

**THE RADHA KRISHNA TEMPLE TRADITION:
A GUYANESE HINDU COMMUNITY IN CAMBRIDGE, ONTARIO**

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A GUYANESE HINDU COMMUNITY IN CAMBRIDGE, ONTARIO**

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine how Hinduism is practised outside its Indian homeland. The focus of the study is the practice of Hinduism in Guyana and the transplantation of this Guyanese version into Canada. Using the postmodern anthropological concept of the "invention of tradition" as the underlying theoretical framework, the study demonstrates how Hindu immigrants in Guyana and their descendants have, over the past several decades, tried to reshape aspects of their traditional Hindu culture and religion to demonstrate in direct and symbolic ways a continuing sense of their Indian identity.

The study examines this development as a two stage process: first, among East Indian immigrants in Guyana and secondly among their descendants who migrated to Canada and settled in and around Cambridge, Ontario. The study was based on field work carried out in a Guyanese Hindu temple, the Radha Krishna Temple at Cambridge. The analysis has revealed that the origin and development of this temple community is a response on the part of Guyanese Hindus living in Cambridge to their present situation as immigrants in Canada. While the multi-ethnic Canadian environment requires them to define a specific sense of Hindu identity, their status as "strangers" or "aliens" in Canada calls for the development of a coping mechanism. As a result, they have formed a community based on a common Hindu religious affiliation.

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INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is the Hindu religious tradition of the Radha Krishna temple of Cambridge, Ontario. The analysis will show that the Hindu tradition of this temple is an "invented tradition." The study will also show that the invention of this tradition was necessitated by the need of Guyanese Hindu immigrants to define and develop a specific sense of Hindu identity in Canada.

In a more broadly considered sense, the study is about the history of Hinduism, its sojourn in the South American country of Guyana and its eventual transplantation into Canada. The study will examine how Hinduism came to be practised in Guyana and other Caribbean countries, its development in Guyana, and its secondary transplantation into Canada. In this study, therefore, we will see how the history of the Hindu religious tradition and the predicament of the Guyanese Hindus as an ethnic unit became entangled. This whole process eventually culminated in the formation of a Guyanese temple community in Cambridge, Ontario.

"The Radha Krishna Hindu Mandir," as the temple is called, is located in the Blair community of Cambridge in Ontario, Canada. The temple has a total membership of between two hundred and fifty and three hundred Guyanese Indian immigrants. The members of the temple community are

mainly working class families. They reside in suburban communities in the neighbouring cities of Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge, and visit the temple weekly to participate in worship and social activities.

The members of this temple community are the fourth generation descendants of East Indian indentured immigrants who migrated from India to Guyana. Their ancestors went to Guyana over a century ago and subsequently settled there after serving their indentureship. Since the mid 1960s, the present generation of Guyanese Indians have been involved in a second migratory process into Canada. These individuals have since 1989 formed the Radha Krishna temple community, a community whose roots in Canada are traced to a small prayer group formed by a pandit in 1975. At this temple, the community meets to practice what might best be described as an "invented" form of Hindu worship which blends Christian patterns of church worship with Hindu temple practices. It is this element of inventiveness in its worship tradition that makes the temple unique and attractive to a curious student of Hinduism. Not only does it mark the temple off as distinct from other Hindu temples, it also represents a modern development in the history of the religious tradition. To understand how this development came about, a brief introduction to the history of the practitioners of the temple's worship tradition is in order. A rise in world demand for sugar in the later years of the eighteenth century boosted sugar production and export from the newly discovered Caribbean, and slave labour

from West Africa constituted the bulk of the labour supply on the sugar plantations (Henry 1994:3). Protests by concerned humanitarian groups, and a downward trend in the profitability of the sugar trade, however, eventually brought this practice of slavery to an end in the mid nineteenth century (Walker 1974:4). Denied a constant supply of cheap labour, plantation owners turned to the practice of indentured labour to supply the workforce on the plantations (Henry 1994:3-5). After experiencing failures with indentures from Europe, China and other islands in the region, plantation owners turned to India to recruit indentured labourers, reputed for their physical strength and suitability for the plantation work (Newman 1964:25; Rauf 1974:25).

