



*The original drawing of  
Mewar Coat of Arms  
sent from Udaipur to the  
College of Arms, London.  
AD 1874*



*The Mewar Coat of Arms  
received from the  
College of Arms, London. AD 1877*



*Present Mewar Coat of Arms*



# The Evolution of an Institution

A house that has stood for 13 centuries would have to be built on a strong foundation, each brick solidly attached to the other, each layer firmly resting atop the one below. It would have to be designed according to a well-conceived blueprint and built with integrity, love, devotion and one-pointed purpose. That purpose would have to be more than simply providing for and protecting one's family, friends and even first-time visitors. It would have to represent something meaningful in a moral sense, something its owners could stand by proudly, something that answers to a Higher Authority.

The pivot that supports the overarching bridge - called a keystone - would have to be so firmly, reliably and strategically placed that the inhabitants would never need fear the edifice might ever crumble.

Such keystones have held together the House of Mewar since its founding in AD 734. That keystone is a staunch and enduring faith, a spiritual belief system that harks back to the origins of the Mewar family, of which Arvind Singh Mewar is the current head.

In the House of Mewar, one's religious affiliation matters little; the principles of the Vedas, Hinduism's formative scriptures that are the basis of the Mewar spiritual beliefs, are the same preached and practiced by all the great religions of Man - the same set down in Judaism's Old Testament and Christianity's New, the same in the Muslim tradition's Koran and in Buddhism's Abhidhamma. The essential 'ism' they share is humanitarianism: service to society and Mankind; peace and compassion; charity and generosity. These values define the keystones.

While some may consider the story of their origins more apocryphal than factual, the Mewars live its truth every day of their lives. "Through every act and function we perform, every service we provide day after day, we uphold and reinforce that truth according to the precise dictates passed down from our founding forefathers," says Shriji, as many call him, the 76th in the world's longest serving unbroken custodianship. Their credo is motivational, inspirational, and irrevocable. They also feel its universal principles should guide any conscious and concerned citizen of the planet.

As is the current trend, companies now develop what they call a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program, outlining what they do for the good of their communities, for their employees, for the environment. The House of Mewar has no need to 'invent' such a CSR; their CSR was established from day one, before they had any products or services. Time-tested values are the pillars of their CSR, living evidence of their sustainability. They and they alone hold up the infrastructure of the House. All Mewar products and

services derive and evolve from them. Trends come and go but proven values are always timeless. Indeed, while they may fall from favour through various periods in history, sustainable values endure.

In essence, the Mewars' values revolve around an ethical conduct that every person should embody. This blueprint to 'live by' was handed down to the founder of the House of Mewar, Bappa Rawal, from his Guru Maharishi Harit Rashi. It's from that time that the State of Mewar, as a governing institution responsible for the support and protection of the citizenry of a geographically defined region, was established. Since that time, though much has changed, this commitment to follow the spiritual path of service to others in that region has remained solid as a rock, solid as the foundations of their House.

Whether one is a Hindu or not, the guru-disciple relationship has a universal resonance for people of all diverse backgrounds. And since it plays a critical part in the Mewar philosophy, it's important to understand it as such. At its heart, it is like any teacher-student relationship - if, that is, the teacher is a person of highest integrity, wisdom, compassion and insight; and if that teacher recognizes in his or her student a willing, worthy and able vessel into which all those same qualities can be poured and nurtured. In that case, there is a sacred and unbreakable bond between teacher and student. There is a level of devotion and mutual respect such that the student would never - could never - digress or deviate from the teachings. Such that neither teacher nor student would leave the path of responsibility to each other. Because of this commitment to the teacher-student guru-disciple relationship, all Mewars since that time take the guidance Guru Maharishi Harit Rashi handed down to Bappa Rawal at the deepest possible level, and pass it down from father to son and daughter.

To put Bappa Rawal's establishment of the House of Mewar in the greater context of global trends and the long span of Man's time, where it rightly belongs, at around the same time, the tide of Arab conquest of the Middle East and into what is now Europe is coming to an end. The seafaring Vikings of Scandinavia begin raiding coastal Mediterranean and go on to found several important kingdoms. In mainland China the Tang Dynasty, when so many cultural developments takes place, reaches its pinnacle. The first Serbian state is formed. In Indonesia Borobodur, the famous Buddhist temples, begin construction. Europe's Roman Empire has crumbled and Constantinople becomes the hub of the Empire of the East. The hunter-gatherers natives of North America Americans are moving across the Great Plains in search of buffalo. When the first Mewar fort-city at Chittorgarh was at its prime in the 10th to 13th centuries, Europe's feudal economy was wavering. When Jagmandir and Jag Niwas were lively Mewar island palaces adorning Lake Pichola, the American Revolution and the French Revolution were still decades away.

