A series of research papers produced in conjunction with the Community Religions Project in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Leeds.

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A Report on
Hinduism in Britain

Ursula King

This report was originally written as a survey published in German*. It briefly describes the situation of Hindus in contemporary Britain and the research currently available on this religious and ethnic minority group. Historically speaking, Hinduism came to the West as a new worldview and faith shortly before the end of the nineteenth century but at first only certain aspects of Indian thought and spirituality became known, especially in the form of Advaita Vedanta which was transmitted to the West through the activities of Indian missionaries. The pioneering work was undertaken by the Ramakrishna Mission, still active in many Western countries today, although the activities of more recently founded groups have created many more and much larger international movements, especially among the young. However, I shall not discuss these syncretistic new religious movements based on Western converts to Hinduism but want to look at groups of Indian Hindus who came to Britain either directly through immigration from India or via East Africa in order to find work in Britain during the last twenty years or so.

During 1982, London and many other British cities celebrated the 'Festival of India'. Numerous exhibitions on Indian art as well as lectures on Indian life, films and radio transmissions created a new interest in certain aspects of Indian culture. But unfortunately this interest did not concern itself directly with the presence of Hindus living in Britain now. The general debate is all too often primarily confined to aspects of social and racial tensions existing between the indigenous population and Indian immigrants. Sociological research has mainly concentrated on the problems of work, housing, health and education without always fully understanding the cultural and religious heritage of Indian minority groups. It is impossible to deal here with all Indian minorities which include many Muslims and Sikhs, but I shall restrict this discussion to Hindus. However, to fully understand the other immigrant groups, it is certainly necessary that the religious beliefs and practices of these different ethnic minorities are more closely studied and become better known in the general population.

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This is the aim of a few researchers who are studying the situation of Hinduism in Britain and whose results form the basis for the present article. It is at present not possible to give a comprehensive picture for the whole of Britain because the data collected so far have been gathered at a local and regional and not at a national level. I rely in the present survey mostly on the information and data collected over the last few years by the Community Religions Project in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Leeds.¹

My report is divided into four parts. The first three are the most substantial and concern first of all the statistical and ethnic profile of the Hindu population; secondly, temples, festivals and rites; and thirdly selected Hindu communities in certain English cities. The last part will briefly list some materials which have been produced for teachers and pupils. They form a good basis to promote a better understanding of Hinduism in Britain and create the necessary presuppositions for dialogue with Hinduism in the diaspora.

1. Statistical and Ethnic Profile of the Hindu Population

The presence of Hindus in Britain has to be seen in a wider historical context. The emigration of Indians abroad is not a new phenomenon but began in the nineteenth century with the world-wide transplantation of Indian workers by the British colonial regime. There is also a long tradition of individual Indians coming to Britain and settling here. Between the two world wars it was mainly people working in the navy, coming from the coastal areas of Gujarat in Western India, who settled in Britain but there were also Indians in the professions, especially doctors and lawyers, who came and settled in small numbers. From a religious point of view these groups contained Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus.

One can generally distinguish four phases of immigration to Britain. The first pioneering phase brought the settlement of individual families during the years 1930-1950. During the second phase (1950-1960) it was most of all the men who came to England in search of work, whereas in the third phase (1960-1970) women and children followed from India to Britain. In addition, numbers were substantially increased through the immigration of Indians from East Africa, due to changing political circumstances. For example, many Gujaratis who had settled as traders and businessmen in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Zanzibar, had to leave these countries in the late '60s and early '70s because
of the aggressive policies of pan-Africanisation. The number of Hindus alone who came from Kenya to England between 1967-1968 is estimated to be 12,000; the number of Hindus who came from Uganda between 1972-1973 is thought to be 18,000. This third phase of immigration was a phase of consolidation. The immigrants slowly realised that the religious and cultural institutions of their homeland had to be built up anew in Britain in order to maintain their traditional way of life, their religious beliefs and practices, and transmit them to the next generation. This happened first of all among the Sikhs, then among the Muslims and finally among the Hindus, who slowly developed the need to establish their own temples.

After 1973 the main wave of immigration was over. A new fourth phase began during which further immigration became very restricted through legislation. The situation now changed very significantly in that the natural increase of the immigrant families brought about a second generation who not only possesses British nationality but is growing up between two cultures, a situation which brings with it particular kinds of tension.