Meanwhile, in India a campaign of socio-economic re-ordering embarked upon by the British colonial government had created hardships, especially for poor low caste villagers (Mansingh 1987: 295-296). Unemployment, hunger and starvation exacerbated their already deplorable conditions. In a quest to survive, the villagers had to seek "greener pastures" elsewhere and it was at this time that the indenture programme was introduced (Mansingh 1987:296). Not only did it provide for these villagers ready employment in the Caribbean, but for those who were of low caste, this was an opportunity for them to escape not only poverty but also from the yoke of low caste existence (Singh 1974:4). Thus began the wave of East Indian migration into the Caribbean which was to lead to the beginning of Hinduism as a religion

in this part of the world. In the years that were to follow, Hinduism would become molded by the constraints of the plantation system, and the contempt and derision of the plantation owners in the Caribbean and Guyana (Nath 1970:17). Hindu culture and religion would be difficult to practice in these circumstances because the indentured servants had come from many different Indian villages, caste or sectarian backgrounds and therefore had different religious orientations (Newman 1964:49).

When the indentureship ended, Hinduism was but a shadow of its Indian essence. While a greater part of the tradition was lost, what remained were rituals in nearly obliterated forms (Newman 1964:49). Yet if these people were to exist as a cultural unit in Guyana, which the majority had come to accept as home, there would need to be a common Hindu tradition to symbolise their identity. The way out of this dilemma was for East Indian indentures to "invent" a Hindu religious tradition (Rauf 1974:105-110).

The years following the end of indentureship were thus marked by an invention of a denuded Hindu religious tradition (Rauf 1974:106). As caste, the basic symbol of Hindu social structure, had become totally lost during the years of the indenture and could not be replicated in this inventive process, Guyanese Hindu indentured servants had to exist without one essential characteristic of "Hinduness" (Rauf 1974:107). New forms of the Brahman and pandit offices were, however, reworked. While these had to be fashioned anew,

they retained a symbolic force as continuities of their former traditional Hindu forms and were accorded similar value on that account (Rauf 1974:107). At the same time as their invention was necessitated by the needs of the times, these institutions acquired new meanings and functions and tended to be molded by the influences of their new cultural setting. If the indentureship had any effect on the Hindu religious tradition, therefore, it was to transform its Indian essence.

For subsequent post indentured East Indian generations, the fierce inventive drive of their immediate post indentured ancestors and the yearning to display their Indianess had died down. For this subsequent generation, integration into the larger Guyanese society, Creolization, and the acquiring of western education which often included a conversion to Christianity, were perceived as a means of achieving faster social mobility. These tendencies even became stronger in independent Guyana rife with competition for scarce resources (Smith 1962:139). Thus, first the invented Hindu tradition became subjected to Creole and western acculturalization until its status as Indian became vague and unclear. It was with such unclear and vague Hindu cultural and religious backgrounds that members of the Radha Krishna Hindu temple community arrived on the Canadian cultural scene.

While of East Indian ancestry, this generation of Guyanese Hindus cannot trace their caste backgrounds, nor do they subscribe to caste

ideology. They do not speak any of the Indian dialects. They speak mainly English and a little Creole and had converted to Christianity or practised a vaguely defined form of Hinduism prior to their arrival in Canada.

For these Guyanese Hindu immigrants, the opportunity of immigrating to Canada could be described as a mixed blessing. On the one hand, immigration into Canada afforded them an escape from the political intimidation, racial tension and economic hardship that were the lot of many of them in Guyana, and gave them the opportunity to enjoy more "decent" lives. On the other hand, by immigrating into Canada, Guyanese Hindus became exposed to the vulnerability of their vaguely defined Hindu cultural background. The roots of this problem lay in the Canadian ideology of cultural pluralism which fosters and even necessitates the formation of ethnic groups or communities (Walker 1984:17). Most of these groups serve as support networks, especially for the so-called visible minorities, and a means of protecting cultural identities from the threat of assimilation (Walker 1984:17). Such for example are the closed communities of Chinatown, Little India, Little Italy, and the plethora of ethnic organisations in Canadian cities. It is in the context of this cultural milieu that Guyanese Hindu immigrants to Canada are made to confront the full brunt of their predicament as a group relocating for the second time in history. Having become "hybridized" persons, Guyanese immigrants are faced with the dilemma in Canada of living in a situation of

"limbo" between the East Indian community and the West Indian Caribbean community.