With these events as the set and props when Bappa Rawal found his place on the stage of history, there's an accomplishment he and future generations of his descendants should be credited with that cannot be understated. This is the concept of 'custodianship' or 'trusteeship'. That is, each generation of Mewar serves only as Custodian, not owner or ruler, providing for the people and protecting the property and possessions of Udaipur before entrusting the same responsibility to the next generation. As compared to the traditions at that time - of feudal lords, or conquering barbarians, of royal kings and queens who ruled according to what often seemed to be a 'me first' doctrine - the idea that those at the head did not possess personally or gain personally was a radically new system of governance. Even today, looking either at some political regimes or individual politicians, the notion of custodianship without ownership or personal vested interest on a monetary level sounds almost like an oxymoron, a disconnect from reality. Yet, that same principle of trusteeship remains the guiding and distinguishing characteristic of the Mewars to this today.

When India attained its independence, the Mewars and other princely rulers throughout the Indian subcontinent lost not only their titles of Maharana and Maharaja but also their authority to govern and, eventually, their special financial privileges. While Indian Royals considered it a grave loss - one from which many have never recovered - The last recognized Maharana of Udaipur, Mewar, Bhagwat Singh Mewar and subsequently his son Shriji, welcomed it as an opportunity, albeit an opportunity borne of necessity, to find another form and format to assure the continuity of their responsibility to serve their community.

Necessity is the mother of invention, as the Greek philosopher Plato wrote some 400 years before the beginning of the Common Era. And in the spirit of entrepreneurial inventiveness for which Indians have long been known - and have become even better known on the global economic stage in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century - they reinvented or, to continue the metaphor, reframed the House of Mewar according to a business model compatible with modern times that still preserves the original historical purpose and integrity of the structure.

Since the House of Mewar was built on the concept of 'trusteeship' - that is, each generation of Mewar serves only as Custodian, not owner or ruler, providing for the people and protecting the property and possessions of Udaipur before entrusting the same responsibility to the next generation - it did not seem a giant leap for Bhagwat Singh Mewar to establish various aspects of the family endeavours under trusteeships, though this time as defined by the prevailing current laws of India. Doing so served multiple purposes. First and foremost, it guaranteed the protection and support of Udaipur under their careful guidance, enabling the Mewars to fulfill their spiritual commitment. It assured that these traditions would not die or revert to The Indian Government, rendering them vulnerable with each change of political leadership. It also made sure that exorbitant taxes would not be levied on these institutions, thereby destroying their financially unviable.

In India's new spirit of entrepreneurial dynamism, they consolidated their ventures and enterprises under one umbrella, now known as Eternal Mewar. There are just as many rooms in the House - with room for more - but they all come under one roof fortified by time, solidified by collective wisdom. A living institution is - or should be - just like any healthy living organism. It should grow and change: if short, it should evolve. The evolution of 'Mewar' - from a family, to a state, to its current phase as Eternal Mewar - reflects the nature of this healthy institution. To remain in the past is to become an irrelevant relic, no more alive than a bronze statue collecting dust in a museum. Rather, one must honour that past while continuing to move forward, both according to a philosophy based on enduring values. The values of the Mewar family, as history has repeatedly shown, is inclusive, not exclusive.

Similarly, Eternal Mewar includes and amalgamates all the activities, duties and responsibilities that resonate with its core values - values past, present and well into the future - activities you will read in more detail in the accompanying Synopsis. Like the family, Eternal Mewar is synonymous with hospitality, philanthropy, and preservation not just of things of value but ideas of value, of an ethical, moral and spiritual stand on behalf of all Mankind.

Arvind Singh Mewar, as the developer and current 'face' of Eternal Mewar, continues to serve as the gracious and generous host welcoming all into his 'House'. He will continue to do so... until the next generation of Mewars proudly takes over the ancient legacy.