The recently published World Christian Encyclopaedia² shows a table of religious groups in Britain and Northern Ireland where the number of Hindus is listed as being 300,000 for 1975 (0.5% of the total population of 56,427,000); for the middle of 1980 the projected figure is 380,000 (0.7% of the total population of 57,519,000). The number of Sikhs for the same year, 1975, is given as 210,000 (0.4%) and the number of Muslims 830,000 (1.4%).

The Muslims are the most numerous group because they not only consist of Muslims from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh but also of many followers of Islam from the Middle East. If one looks at the religious groups in relation to their geographic and ethnic origin the following figures have been given for 1977 for groups from South Asia (these figures include descendants born in England).³

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MUSLIMS from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India</td>
<td>353,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIKHS from the Punjab</td>
<td>304,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HINDUS from Gujarat and Punjab</td>
<td>306,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHRISTIANS and other groups from India</td>
<td>68,809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,034,310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
30% of this total were Hindus, 30% Sikhs and 34% Muslims. The number of Hindus can be compared with the number of adult Baptists in England who count also about 300,000 members. If one looks at the regional origin of the Hindu population one finds that about 46% of all Hindus living in England were born in East Africa or have parents born in East Africa. The Hindus consist of about 70% Gujaratis (from. India or East Africa) and about 15% Punjabis. The remaining 15% come from different Indian states, such as Maharashtra and Rajasthan; there are also smaller groups from Bengal and Andhra Pradesh as well as South India. The Indian population is most of all found in the big cities and industrial centres of Britain. The majority of Indian immigrants live in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, Leicester, Coventry, Nottingham and other cities of North England and the Midlands.

As the Gujaratis are in the majority, more different castes are found among them than among the Hindus from the Punjab who mostly belong to the Khatri caste (traders). Among the Gujaratis a different caste may dominate in different cities, for example in Leicester we have a majority of Lohanas (trading caste from Saurashtra), in Coventry there is a majority of Suthars (carpenters), and in Leeds there is a majority of Mochis (shoe-makers). Gradually different castes have come together on a national level and formed different Gujarati caste organisations, whilst the smaller number of Punjabis has preferred to form ethnic cultural groups at a local level.

These differences point already to the fact of how difficult it is to say something of general validity about Hinduism in Britain. The religious practices and beliefs are very multi-dimensional and they also are in part closely connected with different religious movements in India. We need much more detailed research in order to form a clearer picture about the complexity and diversity of the Hindu communities in the whole of Britain. Without having exact figures it is known that a considerable number of Hindus belong to the Sathya Sai Baba sect as well as to the Swami Narayan sect. In fact, the latter is said to have about 30,000 members in Britain and to be the fastest growing group among the 100 different Hindu religious groups in Britain.4

Western converts to Hinduism must be briefly mentioned too. Besides the long-established groups of the Ramakrishna Mission, the Theosophists and the disciples of Aurobindo there are many new groups following different gurus. In 1977, the Transcendental Meditation movement counted sixty-five different centres with about 75,000 followers of meditation in England, whilst the
followers of Guru Maharaj Ji and his Divine Light Mission were already 8,000 in number in 1973 and had 31 different centres in England. However, the members of these two movements are not necessarily Hindus in the fullest sense of the term; this is perhaps more the case with those who joined the Hare Krishna movement (International Society of Krishna Consciousness) which counted 3,000 members in 1973 and had by then three temples in England. One of these temples was directly opposite the British Museum in an old Victorian house in London (it has now been moved to a house near Piccadilly), whereas the main temple is found in Watford in a big country house donated by George Harrison, one of The Beatles. The Hare Krishna movement has in certain cases close contact with Hindus of Indian origin who admire these western converts and their committed practice of Hinduism which they find quite impressive and convincing, and which in certain cases influences them in their own understanding of Hinduism.

2. Religious Practice: Temples, Festivals and Rites

Some general remarks about Hindu religious practices in Britain may be helpful before certain communities are described in greater detail. Most Hindus here are bhaktas following the way of devotion to a personal god. Whereas Hindus in India are generally worshippers of either Shiva, Vishnu or the Devi, this division cannot be so easily applied to Hindus in Britain. The gods worshipped in different families may be very different indeed, but on the whole the god Krishna is at the centre or worship in British temples besides the god Rama. Research in London has shown that even in family ritual Krishna and Rama are by far the most favoured gods. Therefore one could say that on the whole Vaishnavism dominates among Hindus in Britain, but at the same time it must be added that the general Indian inclination towards syncretism and the absorption of new elements is an important feature in England and helps Hindus to adapt to their new environment.