The plight of Guyanese Hindu immigrants was especially exacerbated by the fact that they felt that East Indian immigrants, who had come directly from India tended to regard themselves as of purer Hindu stock. In the face of a supposedly "purer" Hindu identity the Guyanese Hindus were reminded of the ambiguity of their Hindu identity, and sensitized to the need to define a niche for themselves in the multi-ethnic Canadian environment. Their feeling of being alienated was occasioned by a deep inner struggle with the question of identity in the early years of their stay in Canada. This struggle found an expression in their habit of joining one Christian congregation after another in Canada. Nevertheless, in spite of this negative feeling of alienation, Guyanese Hindu immigrants also developed a positive view of themselves as a people with a common historical heritage having to face a common predicament. This feeling resulted in a strong drive to define a unique Guyanese sense of Hindu identity. This identity is clearly distinct from an East Indian identity, and is marked by an absence of caste categories. Necessity, it has been said, "is the mother of invention." In the absence of a clearly defined cultural or religious heritage, the only recourse for the Guyanese Hindu immigrants was to invent a "Hindu tradition" from their Creole, Hindu and Western cultural backgrounds. Hence the creation of the "Radha Krishna Hindu

Temple Hindu tradition." In a process akin to the art of solving a puzzle, the Guyanese Hindu immigrants plucked pieces from the traditions of their local Cambridge environment, their former Christian backgrounds, and the Hindu tradition of India to create a Hindu religion. The enthusiasm and commitment of members to the community exhibited by the members of this temple are indicative of their realization of the crucial need to define their place as a Hindu ethnic unit in multi-ethnic Canada. What is even more intriguing about this temple is the sense of confidence members express about the status of their "Hindu" practices. While from an outsider perspective the temple practices of the Radha Krishna Hindu community might appear to be a less pure or syncretic version of Hinduism, the practitioners themselves are not concerned about questions raised about the "Indianness" of their version of Hinduism. They exude great confidence in the genuineness of their tradition. For them, the Hindu tradition they practice, although an invention, is as genuine as any other Indian religious form, for what is important is not the nearness of the tradition to an Indian original but rather what is workable and practicable for them in Canada.

In the chapters that follow we shall journey with the Guyanese Hindus from their past to the present, bearing witness to their challenges and how they came to terms with them. We shall also follow the Hindu religious

tradition throughout its tortuous historical journey through the experience of the Guyanese.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The thesis is divided into three main parts. Part One comprises the first three chapters. Part Two comprises chapters four, five, six, and seven. Part Three is made up of the last two chapters and the conclusion.

Chapter One is devoted to methodological considerations. In this chapter, I describe my background, my experience of fieldwork and the theoretical framework of the study.

The developments occurring in the Radha Krishna Temple are a part of an emerging trend in Hinduism as it is practised in immigrant communities. For a better understanding of the Guyanese story, we need to place it within the framework of general developments in the history of Hinduism. In Chapter 2, therefore I review briefly the general literature on the practice of Hinduism in non-Indian cultures. This review enables us to place the developments in the temple in a comparative perspective.

The third chapter provides a historical background to the developments taking place in the temple. I examine the Hindu indentureship in Guyana and its effect on the practice of the religion. I also examine how the indentured workers invented their tradition during and after their time of

indentureship. I show then how invented Hinduism became acculturated in subsequent years in Guyana and how by the time the present generation of Guyanese immigrants arrived in Canada, the status of the religion had become vague and unclear and necessitated the invention of a new Hindu tradition as an integrative symbol in Canada.

