Aurora, Illinois. This alleged act of hate has shaken Indian Americans and communities of all backgrounds who believe everyone deserves to worship, gather, and live without fear."

Mohta added that this incident is a sobering reminder that anti-Asian hate, anti-Hindu prejudice, racism and white supremacy must never be ignored or normalised. "Threats against one community are threats against the safety and dignity of all communities…Time calls for restraint, caution and standing with each other. No one should ever be targeted because of their identity, heritage, or faith. Our unity is our strength," said Mohta. Another large and densely populated Indian American enclave that is on alert is North Carolina. The state has a sizeable Indian American population, with an estimated 45,000 diaspora members in Cary and Morrisville, near Raleigh. The area is home to about a dozen temples and three gurdwaras, alongside a vibrant cultural community and Indian American representation in local and state politics. However, it is the incident of statue vandalism at Sri Venkateswara Temple in January 2026, and now the Aurora temple shooting incident, that have spread a sense of unease in otherwise peaceful and diverse neighbourhoods.

For Sajjan Agarwal, chairperson of the Hindu Society of North Carolina (HSNC) Temple, the area's largest Hindu temple, the safety of devotees is paramount. "Thankfully, no one was hurt in the Aurora Temple shooting, and the swift response of law enforcement is commendable. The ongoing investigation is equally important to ensuring the safety of our devotees. We have strengthened security checks, expanded volunteer presence and deployed additional security cameras, particularly during the extended Hindu festive season. Police officers remain on site, and we continue to coordinate closely with local law enforcement during major events. We are also working with other temples, gurudwaras and religious institutions to ensure maximum security."

Agarwal also urged mutual tolerance and a firm rejection of hate, pointing to HSNC's broader contribution to the community. "HSNC has served the wider Research Triangle community through initiatives including five million free meals provided through a local rescue mission, vaccination camps, blood drives, donations to area schools and opening our facility as a polling site. We will continue working with our neighbours, interfaith partners and civic leaders to foster mutual respect and understanding. Hate has no place in our community. Our doors remain open to all who come to worship, celebrate and serve," said Agarwal. True. Hate has no place in any civilised society, and 'Little India' enclaves seem to hold on to that belief while remaining a core component of the larger American family.

Deepfakes are a moral problem, not just a technical one



The voice on the telephone sounds exactly like your brother. He says he is in trouble and urgently needs money. There is panic in his voice. He knows how your brother speaks, where he works and what he calls you at home.

You transfer the money.

Only later do you discover that your brother never called.

Artificial Intelligence has given an old crime a disturbing new instrument: synthetic voices capable of imitating familiar people.

The trick itself is ancient. In the Ramaya?a, the demon Marica, struck by Rama's arrow, cries out in Rama's own voice: "Ha Sita! Ha Lak?ma?a!"

Sita, hearing her husband in distress, insists that Lak?ma?a rush to his aid, leaving her unguarded. A forged voice of a loved one in danger was enough to undo the most careful protection. Today's fraudsters need only a few seconds of audio from a social media video.

The global debate about deepfakes often concentrates on detection technology. Can software identify a fake recording? Can platforms label manipulated content?

These are necessary questions. But the problem is not only technical. It is also about the ethics of communication.

Nearly two millennia ago, the Tamil moral philosopher Tiruvalluvar devoted a chapter of the Tirukkural to vaymai, or truthfulness.

Its treatment is far more demanding than the simple instruction never to tell a lie.

The opening couplets connect truthful speech with freedom from harm, while examining the difficult relationship between factual accuracy and ethical consequences.

The Mahabharata shows how sharp that relationship can be. Yudhi??hira announced that Asvatthama had been killed, and only muttered that it was an elephant, his words drowned by the sound of conches. Dro?a, believing his son was dead, laid down his arms.

Tradition holds that Yudhi??hira's chariot, which had always moved above the ground, touched the earth that day. A statement can be technically true and still do the work of a lie.

Whatever interpretation one adopts, the central concern deserves attention: words are actions, and their effects on other people matter.

Another couplet goes further: do not speak what your own heart knows to be false, for once you have lied, your heart itself will burn you. Valluvar places the first defence against deception in the speaker's conscience. A machine has no heart to burn. That conscience must therefore reside in those who build and deploy it, and in laws that hold its misusers to account.

Synthetic media makes that insight painfully contemporary.

A manipulated video could create panic after a natural disaster. An imitation of an official's voice could mislead beneficiaries about a public scheme. A fabricated emergency message could travel through community networks before anyone has time to verify it. In district administration, public trust is not an abstract resource. It saves lives.

When a genuine flood warning is issued, people must believe it quickly enough to act. If false messages repeatedly circulate under the names of officials, the credibility of legitimate warnings can suffer.