Traditional Hindu puja is very much family-oriented and does not include the obligation for congregational worship. Puja in the temple and the complex temple ritual belong to a specialist whereas the individual worshipper may visit the temple alone or with his family at irregular times but especially during the time of festivals. Hindu families in Britain rarely have a separate room for puja but a corner in the kitchen or the sitting-room is often decorated with religious pictures or statues of the family god, and it is here that the women perform the traditional daily puja. This family Hinduism is by far the most important carrier for the transmission of the religious beliefs and
practices, but in Britain Hindus are in a diaspora situation so that the temple has acquired a new significance because it has become an important centre and meeting place for an ethnic and religious minority. Therefore the temple helps to express and enforce a separate religious and cultural identity and it has thus acquired a new function for which there is little need in India.

This development began among Hindu communities in East Africa. Later it was transplanted to Britain by those Indians who came here from East Africa. Already during the middle of the 1960s several Gujaratis and Punjabis got together in English cities in order to promote cultural events and religious festivals or to meet in private houses for the singing of religious songs or Bha'ans. This led to the existence of many Bhajan and Satsang groups, which later received official financial help from the various city authorities in order to fund cultural and religious centres and eventually also prayer halls and temples (Mandir).

The first English temple was opened in 1969 in an old house in Leicester. Less than ten years later The Asian Directory and Who's Who listed the addresses of 82 different temples and by now it is estimated that there are at least 100 temples of Hindus in Britain. Most of them are not new buildings but private houses adapted for the purpose, or former churches which were vacant and sold to Hindu communities. The number of temples is still quite small in comparison to the number of religious buildings owned by Sikhs and Muslims who have also built new Gurdwaras and mosques. This difference has several reasons. Besides the less obligatory character of temple ritual in comparison to family ritual there is the difficulty of the complicated installation ceremony (pratistha) necessary to install the main statues for the temple ritual. These statues have to come from India and have to be installed in a traditional way, a difficulty which neither Muslims nor Sikhs have. As soon as the Hindu statues are fully installed, there is also the necessity for the regular presence of a Brahmin priest to conduct the necessary daily ritual. There are only a few Brahmins among the Hindus in England, some of whom take on ritual duties part-time in addition to their main job, but there are also a few Brahmin priests who have been especially brought over from India to serve at certain Hindu temples in a full-time capacity.

The comparatively late foundation of temples is also due to the fact that until the middle of the 1960s the number of Hindus was relatively small in comparison to the Sikhs and Muslims who had already arrived earlier. It would
thus have been very difficult to find the necessary financial means to support Hindu temples. The Hindus from East Africa had already a long experience of founding temples abroad; they knew the necessary organisational structures to administer temples. The growing Hindu communities made great financial sacrifices in order to acquire the necessary buildings to have their own temples. It is often the case that the Hindus from East Africa are mainly responsible for the founding of temples and are still frequently central to the administration of British temples today.

The Gujarati majority and the Punjabi minority celebrate different festivals. The great North Indian festivals of *Divali* (beginning of November), *Holi* (March), *Janashtami* for the birth of Krishna (end of August), as well as *Durgapuja* (October) and *Dussehra* (November) are widely celebrated besides several small religious feast days. The greatest festival for the Gujarati Hindus is *Navaratri*, the festival of the nine nights which falls at the time of *Durgapuja* devoted to the great goddess Durga whom the Gujaratis call Amba or Ambaji. For the *Navaratri* festival a specially decorated shrine is constructed for the goddess, and the community dances around this shrine whilst well-known songs are sung. Women have their own traditional dance whilst the men dance a very well-known vivacious dance (ras) in which they use sticks. Women wear a new sari every night and each evening the festival closes with *Arti*, the traditional light ritual. Frequently the temples are not big enough for these particular festivals so that a school hall is hired in which 500 or 600 people meet every evening during the course of the festival.

The traditional Bengali *Durgapuja* is celebrated less frequently because there are relatively few Bengalis in England. The Bengalis around London and Leicester come together in order to celebrate this festival and finance its considerable cost. In Bradford *Durgapuja* was celebrated for the first time in October 1982 because a wealthy Indian, not a Bengali himself, wanted to bring together the different Bengalis to celebrate this festival. During the summer of 1982 the 'Festival of India' had brought traditional Indian sculptors to England who made a special Durga statue which the Bradford group acquired. A Brahmin priest was called from London in order to undertake the necessary rituals. There was great rejoicing and participants came from as far as Lancashire and Lincolnshire.