Chapter Four examines the immigration experience of the members of the temple community in Canada. I describe these experiences from the point of view of the members, with reference to the period of their migration, their reasons for coming to Canada, the trend of the migratory process, and their experiences as immigrants in Canada.

Chapter Five traces the temple to its origins. This chapter is based on accounts recounted by members of the community from their shared memories. On the basis of an analysis of these accounts, I argue that the temple originated as a religious response to a social problem: the quest to define a sense of a unique Hindu identity and to create a network of mutual support for members of the community.

Chapter Six describes the Temple as an institution. In this chapter I describe the physical structure of the temple, its local geographical location and its layout. I also describe the composition of the community, with regards to its demographic characteristics and its organizational framework.

Chapter Seven looks at worship as it is experienced in the temple. In this chapter I show how the community blends other forms of worship into its fundamental Hindu framework.

Chapter Eight is an analysis of the temple's tradition as "invented." Chapter Nine looks at the temple as a symbol of Guyanese Hindu ethnic identity. In this chapter I discuss how the temple functions to reinforce a sense of oneness among members of the community, and how the community redefines, and reasserts its sense of communal identity. Chapter Nine is followed by a Conclusion.

CHAPTER ONE

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is becoming conventional in postmodern anthropology for writers to include details of their personal experiences in the body of their monographs.¹ The logic that seems to inform this practice is the idea that who we are, where we come from and what our experiences are or have been largely inform not only our interests but our insights as well as our interpretations (Kleinman 1991:184-194). One is further of the opinion that this new tradition makes anthropology seem more human and less impersonal, for the researcher too is a human, seeking to understand the ways of others. In keeping with this postmodern tradition I have tried to blend some of my personal experiences before and during the study into my analysis. I therefore find it appropriate to begin with a brief introduction about who I am and why and how I study what I am studying.

Many a student's academic agenda is a product of a lifelong effort to understand a phenomenon that was encountered earlier in life. It may be presumptuous for me to generalize in this way, but for me, at least, this was the case. My interest in the present study stems from the desire to make sense of my early encounter with Hinduism.

I encountered Hinduism for the first time in my teen years. I grew up in Osu, a suburb of Accra, Ghana's capital city. Osu, a coastal location, is noted for its brisk trade and its population of East Indians, who control much of the trade in the capital city. In the immediate neighbourhood of my home was the "Indian Community Center", then an incomplete structure which served as a temple for the Indian community and a handful of Ghanaian followers of the religion. The sight of Ghanaian as well as Indian men and women at worship, and the sound of their drums, bells, singing and chanting was familiar to the neighbourhood. The worship of this group was a part of the sequence of events that occurred every Sunday morning, and their songs became familiar tunes which we often hummed absent mindedly.

At this age, I knew little about India and its religion. I would often wonder what the beliefs of these Hindu religious groups were, how they worshipped and how similar or different their beliefs and practices were from those of African religion and Christianity, religions with which I was more familiar.

My impressions about this group at that time were influenced largely by the stereotyped notions Ghanaians hold about India as a land associated with magic and occult power. As Ghanaian people themselves often resort to magico-religious means to attain certain ends in life, psychic powers believed to be associated with Hindu spirituality hold great attraction for them.

Individuals who claim to have been trained in India and to have acquired mystical powers as a result of that training regularly offer their services to the Ghanaian public, especially in the area of psychic healing. Influenced greatly by the activities of such individuals, many Ghanaians have come to regard Indian religions as expressions of magic or the occult. It was in a similar light that I perceived this Hindu religious group near my home.²

I was also curious about this Hindu group, for reasons that probably have to do with my traditional African background. Occult power is an important feature of traditional African religion. African religion in its various traditions is based upon the belief in a world peopled by a host of supernatural powers (Opoku 1978:8-10). There is also the belief that individuals attain special and extraordinary powers or knowledge and can harness these occult powers for certain human ends. There is a general belief in Ghana that there are grades of occult powers and that these grades vary in accord with the potency thought to be associated with the power. For certain reasons, it is believed by many that special powers or knowledge derived from India are the most potent and the most efficacious. With these ideas in mind, I came to regard the Hindu religious group near my home as a symbol of occult power. I was curious to learn more about the group, especially about their "extraordinary" powers precisely because I knew they were Indian. As members of the group filed past my house on their way, both before and after worship, I would hide behind the

window blinds watching them and wondering who among them possessed the most power or mystical knowledge.

