“Hello, there!” I did not get a chance to see you since the sun is directly staring at me. Let me introduce myself, I am a Swaminarayan murti that is hanging on the rear-view mirror of a Hyundai Tucson in Mississauga, Canada. I have spent more time than anyone else in this car, but my story has started long before that.

I was born five years ago in the advanced era of computer technology and photoshop. Firstly, the murti design was decided by members of the computer department at the Haridham Mandir, located in Gujarat, India. A media technician at the Mandir then put together my designed look. I am an image that was merged with the images of Lord Swaminarayan, Gunatit, Hariprasad Swami with a gradient background that goes from blue to pink. I have been inked with the words “Atmiya Ambrish Shibir – Columbus” in white as that was an important event for the members of the Swaminarayan community at that time. Moreover, I have the Yogi Divine Society logo, the non-profit organization of the Haridham Mandir with a flower design above the logo. Under the logo there is a white Swaminarayan slogan written in Gujarati which translates to “All the devotees of God have the lord within them”.

After the successful completion of the photoshop image, my design was again reviewed by the computer department members of the Mandir before I was sent off to the printing company to multiply. I was sent to the Inkprint.in factory in New Delhi where due to my small size the print operator named Abhishek Gupta made fifty versions of me on big sheets of paper that were then printed and laminated. Later, the laminate cutter machine, brought me back to my current size. I, along with my two thousand duplicate versions of me, were packed and surface shipped back to the Mandir.

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My copies and I, along with millions of other Swaminarayan icons that were then my closest friends were all sold at the Mandir. All the smaller icons like myself and my replicas were sold to put in purses and cars as a constant reminder that Lord Swaminarayan is always present and looking out for all of his devotees. Furthermore, Hariprasad Swami touched all the icons including me in a ceremony called Prana Pratishtha to put the life of Lord Swaminarayan into us. I would like to tell you an important secret that I am not just an image but Lord Swaminarayan himself. A lot of the people that had come to buy the Swaminarayan icons were visitors of the Mandir. Visitors of the temple would always visit the main section of the Mandir first, where I felt that the devotees prayed and looked at the icons as if Lord Swaminarayan was present. Later when they would come to visit me and my friends, they looked at us as commodities, not representations of Lord Swaminarayan himself. I always wondered if people would look at me, with the so called “Temple Effect”.

As far as I remember, on 17th December 2016, I had to leave behind the mandir and my friends as I was sold to a Swaminarayan lady in Canada, and that is how my journey from the temple to a car in Canada began. I was sold to the lady by a Mandir devotee for 100 rupees and I was directly put into the purse, for about four days until all of a sudden, I felt the temperature getting cooler. When I was taken out of the purse, I was hung on the rear-view mirror of the fancy 2016, Audi A6. At first, I was not used to the colder temperatures in Canada, and my environment had also completely changed. I had moved from a room where I had only seen the Mandir visitors, to now basically exploring all of GTA. Moreover, due to multiculturalism in Canada, I have also gotten the experience to see people of all races, and their interactions, all while staying in the car. There are two people that drive the car that I was present in, the lady that brought me and her husband.

Since the day that the lady hung me in her car, she always takes my blessings before she starts to drive the car. She firmly believes that Lord Swaminarayan whom she comes to visit every year at Haridham, is present in me. She prays before me to join her while she is driving, as I will always be present with her to make sure that she is safe. I always listen to my followers that pray to me with all their
heart. I know that without my command, a leaf cannot move from its position, so the lives of my followers can never be at risk until I demand it to happen for their own benefit. An event would only take place in the lives of my followers for them to reach a step closer to enlightenment. Although the lady has trust in me to keep her safe, her husband does not see my murti as the same icon present at Haridham. He never takes my blessings before he starts to drive but instead just remembers me before he starts to drive. I am very patient with my followers, I believe that one day my followers will understand my glory and believe that I am omnipresent. I am present everywhere and my icons are just a reminder that I am always looking after them. However, when the lady and her husband are both in the car, he takes my blessings just for the sake of showing his wife.

Around two years ago, all three of us were going to visit a temple in Mississauga, and the husband like usual just took my blessings just for the sake of showing his wife. Although, this time the wife told him to take my blessings as if Lord Swaminarayan was present before him. The husband then prayed with his heart for their protection in the car journey and told me that he firmly believes that I will always be there to protect them. While taking a left turn at the light closest to the temple, the husband could not gauge the speed of the incoming car and we got into an accident. The car had completely broken down, but all three of us were completely safe. As soon as the husband and wife got out of the car, the husband had instantly taken me and kept me in his hands. When the police had come to the accident location, they told the couple that majority of times in accidents like this, there are people that usually get hurt. Immediately, the husband had said, “My God is with us to always protect us at all times”. The accident allowed him to believe that God is present in different forms in the lives of his devotees as a constant reminder that he is present to always protect them.

The damaged car and all of its parts had to be sent to Scrap Car Removal Toronto for auto recycling. Objects are very fragile, they are just temporary aggregation of materials, but I have become more than just an object to the husband as there has been change in the relationship. After the accident, they have brought a Hyundai Tucson and I am the only object that has been present in both of the cars.
Since then, I have experienced the “Temple effect” as the couple relate religiously to me as Lord Swaminarayan. Now after three years of being with the couple, I have the same level of importance to their lives as the icon at the Haridham. They firmly believe that I am Lord Swaminarayan, and I am always there to protect them.