In many temples the *Arti* ceremony is performed twice daily. In India it occurs during the time of sunrise and sunset whilst in England this rite is
adapted to the general rhythm of work and therefore is often celebrated at 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.\textsuperscript{7} It is not absolutely necessary to have a Brahmin priest for this rite; especially respected members of the community, sometimes women, can conduct it when no priest is present.

The adaptability of Hindus to new situations is illustrated by the following example. When the priest of the Hindu temple in Leeds had gone to India for several months, his congregation took it for granted that his wife, who knew the traditional ritual best of all, took over all the temple duties. Some orthodox Hindu students who had come from India to Leeds and saw this, were quite surprised and even shocked at this pragmatic solution because the traditional rites going back to the Vedas are not normally conducted by a woman (but it must be added that there are also now several small, religious women's groups in India who perform Vedic rituals). Those temples which have a permanently resident Brahmin priest celebrate once a week or less often the Havan rite. This goes back to the Vedic fire sacrifice but its present form is very much dependent on Arya Samaj practices. As the Hindus have to adapt to the British working week, Havan is now mostly celebrated on Sunday mornings at the same time when the Christian Sunday worship takes place. In some temples there are afterwards language classes and religious lessons for children.

Research about the family life of Hindus in East London conducted by Dr. Bernadette O'Keeffe\textsuperscript{8} showed that Havan can also be celebrated in families where other ceremonies, such as the public reading of the Bhagavad Gita and Ramayana, may be undertaken too in a circle of friends. Different castes can take part in the Havan and this ritual can either be celebrated in a small group or with many guests present.\textsuperscript{9}

The minority situation of Indians requires many adaptations to life in Britain. Only a few of the traditional Hindu samskaras or sacraments are celebrated here. It is mainly marriage and rites connected with death that are regularly performed. Marriages are celebrated in the temples in traditional style and with considerable cost whilst in the case of death the cremation of the body takes place in the crematorium where the traditional rites are performed. It sometimes even happens that Hindus scatter the ashes of their dead somewhere in an English river.

The sociological questionnaires of Dr. O'Keeffe were mainly concerned with the empirical problems of family organisation, marriage and kinship; they
showed that the influence of the caste system is on the whole on the decrease whilst many traditional customs are adapted to the new situation in England. Thus the frequency of the daily puja ritual in families has decreased, especially where women are in full-time work, and visits to temples may be rare whilst the custom to come together in private houses for the singing of Bhajans is on the increase. However, the majority of the families of Dr. O’Keeffe’s sample were Punjabis who are generally considered to be less religiously active than Cujarato. In general one can say that the family shrines and the rites celebrated in the family are not in competition with the rites celebrated at the temple but both activities complement each other in the life of British Hindus.

3. Information about some Hindu communities and groups

Several sociological studies have looked at Indians in general or at particular castes in England but we do not yet possess sufficiently detailed research to give us precise information about the religious practices of the large Hindu communities in London, Leicester or Birmingham. Up to now most information about specific Hindu communities has been collected in either North England or in the Midlands. A pioneering piece of work has been undertaken by Dr. Kim Knott in her doctoral work about Hinduism in Leeds which presents statistical data and analyses the religious practices of the Hindu temple at Leeds. For the neighbouring city of Bradford a similar project is still under way and is concerned most of all with the Sathya Sai Baba sect. Its author, Mr. David Bowen from Bradford College, also organised a conference about Hinduism in Britain in 1979 and published the papers in a book (Hinduism in Britain, Bradford College 1981) which awaits reprinting in revised form. It includes information about Hindu communities in Bradford and Coventry. I shall here mainly rely on the pieces of research undertaken in connection with the Community Religions Project at the University of Leeds and mention some of the results gathered so far.

a) Leeds

In this city of 696,714 inhabitants (according to the 1981 census) the number of Hindus has been calculated to be 2,500 although the immigrants usually assess the figure to be much higher, namely nearer 4,000, but statistical evidence for this cannot be found. About 60% of these 2,500 Hindus are Gujaratis who either have come since 1967 from East Africa or arrived in 1972 as refugees from Uganda, whilst about 30% of the Hindus came directly from the Punjab to Britain. The Punjabi men came originally on their own in order to find work but brought over their families in the sixties. In 1966, they founded the 'Hindu Cultural
Society' and in 1967 the 'Hindu Charitable Trust' which three years later was responsible for the opening of a temple which at first employed a pandit from the Punjab. Later the Gujaratis, who are represented in Leeds through six different castes, became dominant and the second pandit employed at the temple was until 1982 a Brahmin priest who had been called from Baroda in Gujarat. He recently had to return to India for health reasons so that at the moment the temple ritual is celebrated as far as possible by active, elderly and widely respected members of the community.