My impression about Hinduism changed in the years of my undergraduate studies as a result of courses I took in Comparative Religion. I had the opportunity during these courses to learn about the religions of India and from then on I began to see Hinduism in a different light. I came to appreciate Hinduism as a respectable spiritual option and was greatly impressed by the richness of Hindu culture and what I see as the great depth of the intensity of Hindu spirituality. I began from that point to develop a serious academic interest in the religion. For me what was once a symbol of the occult in its most potent form became a subject of curious academic inquiry. I began then to reflect on a number of the themes I had observed about the Hindu group in the temple near my home. What began to interest me about this phenomenon during this late contact was the extent to which the local Ghanaian cultural and geographical context had shaped the directions of the religion's development in Ghana. What now interested me was what participation in this form of Hindu worship meant for the Indian and the Ghanaian members respectively.

My current research interest in Guyanese Hinduism thus stems from an old desire to satisfy a curiosity and explore questions regarding Hinduism. Although I am still interested in how Hinduism is practised, my focus is now

more anthropological and concerns how Hinduism develops as a religious tradition in non-Indian cultures and what it means to the different groups involved.

The specific focus of this thesis is attributable to my background in a different sense. I am African, a Ghanaian by birth and nationality, but also a Christian by religious persuasion. In that sense my religious self is the product of an intercultural encounter, and I am in a sense a member of an invented Christian tradition.

In spite of its Western origin, Christianity as a religion is now rooted in Ghana and has taken into itself so many of the Ghanaian values and practices that it has assumed a Ghanaian identity. In this regard, the Christian religion of Ghana has been recreated and redefined over the decades to suit the Ghanaian cultural situation. Nevertheless, among its Ghanaian followers, the religion retains its status as Christianity and is not thought to be a different branch of the faith. In essence, Ghanaians believe that the meaning of Christianity can be reinterpreted from context to context. From that background, I approach the study of Hinduism and its practice in other cultures with similar assumptions in mind. Like Christianity in Ghana, Hinduism has over the year been transplanted to other cultures, and I assume it is undergoing a steady process of recreation as a result of these intercultural encounters. What form this process of recreation is taking, who the perpetrators of this recreation are,

why this process is necessary in alien cultures, what new forms of Hinduism are emerging and how they are being defined by the religions' practitioners are the issues I am concerned with in this study. My encounter with the reinvention of Christianity in Ghana provides me with a model to draw on for insights in explaining a similar phenomenon occurring in Hinduism.

To conclude I will say that a childhood encounter with Hinduism, an old curiosity to know more about the religion, a heritage of Ghanaian ideas about Hinduism, a cross cultural encounter and more importantly my African background all help to inform my insights in this study.

THE FIELDWORK

An aspect of this study involved field research. The aim of the fieldwork was to collect data on members of the Radha Krishna temple, their religious practices and their history as an immigrant group in Canada. Much of the data for this thesis was collected during the fall semester of 1994 and part of winter 1995. The fieldwork materials were collected through participant-observation and interviews. I also consulted temple documents, files, magazines and books in the temple's library.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Participant observation for this thesis involved making trips to the temple. I visited the temple once every other week at the beginning of the study. These visits became less frequent as the study progressed. My trips were made either on Sundays to attend worship, or on Fridays to attend the hymn rehearsal sessions of the choir and band.

During my visits much effort was made to observe and understand the significance of the rituals for the members and to establish rapport with them. During the Sunday visits, I participated in worship and in the communal meals with the members. I also had the opportunity to be part of a festival celebration in October 1994. Observations made during these visits were recorded in a field note book that I carried along. During the Friday visits I would normally hang around with members of the temple and engage them in conversation. In this way I was able to establish good rapport with the members and to make some friends who became my regular informants.

