**HM4519 Portfolio - Semester One: Hinduism**

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**Belief and practice**

Contemporary forms of Hinduism, such as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), mirror traditional Hindu forms of worship with offerings of ‘food, water, incense, and light each day’ along with ‘private daily chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra,’ preaching his glories every day. This worship of

Krishna, the God of protection, differs from the predominantly Guru-focused worship of the Swaminarayan tradition.

God and Goddess worship are considered to be the foundations of this polytheistic religion, however Ram Mohan Roy was ‘opposed to ‘idol-worship’, and ‘polytheism’,’ writing in favour of monotheism, ‘using selected Hindu scriptures and Christian Utilitarianism to support his case.’ Roy is often referred to as the father of modern Hinduism, so this shift towards Christian ideology contradicts the beliefs of this tradition and points towards an element of modernisation. Perhaps to maintain and extend their influence in the contemporary and outside of India. Along with these changes ISKCON performs ‘Public worship, processions, and pilgrimages’, within, ‘India’s villages and the big cities of the West,’ this reinforces the argument of adapting to remain relevant and increase the number of devotees.

Changes within Hindu worship have also been caused by the developments in technology, and the covid-19 pandemic. Scripture and pujā have moved online to continue worship of the Gods, Goddesses, Gurus, and Saints and allowing both the devotees and non-devotees access to sacred writings. Scripture is also an integral part of all Hindu sects; the Veda is considered to be ‘revealed [and does] not originate at a particular time in history.’ With Hindu philosophers Adi Shankara (8th century) and Ramanuja (c.1017-

1137CE) who took this belief as the ‘cornerstone for their ideas on the relationship between the divine and humans’, which has been extended into modernity with the remaining importance of scripture for all sects of Hinduism[[1]](#footnote-1).

Despite these differences in beliefs and practice, the beliefs of Samsāra and karma remains a prominent aspect of the Hindu tradition. The poem, Between the Poles of the Conscious by Kabir (1400s to 1500s), describes the mind as having created ‘a swing: Thereon hang all beings and all worlds, and that swing never ceases its swing.’[[2]](#footnote-2) One could argue that this poem describes Samsāra and the unchanging of ātman which is mirrored in the contemporary, with belief in reincarnation and the eternity of the soul and its attempts to achieve maksha. This interpretation of the poem brings focus to the consistency within Hinduism and their core beliefs.

Differences between the considered traditional beliefs and practices, and the contemporary suggest that migration and westernisation of Hinduism with Swaminarayan, Jalaram traditions and ISKCON with growing supporters in the West. However, with the continuation of integral features such as deity worship and offerings, importance of scripture, belief in reincarnation and the karma that affects their rebirth, creates a sense of continuity with adaptations to apply to its contemporary.

**Migration and the diaspora**

Hindu migration began with the ‘trade diaspora’ and it was ‘only in the nineteenth century that substantial permanent South Asian trading communities settled abroad.’ This first wave of migration formed a space for Hindu trade and business in the West and these business and tradespeople became accustomed to a more ‘cosmopolitan lifestyle due to their exposure to other cultures.’ Creating interfaith communities and forming contemporary multifaith countries, with the building of the first Mandir in Nairobi in 1945 and with two Jalaram and around 10 Swaminarayan Mandirs in the UK. These Mandirs represent the inclusion of Indian culture and tradition within non-Hindu dominant countries, and caused adaptation and westernisation of the Hindu tradition, including the formation of ISKCON in New York City, 1966.

Second wave migration consisted of ‘indentured labourers’ to replace former slaves in the 19th century, along with clerks and teachers to ‘serve colonial Governments overseas.’ This wave being a more forced and involuntary move to the West rather than the self-driven ‘trade diaspora’ as part of the ‘colonial expansion system’ with India in the British Empire until 1947. With its focus at the time being on the ‘number of returnees’, and the living and working conditions. Contemporary evaluation focuses on how the ‘reproduction of Indian culture abroad has grown.’, showing consistencies between traditional and contemporary interpretation of the Hindu diaspora and the still existent Hindu communities integrated within communities in the UK with the Bhaktivedanta Manor near to a McDonalds. Showcasing diverse, religious and secular aspects of a community.

Post-Second World War created a third wave of migration with ‘many Muslims migrating from India to East and West Pakistan’ and Hindus from Pakistan migrated to India, this Eastern migration of religious tradition

and culture created an integrated Pakistan and Indian[[3]](#footnote-3). However, ‘under Modi [India] has become dangerous country for Muslims.’[[4]](#footnote-4) This is one of many contemporary examples of conflict and tension between differing traditions in one country/community. After WWII ‘highly educated professionals’ migrated to Europe, the US and Canada from India, to find jobs such as teachers, lawyers, and doctors. With a contemporary revival of this type of Hindu migration with the ‘exodus of many IT professionals.’ Along with migrants finding work as ‘construction workers or housekeepers in the Middle East since 1970s.’[[5]](#footnote-5) all this creates a multifaith community in these countries either leading to conflict or interfaith relations.

This diaspora of the Hindu community has integrated Indian culture within the West and neighbouring Asian countries which has formed healthy interfaith communication, however with its share of conflict and persecution. These three waves of migration have created and formed differences between Hindu beliefs, practices, and philosophies due to Westernisation and the need to adapt in order to remain relevant and survive within modern societies both within India and in other countries.

# Bibliography

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Radio Pakistan. ‘Word must take on impending genocide of Muslims in India, IIOJK: Gregory Stanton’, <<https://www.radio.gov.pk/>> [19/01/2022]

1. Kim Knott. *Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction.* (New York: OUP Oxford, 1998), pp. 61, 10, 67, 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Kabir. *Between the Poles of the Conscious* (c.1400s – 1500s) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Gijsbert Ooank. Global Indian Diaspora: exploring trajectories of migration and theory. (Amsterdam University Pres, ed., 2007), pp.11 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Radio Pakistan. ‘Word must take on impending genocide of Muslims in India, IIOJK: Gregory Stanton’, <<https://www.radio.gov.pk/>> [19/01/2022] [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ooak, pp. 11 -12 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)