Dr. Knott has described in detail the temple room which is found in an adapted nineteenth century house. She has also analysed the rites (especially Arti and Havan) from a historical and phenomenological perspective and compiled a liturgical calendar for all the religious events of the year but these details cannot be mentioned here for lack of space.

In South Leeds there is another small temple in a private house which belongs to the Sathya Sai Baba sect which has many followers now among the Hindus in Britain. Most information about this sect has now been collected through research undertaken in Bradford.

b) Bradford

The number of Hindus was estimated in 1977 to be 5,000 but it is certainly greater today through natural increase (according to the 1981 census the total population of this city is 454,198). The number of Hindu Gujarati households is estimated to be at least 1,000.

There are two important Hindu organisations in Bradford besides several smaller groups. Already in 1957 the Gujarati families living then in Bradford, especially those of the two main castes (Patel and Prajapati), got together to form the Bhartiya Mandal in order to celebrate religious festivals, give children Gujarati lessons and found a cultural centre in the town. The second largest organisation is the 'Hindu Cultural Society' founded in 1968; it opened its first temple in 1974 which mainly serves Punjabis. By now the Prajapati caste has formed a separate organisation and has opened its own temple in 1980. In addition, a Gujarati Patel family opened in its house in 1970 a Sathya Sai Baba temple which is said to have been the first temple of this sect in England. Later another house temple was founded by the followers of Jalaram Bapa, a Gujarati saint of the nineteenth century.
In the temple of the 'Hindu Cultural Society' (which possesses separate rooms for social and cultural meetings including marriages and other festivals) there are statues of Radha and Krishna, the main centre of devotion, but there are also images of Shiva, Ganesh, Lakshmi, of the goddesses Sarasvati and Durga, as well as a portrait of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. A local painter from the neighbouring community in Huddersfield gave the temple in 1979 a big wall-painting which shows Krishna and Arjuna and underlines the central importance of the Bhagavad Gita whose illustration is a relatively recent phenomenon.  

In the temple of the 'Hindu Cultural Society' a Brahmin priest is permanently resident. Each Sunday afternoon a small congregation meets between 4 and 6 p.m. in order to sing Bhajans or read together religious scriptures, especially the Ramayana. This meeting always finishes with the Arti rite. This community, as Hindu communities elsewhere, has good contacts with the Hare Krishna movement, mainly consisting of western converts to Hinduism — it has in fact acquired life membership of this movement. It is therefore not surprising that members of the Hare Krishna movement come to visit and perform the Ramlila here. Sikhs, who like most Hindus of this congregation are also from the Punjab, sometimes come to the temple, especially on Sundays, in order to provide the instrumental accompaniment for songs and lead the singing of the congregation. This temple in Bradford, as well as the main temple in Leeds, is frequently visited by school and college groups, as the Hindu communities are keen to foster good relations with other religious groups. They also attempt to convey to a wider public a better understanding of their different religious and cultural way of life.

The Sathya Sai Baba sect follows Sri Sathya Sai Baba, a Guru born in 1926, who considers himself as a reincarnation of the saint Sal Baba from Shirdi who died in 1918. His followers consider him as Avatar, as the divine manifestation of our age, and many praise him for his extraordinary and miraculous powers. The shrine of the Sathya Sai Baba sect is found in two rooms of the house of a Patel family which, like many other families, comes from East Africa. It is impossible to describe in detail here the decoration of this shrine and the regular weekly rituals and annual festivals but at least it may be mentioned that the members of this sect meet here for the singing of Bhajans each Sunday afternoon. Other groups meet at five other houses. In the temple room of the Patel family a meeting takes place every Thursday evening in order to celebrate a weekly puja, which always concludes with the Arti and the giving of prasad. For a long time only about 40 persons attended but the activities of this sect have greatly increased; now about 100 people meet every week.
including many young people. The interest of the young has greatly increased since a young man from another city came here to preach very impressively about his conversion to Sri Sathya Sai Baba. His example inspired a group of young men to undertake a pilgrimage to Sri Sathya Sai Baba in India during the summer of 1982. On their return they showed great religious fervour which finds its expression especially in social activities for the community.