On occasion, I would join members in their after worship "chats." I had observed a tendency among members to converse in groups, and felt that joining such conversations would be a good way of learning more about members' personal views and experiences. In order not to seem as if I was merely eavesdropping on them, I tried to be part of the chats, especially when the topic was familiar to me. My status as an immigrant in Canada facilitated

my participation in some of these conversations in that it provided me with experiences to share whenever such issues cropped up during conversation. I found these group chats very helpful in a number of ways. First, it was a good method of supplementing information obtained from my interviews. Members expressed their thoughts more freely during these chats and would talk about their daily experiences, about how they were feeling that day, the day's sermon, their work places, their friends and relatives and sometimes about Guyana. These chats gave me ideas about the members' personal concerns and opinions on issues, and about their experiences as immigrants. They also constituted a good way of learning about the social significance that members attach to the temple.

INTERVIEWS

The aim of the interviews was to collect information on members' views on temple worship, their experiences as immigrants, their religious experiences, their social status, where they work, when they immigrated to Canada, and the history and origin of the temple.

The interviews were conducted mostly during my visits to the temple. These interviews were conducted at any time it was convenient, that is, during worship, during the communal meal, while we were taking off our jackets or

fetching them from the closet room, or while I was being given a ride to the bus terminal.

Interviews were mostly informal and unstructured in that questionnaires were not used. I was guided by an interview guide which included a series of questions covering the range of topics I was interested in. The duration of the interviews varied according to who was being interviewed, when the interview was being conducted, and the specific day of the visit. The longest interviews lasted from forty minutes to about one hour, and were conducted mostly with the leaders and the priest on days when they were not very busy in the temple. These interviews were formal and open ended. Shorter interviews often lasted about twenty minutes or less and were mostly conducted with lay members during or just after worship. Many of these short interviews were very informal and took the form of casual conversations.

I made a number of follow-up interviews too. These were mostly by telephone, and were for purposes of seeking clarification on issues we had discussed sometime earlier in the temple.

The kinds of questions I asked members depended on who I was talking to. In my interviews with the leaders, priests or founding members of the temple I asked them questions about the origins, history, and the teachings of the temple. Interviews with lay members delved more into personal and social issues, such as: the frequency of members' attendance, how they felt about the

group, and what impressions they had about how they worshipped and the practice of Hinduism generally.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FIELD

This study began with much frustration, tension and anxiety. First of all I was frustrated from the beginning by the lack of adequate information on the development of Hinduism in Guyana. The history books on Guyana hardly mentioned anything about the Hindu religious tradition, though they do have quite detailed information on the indentureship.

I began to panic when on consulting book after book all I came up with were scanty pieces of information relating directly to my topic. I was determined to go on and resolved that my recourse was to draw inferences on the basis of the little information available on other Caribbean countries.

Second, I had serious concerns about whether my presence doing fieldwork in a Hindu temple would be accepted. The main reason for this concern was my ethnic background. I thought my African background, especially my physical features might create some difficulties. Being dark skinned I assumed I would be considered low caste among Hindus, and began to wonder if I would be considered "pure" enough to be permitted into a Hindu temple. I had fears that even if the leaders consented to my proposal, some

members of the temple might feel resentful of my presence among, them let alone agree to be interviewed by me.

Thirdly, my other concern had to do with matters of methodology or procedure. What strategy was I going to employ in collecting the data? What questions was I going to ask? How was I going to frame them in such a way that would not make them sound offensive? How was I going to conduct myself in the field? The more I thought about these issues, the more I was convinced I could do little about them.

I still do not know whether the tension and anxiety I felt at the beginning is a normal feeling of researchers about to go into the field, or was a unique personal experience due to my "alien" status in Canada. I wonder why I have hardly come across descriptions of such experiences in fieldwork accounts. Whatever the case, to borrow a North American expression, "I had butterflies in my stomach" as I started. Eventually I resolved to go by Warren's (1988) advice to simply "go into the field, live and think and write" (Warren 1988:86).