I learnt this early. As SDO of Dumka in 2005, when floodwaters rose near the Masanjore dam, conflicting messages poured in from every quarter. Deciding which ones to trust, and deciding quickly, mattered as much as the relief work itself.

Years later, as deputy commissioner of Hazaribagh during the Ram Navami processions of 2012, the real challenge was not only maintaining order on the streets but separating truth from rumour before rumour could move a crowd.

That was before deepfakes. Imagine those rumours arriving in the cloned voice of a district official.

The cost is not mere embarrassment. It can be measured in lives. An elderly citizen may find it especially difficult to distinguish an authentic instruction from a convincing digital imitation.

At a camp of "Aapki Yojana, Aapki Sarkar, Aapke Dwar" (Your Scheme, Your Government, At Your Doorstep), the Jharkhand government's flagship outreach programme, in a panchayat of Deoghar district, I met pensioners and farmers who had received a call from someone claiming to be "from the office".

They were asked for an OTP to "release" their installment, and watched their savings disappear. The caller sounded official. That was all it took.

India needs a practical system for verifying critical public communications.

Kautilya would have understood the problem. The Arthasastra advised that a spy's report be believed only when three independent agents, unknown to one another, said the same thing.

Royal orders carried the king's seal, or mudra, so that a true command could be told from a forged one. Yet Visakhadatta's play Mudrarak?asa turns on exactly this weakness: a letter stamped with a stolen signet ring persuades a prince to turn against his most trusted minister.

Authentication helps, but a stolen seal is more dangerous than none. A cloned voice is today's stolen signet ring.

District administrations could maintain clearly identified official channels for disaster alerts, payment instructions, and welfare announcements. Important messages should be independently verifiable through trusted contact points.

Public awareness campaigns can teach a simple precaution: a familiar voice is no longer sufficient proof of identity. Families can agree on a code word, a question only the real person could answer.

Our villages already have a model of verified trust. Information has long travelled through known people: the anganwadi sevika, the panchayat secretary, the notice board at the panchayat bhawan. Official digital channels should strengthen these human relays, not bypass them.

Banks, technology companies, and communications platforms also have responsibilities in detecting impersonation, protecting users and responding promptly to reported fraud.

At the global level, technical approaches such as content provenance and authentication may help establish where digital material came from. But no detection system will eliminate every deception.

Trust must therefore be supported by institutions, procedures, and informed citizens.

The Tirukkural does not offer a manual for identifying AI-generated audio. Nor should its ethical ideas be mistaken for cybersecurity tools.

It does, however, remind us that the moral quality of communication cannot be separated from its consequences.

For centuries, hearing a loved one's voice was powerful evidence of presence. Sita trusted it, and the Ramaya?a turned on that moment.

In the AI age, even that evidence may require a second question.

Before trusting the voice, make sure the person is actually there.

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APPENDIX-IV-A [SEE PROVISION TO RULE 8(6)] SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rule 8(6)) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower/s and Guarantor/s that the below described immovable properties mortgaged/ charged to Truhome Finance Limited (formerly Shriram Housing Finance Limited), the Physical Possession of which have been taken by the Authorized Officer of Truhome Finance Limited, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis for recovery of the balance due to Truhome Finance Limited from the Borrowers And Guarantors, as mentioned in the table.
Details of Borrowers and Guarantors, amount due, Short Description of the immovable property, reserve price and earnest money deposit and date of Inspection are also given as:

Name of Borrowers/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/Mortgagers	Amount of Recovery and date of Demand Notice	Reserve Price (Rs.) & Bid Increment	Date & Time of Auction	Contact Person Details – (AO and Disposal team)
(1) Anilkumar Dayaram Kushwaha, And (2) Umadevi Kushwaha All Having address at :-608, Shreenathji Tower Golden Arce, Damruwadi sanjan road, Umbergaon-396170. Also at:-@Uma Synthetics Darshan Engineering plot no. 710 3 , GIDC Umbergaon-396171 Also At:-Flat no. 302, 3rd Floor, Sahyog Residency, Nr. Royal Residency, Umbergaon-396171 Also At:-242-25 EWS Colony, Nr Pani Tanki,Gandiwadi Umbergaon-396171. LAN:- SHLHVAPI0000291	Demand Notice Date: 15/03/2025 Rs. 12,51,071/-(Rupees Twelve Lakh Fifty One Thousand Seventy One Only) as on 11/03/2025 under reference of loan account no. SHLHVAPI0000291 with further interest at the contractual rate, within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice	Rs. 6,15,000/-(Rupees Six Lakh Fifty Fifteen Thousand Only) **Bid Increment:** Rs. 10,000/- and in such multiples. **Earnest Money Deposit(EMD)(Rs.)** Rs. 61,500/- (Rupees Sixty One Thousand Five Hundred Only) **Last date for submission of EMD : 16/11/2026, Time 10.00 a.m. to 05.00 p.m**	**17-Nov-2026 & Auction Time: 11:00 AM to 1.00 AM**	**Debjyoti Roy - 98747 02021 Sandip Mahajan 99989 44955 Property inspection Date. 30/10/2026, Time.11 AM to 1 PM**
Date of Possession & Type: 14/09/2025 and Physical Possession. Encumbranches known: Not Known				
Description of Property: All That Piece and parcel of the immovable property being Residential Flat no. 302 admeasuring about 739.00 sq.feet i.e. 68.68 sq.mtrs., Super Built up area , along with undivided share in land admeasuring about 10.00 sq.mtrs., lying and located on the 3rd floor (Unit no. 1 on third floor towards north as per approved layout plan) of building known as "SAHYOG RESIDENCY" Constructed on N.A. land bearing survey no. 112/Paiki 1/ Paiki 53 admeasuring about 0 hector 5 are 97 sq.mtrs. Situated at Village Umbergaon,, Taluka Umbergaon, District Valsad. Boundaries of the said property :- East : By Road. West : By Flat no. 301. North : By Common Plot. South : By Flat no. 303			