The Shree Prajapati Association, counting about 400 families with 2,000 people, was founded in 1975 as a local branch of a national Gujarati caste organisation which exists today in all the big cities where there are Gujaratis (in Birmingham, Bolton, Coventry, Leicester, London, Loughborough, Luton, Preston, Rugby, Manchester, Walsall and Wellingborough) and their total membership is estimated at 25,000. Bradford possesses one of the most active branches of this organisation and its national secretary lives in this city. In 1980 a former church was bought by the Shree Prajapati Association and by 1982 the organisation had already paid all debts for this building. The former church benches were taken out, a temple shrine was created and Hindu images were introduced until later marble statues were brought over from India and properly installed. Although this is the temple of a caste organisation, it must be stressed that it is open to all Hindus independently of their caste. From the beginning a regular religious programme was organised which consisted mainly of daily puja every evening at 7 p.m. which in the absence of a priest is performed by different members of the community. Sometimes long readings of religious scriptures are undertaken, for example when the temple was opened, the whole of the Ramayana and the BhagavataPurana were recited, whilst in 1981 a non-interrupted reading of the Mahabharata was undertaken, and in 1982 a reading of the much shorter Bhagavad Gita.

c) **Coventry**

In this city of 314,124 inhabitants (1981 census) there are four Hindu temples and four Sikh temples and two mosques. One Hindu temple is mainly for the Punjabis whereas two other temples serve other groups. The main temple is devoted to Sri Krishna and belongs to the Gujarati majority which is estimated to be more than 5,000. Less than half these Gujaratis came directly from India whereas the others came from East Africa. The Sri Krishna temple is open to all castes but the members of smaller castes sometimes travel to other cities to visit temples there. The Sri Krishna temple has been described in detail elsewhere. Here it suffices to mention that it is found in an old school building and that the temple room possesses statues of different gods which were
brought from India and fully consecrated in 1972; four times daily a priest performs the necessary religious ritual.

d) Preston

The first Hindus arrived in 1957. They came almost exclusively directly from Gujarat to Preston whose total population is 143,743 people. Eight years later about eighty families founded the 'Hindu Gujarati Society of Preston' which has considerably grown since then, especially because of the emigration of many Gujarati Hindus from East Africa. In 1978 the number of Hindus in Preston was estimated by a Hindu Community Relations officer to be about 6,000. Such estimates are often too high but it is certain that nevertheless the Hindu population must have grown considerably through natural increase.

Besides the Gujaratis, there is a small group of people from Andhra Pradesh which belongs to the national Andhra Association. About 500 Hindus are members of the Swami Narayan sect, whilst all other Hindus take part in the activities of the cultural centre which was opened in 1975 in an old school. Here cultural and sports activities take place but there is also a prayer hall which is now simply referred to as temple. The devotion of the Hindus is here mainly directed towards Krishna and Radha whose statues were solemnly consecrated in the presence of five Indian Swamis and 7,000 people. Since 1977 the congregation supports also a Brahmin priest who was specially brought from Gujarat and who performs now three times daily the religious ritual in the temple.

Whilst the priest is required for the ritual, he is not necessarily considered to be a spiritual adviser or Guru. Preaching and the interpretation of the scriptures is mostly undertaken by visiting Swamis who come for some time from India. The Hindus in Preston, as Hindus elsewhere in England, have close contact with the congregations in other cities so that a visiting Swami will travel from congregation to congregation and during the course of his visit will address a considerable number of Hindus. The Hindus in Preston have also close contacts with the Hare Krishna movement.

e) The Swami Narayan Sect

This religious group was founded in Gujarat at the beginning of the nineteenth century; its leaders are married ascetics. The sect is mainly found in Gujarat but through the emigration of Indians it is today present everywhere where there are Gujaratis. The 30,000 members in England are mostly Gujaratis from East Africa, especially from Uganda. The Patidar caste is in the majority but other castes are also found among the followers of Swami Narayan. Most members
live in and around London. The Swami Narayan organisation is very centralised but it is divided into several branches dependent on particular Swamis. It is a fast-growing movement which combines partly very traditional and partly reformed theological ideas with some unusual customs (e.g. the very strictly followed separation of women and men for all religious ceremonies) which cannot be described in detail here. The sect has several temples of its own in England, for example in Bolton and Oldham as well as in Cardiff and London, whilst smaller groups meet in house temples elsewhere. The biggest temple so far is in Hendon in North London, the second biggest temple is in Leicester, but at the moment a very large new temple is under construction in London.