Astonishingly my entry into the field was easier than I had anticipated. I called the priest of the temple on the telephone, introduced myself as an African student of Hinduism, and informed him about my intentions to study his temple for a thesis. To my surprise, the priest consented to my proposal. During the first conversation, however, I was taken aback when he

referred to the temple as a "church." From all the literature I had read on Hinduism, and in my encounters with the Hindu groups in Ghana, the term "temple" or "Mandir" was the term used when referring to the place of worship. "Church" seem to me to be more a Christian than Hindu term but, of course, anyone can use it.

Thus after making the call to the priest, I found myself with a new set of questions. What kind of Hindu religious group was this? Why might they refer to the temple as a church? Was this in any sense a Christian-Hindu group? As I reflected on these questions the realization began to unfold that maybe I had stumbled upon my first important clue to the understanding of the phenomenon I was about to study. The idea that there might be some sort of Christian influence on the practice of the religion began to dawn on me. My suspicion was realised later during the study.

I made a special effort to develop my "self presentation" (Shaffir and Stebbins 1991) before entry into the field. I decided I was going to play a "naive and very eager to learn" role in the temple, honestly declaring my lack of knowledge about the practical aspect of the religion's practice and humbly submitting to my respondents' explanations. As I reflect retrospectively on the fieldwork process I think this strategy was the key to its success. The leaders and members not only admitted me into the temple willingly, but always went a little further in helping me. I was always informed whenever there was a special

programme in the temple, and was always welcomed there. Members always seemed eager to be interviewed. They volunteered information on practices that they felt might not be familiar to me and always encouraged me to ask questions. Members also volunteered willingly to give me rides to the bus terminal or to pick me up from there whenever it was convenient. I soon realized how unfounded my initial fears were. The temple members' interest in my study was obvious and that in itself was gratifying. Even as I try to write up what I have learnt from them, I cannot help but marvel at the way these people could be so nice to a stranger.

There were difficult moments however. During the study I had a persistent sense of guilt throughout. This guilt stemmed from the feeling that for all the wealth of information that I got from them and for all their hospitality I was in no position to give anything in return. I did express my gratitude verbally each time I got some form of help, and always contributed some money during the offertory, but I always felt these were never enough. I still feel the same today.

I also had a hard time explaining to members what it was that I was doing. I was often confronted with questions such as, "What are you doing this research for?" "Why are you studying us?" "You mean to say you came all the way from Africa to study Hinduism in Canada?" "Why not go to India?" I sometimes did overhear comments such as "he says he is studying us."

Questions and comments such as these embarrassed me and I found myself trying to explain my thesis and why I was interested in their temple again and again. To say the least, I felt awkward having to do this.

Another difficulty concerned transportation to and from Cambridge and Hamilton. As I do not have a car of my own I had to rely on a bus. Not only was this costly, considering my rather meagre resources as a student, it was inconvenient especially on Sundays. On Sundays the bus bound for Cambridge left Hamilton late in the mornings, with the result that I often missed a part of the worship in the temple. On the days that I visited the temple in the evenings, I was forced to hurry through with my interviews in order to catch the last bus to Hamilton. Thus I always had the feeling that I missed something important, either because I went to the temple too late or left too early. This, however, gave me an excuse to call members on the telephone in such instances, and it also gave those taking me to and from the bus terminal a sense that they wanted all the more to help with the research.

One of my greatest challenges was the problem of determining when I had gathered enough data to start analysing, for each time I visited the temple I came across some new discovery and felt compelled to explore it further. In fact even while writing out the thesis I always had the feeling that I had excluded certain relevant details. These problems notwithstanding, I enjoyed the friendship of members of the community. I came away with the idea that the