Name of Borrowers/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/Mortgagers	Amount of Recovery and date of Demand Notice	Reserve Price (Rs.) & Bid Increment	Date & Time of Auction	Contact Person Details – (AO and Disposal team)
(1) KAMAL JOSEPH LUTHARE And (2) ANJANI NIKOSE All Having address at :-Plot No.A-23, Flower City Kanpura, Vyara, Gujarat-394650. Also at:-@ Kamal Sadi, Plot No.A-23, Flower City Kanpura,Vyara, Gujarat-394650.. Also AT:-Flat No.501,5th floor, Building no.D, Jal Darshan Park,Near Royal Luxuria, Kanpura, Vyara, Gujarat-394650. LAN:- SLPHVAPI0000432	Demand Notice Date: 12.10.2024 Rs. 25,04,649/- (Rupees Twenty Five Lakh Four Thousand Six Hundred Forty Nine Only) as on 9/10/2024 under reference of Loan Account No. SLPHVAPI0000432 with further interest at the contractual rate, within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice	Rs. 11,50,000/- (Rupees Eleven Lakh Fifty Thousand Only) **Bid Increment:** Rs. 10,000/- and in such multiples. **Earnest Money Deposit(EMD)(Rs.)** Rs. 1,15,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Fifteen Thousand Only) **Last date for submission of EMD : 16/11/2026, Time 10.00 a.m. to 05.00 p.m**	**17-Nov-2026 & Auction Time: 11:00 AM to 1.00 AM**	**Debjyoti Roy - 98747 02021 Sandip Mahajan 99989 44955 Property inspection Date. 30/10/2026, Time.11 AM to 1 PM**
Date of Possession & Type: 02/12/2025 and Physical Possession. Encumbranches known: Not Known				
Description of Property: All that Piece and Parcel of bearing Non-agricultural plot of land in Moje: Vyara, lying being land bearing R.S. no.233 paikki, C.S. no. 1800/A/28 admeasuring 1208.70 Sq. Mtrs., Known as "JALDARSHAN PARK" paikki Building-D, Fifth Floor, Flat no. 501, Built Up area admeasuring 85.732 Sq. Mtrs., Undivided Share of Land admeasuring 25.814 Sq. Mtrs., at Registration District & Sub-District Vyara District Tapi. Boundaries of the property:- East :- Flat No. 505 , West :- Flat No. 503 , North:- Adj. Building, South:- Passage				

1) **For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer the website of Truhome Finance Limited (Formerly Shriram Housing Finance Limited) website.**
2) **The intending bidders have to submit their EMD amount to be deposited by way of RTGS/NEFT to the account details mentioned herein below: BANK NAME: AXIS BANK LIMITED BRANCH: BANDRA KURLA COMPLEX, MUMBAI BANK ACCOUNT NO. Current Account No. 911020045677633 IFSC CODE: UTIB0000230.**
3) **The mortgagors/borrowers are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest before auction, failing which secured assets will be sold as per above schedule.**
4) **The mortgagors/borrowers are requested to collect your all remaining movable items within period of 7 days without damages of the property. If you fail to take movable assets, then it would be deemed that you have no claim and no interest in taking back such items. In case you still prefer to ignore this notice, we shall be constrained to treat them as unclaimed and waste materials and shall not be liable for any loss or damage whatsoever to such articles and also may sell all movable items and adjust the amount against outstanding dues of your loan account. It will be also deemed that you have no claim and interest in taking back such items and also have no objection, if such items are disposed-off or sold by us as items are having negligible substantial value. Also note that by not taking the items within specified time, you will also relinquish any right or claim over such items in future**

Place : Tapi-Vyara, Valsad
Date: 26-10-2026

Sd/- Authorised Officer- Truhome Finance Limited
(Formerly Shriram Housing Finance Limited)