In London the sect has organised several large public events for several thousand participants and these have been widely reported in the press. The biggest event so far has been the laying of the foundation stone for the new London temple (said to cost £2,000,000) which will be constructed entirely in Indian style and for which materials as well as workers have been imported from India. Besides the temple itself the building will include a library and rooms for Sanskrit and Gujarati teaching as well as for marriages and cultural activities. What influence this new building and its future activity will have on the further growth of the Swami Narayan sect and on the many Gujaratis in London can only be assessed at a later date.

4. In Dialogue with Hinduism in the Diaspora

The preceding remarks remain necessarily sketchy and incomplete, but at least they give an impression of the diversity of Hinduism in contemporary Britain. Numerically speaking, Hindus are a comparatively small group within the total British population but from the example of this minority we can study and understand many characteristics and problems facing Hinduism worldwide, in the diaspora. I deliberately use the concept 'diaspora', which comes from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, as the presence of Hinduism outside its Indian homeland is a modern development. In the minority situation in which Hinduism finds itself abroad many of its traditional features are being questioned and the faith of particular Hindus has to find new ways of expressing itself. Thus it is not surprising that the main leaders of Hindus in Britain are frequently people who grew up abroad (in East or South Africa, Guyana or elsewhere) rather than in India itself, because it is they who have had already more practical experience in communicating their faith to others and in entering into dialogue with people from other religious and cultural backgrounds.
The diaspora communities abroad are seeking new ways of expressing and describing Hindu religion. For example, for the religious teaching at the temple in Leeds 'The Hindu Catechism' is used, printed in Guyana. Similarly the Hindu organisations in South Africa have produced a volume of Hindu scriptures with commentaries which is specially addressed to congregations of Hindus abroad and is also being used in the West.

The Hindu communities in Britain provide concrete examples of the liveliness and dynamism of Hinduism. This is expressed partly through reform and adaptation to the new situation in the West, but it also has many features of what one might call a 're-traditionalisation' because certain customs are more emphasised here than in India in order to give the relatively small communities stronger coherence. The presence of Hinduism in England also means an enrichment as well as a challenge for people of other faiths, especially for Christians from different churches, amongst whom some are deeply concerned to gain a better understanding and insight into this different form of faith. Some efforts in this direction will be mentioned without being able to give a complete survey here.

Over the last ten years many materials have been produced for religious education in schools, addressed to children of all age groups, in order to make them familiar with the religious beliefs and practices of different groups, especially those from ethnic minorities. This development is primarily the merit of the Shop Working Party on World Religions in Education, founded in 1969, which comprises teachers, lecturers and academics. This group has now a wide-ranging number of publications and here may be mentioned the excellent reference work World Religions: A Handbook for Teachers (ed. W. Owen Cole, 1977, 3rd edition) which includes a detailed chapter on Hinduism, as well as the widely known book on Hinduism (ed. J.R. Hinnells and E. Sharpe) used by students and teachers. The same working group compiles a yearly list of religious festivals for the different faiths, organises courses and conferences as well as study tours abroad in order to promote a closer understanding of Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, etc. For example, in April 1983 a conference was organised on 'Understanding Hinduism' which was chaired by Professor Richard Gombrich (Oxford) and other academics and took place at the West Sussex Institute of Higher Education. Wide-ranging and most helpful teaching materials are found in A Handbook of Hinduism for Teachers edited by Dermot Killingley and others (2nd edition, Newcastle: Grevatt and Grevatt, 1984). A stimulating debate is found in the special issue of the British Journal of Religious Education (vol.6, 1984) entitled "Teaching Hinduism Today".
The very attractive course 'Man's Religious Quest' offered by the Open University contains several elements on Hinduism which are very helpful and stimulating but they are mainly restricted to classical Indian developments and to village Hinduism without making direct reference to the Hindu immigrants living in Britain or to Hinduism outside India. But this course, followed by people from different backgrounds, provides a very good basis for a first understanding of Hinduism, especially as students are encouraged to visit Hindu temples as far as possible and to enter into personal contact with the Hindus living here.

It would require a separate article to analyse the syllabuses of the different educational authorities and show what material they include on different world religions. Many education authorities have produced excellent materials which prepare children for the religious pluralism of British society. Many cities have also a centre for multi-cultural education where teachers can obtain information and resources, and where material can be found about the religious practices of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, etc.

A better inter-religious understanding and dialogue are also the concern of 'The Standing Conference on Interfaith Dialogue', the 'World Congress of Faith' and the 'Anglican Interfaith Consultants' who advise the Archbishop of Canterbury and who organise every two years a 'Lambeth Inter-faith Lecture' in Lambeth Palace. Many Anglican bishops have by now a chaplain for community relations whose task it is to maintain close contact with the different religious minority groups. The British Council of Churches has a special office for this purpose. Besides the Anglican Church many other churches and denominations are active in this area, especially at parish level and in large cities. In Birmingham, where there are a large number of immigrants, a group was formed some years ago called 'All Faiths for One Race' which promotes a better understanding between the different ethnic groups and has published several monographs. Recently it brought out a study about the training of the clergy in different churches. It undertook this enquiry in order to find out how far ministers had been prepared during their theological training for the cultural and religious pluralism of Britain. About \(70\frac{3}{4}\%\) of those questioned had not had any preparation at all and had to collect the necessary experience during their parish work, but about \(90\frac{3}{4}\%\) thought it was absolutely necessary to teach children in schools about other religions. It is certainly very important to give ministers as well as teachers in their training enough preparation for a pluralistic situation in school and society because they are often in a leading position to overcome or counterpart prejudices and to further close human and religious contact and dialogue.
This survey is only of a preliminary nature because the Hindu communities are constantly undergoing change in their relation to the wider society and in their adaptation and re-interpretation of their traditional beliefs and practices, but the research undertaken so far shows very clearly that it is necessary to take up further detailed studies of specific aspects and communities of Hinduism in the British as well as in the world-wide diaspora. Such studies can make an important contribution by providing a solid basis for a better informed religious dialogue as well as by rectifying our image of Hinduism in the West which so far has been very one-sidedly moulded by classical indology but which has now to be deepened and considerably modified through direct contact with and practical experience of Hindus living here.
Footnotes

1. The Community Religions Project was founded some years ago by Dr. Michael Pye (now Professor at the University of Marburg), Mr. W. Weaver and Dr. Ursula King in order to gather data about different religious communities at a regional level. This project has now been expanded and data are being collected, as far as possible, at a national level. They will be published later and are also used for a new course on Religions of Ethnic Minorities in Britain.


8. See note 6.

9. Havan is also described in detail by Dr. Knott (see note 7) in the 4th chapter of her dissertation 'Havan and Arti: Two Temple Rituals'.

11. See note 7.


17. It is perhaps little generally known that different Hindu castes have been organised at a national level in England. The activities are different according to their size but their main function consists in collecting lists of all the members of the caste in England, having details of their family composition, age, profession and education of the children. Besides this, many smaller caste organisations have no other activities except that their members meet once or twice a year whilst the bigger organisations have numerous religious cultural centres in the large cities.

18. In an article of R. Jackson (see note 7).


21. H. Tambs-Lyche, *The London Patidars*, London 1980, page 118, has described the solemn opening of the London Temple of the Swami Narayan sect in June 1970 in the following words: 'A procession was staged, walking from Hyde Park Corner to the temple. The attendance was estimated to be as high as 1,500. A 'temple chariot' in the form of a decorated lorry led the way. Yogiji Maharaj, the present leader of the sect and an incarnation of the founder, led the way. He was followed by a company of monks from Gujarat, dressed, like himself, in orange robes. It was a splendid sight. The 'top leader' was very much in charge of the practical operations. The temple was furnished with chairs painted in gold for the occasion. The building itself, an old church hall, had been painted in blue and orange and stood out in the dark street like a flower among stones. After the official opening, to which all the notables were invited, the people were bussed to an older temple in Camden Town for a free meal.'

22. The current president is Professor Ninian Smart from Lancaster University, and the Vice President is Professor Geoffrey Parrinder from London.

23. The first edition was published in 1972 but since then the volume has been reprinted twice and has been expanded. It is available from The Commission for Racial Equality, Elliot House, 10/12 Allington Street, London SW1E 5EH.


Previous Religious Research Papers included

- Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus in the UK: problems of religious statistics.

All research papers are available on request at made payable to 'The University of Leeds' Community Religions Project, Department of Theology and Religious Studies Leeds, LS2 9JT.