fieldwork process is- in addition to its academic purpose- a cultivation of friendships, some of which last. I still often call to chat with respondents. I enjoyed also the flexibility of the fieldwork process. I realised the need to sometimes abandon some of techniques I learned in methodology courses. There seems to be no specific way of doing field work. What methods or strategies one adopts depend so much on the circumstances of the research. Thus, besides getting acquainted with the most up to date techniques, creativity and adaptability are essential. It also proved very helpful in my case to allow the subjects of the research to play an active role in the entire process. For the most part I allowed them to do more of the talking while I only directed the conversation with my prompts. Also I relied more on their guidance in the field. After all I was a student of their world and it was they, not me, that the study was about, and in this case the leaders of the community knew better when interviews would be considered appropriate and what tone would establish good conversation with the people. In conclusion, looking back at the whole field work process I will agree with Peacock (1986:55) that "field work is a rite of passage" and an "initiation ritual." For me, this statement holds, though in a slightly different sense in that I am not entirely new to fieldwork, having gone through the "ritual" before. Doing field work in alien cultures is, however, a new experience. In my situation, I was confronted with two alien worlds. On the one hand is the unfamiliar Guyanese Hindu world. On the other hand, the setting of

the field work, Canada itself, is also a new world for me. The challenge of having to perceive reality from the viewpoint of Guyanese Hindus, expressing this world in a language of which I am still a student, while at the same time learning to overcome challenges posed by the sophistication of western culture and technology are transforming experiences for me. While I cannot be certain about the specific transforming effects of this experience, having at least gone to the field and come back, I will say I have been reborn and with new insights.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study was begun with no specific theoretical concept in mind, as the aim was neither to test nor to confirm any given body of theoretical formulations. I proceeded to the field with a number of broad and general questions, and hoped to come upon ideas for conceptual analysis during the course of the study.

A number of themes began to emerge as I interviewed the lay members and leaders of the Radha Krishna Hindu worshipping community, listened to the members' conversations, and participated with them in their activities during worship and at other social gatherings. The purpose of this section is to indicate what the main themes are, and review the conceptual frameworks that seem to undergird these themes.

THEMES

Two main themes emerged consistently in the course of the my interviewing and observations in the temple. The first of these is the desire of members of the Radha Krishna Temple to belong to a group of people with a shared ethnic identity (Guyanese Hindu), and to preserve the cultural and religious features which define that identity. Evidence of this theme ranges from the great significance the members attach to the geographical location of the temple, the care with which they define their mutual social obligations, and other views expressed by members.

The temple is situated at a focal point of the three cities of Waterloo, Kitchener and Cambridge. This location is considered significant by members because it is thought to provide a point of convergence for all the members of the Guyanese Hindu community in this area.

Secondly, members regularly refer to the temple as their "home" and to themselves as a "family". They define their routine weekly visits to the temple in terms of a "process of keeping the group together." They also provide a strong multi-generational emphasis by saying that the temple helps to "teach the kids about their traditions."

Through the regular practice of worship and the performance of rituals, the temple provides a spiritual environment in which to practice their customs, traditions and beliefs on a routine basis, and to define their Guyanese

Hindu identity. "Hinduism" for this kin-based Guyanese community clearly serves as a symbol of their unique Guyanese Hindu ethnic identity. The temple in this connection serves as the venue for defining and reasserting this identity, and for transmitting its values to younger generations of Guyanese Hindus in Canada.

The second theme that emerges as central to this study is the idea of religious invention. Worship in this temple is Hindu in a very general sense. The temple's deities, the ritual enactments, and the scriptural texts and hymns are taken from traditional Hindu practice. Hindu words, although quite corrupted, are used to refer to the different parts of the ritual. On the other hand, Christian forms of worship and patterns of church organization seem to define the overall framework of worship.

Worship is congregational in style, and takes place at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning. Many worshippers refer to worship as "going to church," and the "sermon" is the central feature of worship. In addition to borrowing from these two traditions, the worship is innovative and one observes practices that seem to be improvisations made in order to accommodate temple practice to the unique needs of the members of the worshipping community. "Hinduism" might be said to provide the foundation for this religious system, but it then develops its own answers to a variety of questions defined by the social setting

of the community. This process leaves one with the impression that the Radha Krishna Temple practices an invented form of Hinduism.

THE CONCEPTS

In developing these two main themes, two concepts will need to engage our reflection. These concepts will be analysed on their own, and will also be examined in terms of how they interact as they provide the framework for understanding the community's activities as parts of a coherent whole. The concepts are, the creation of ethnic identity and the "invention of tradition."

We turn our attention to the first major concept, that of ethnic identity. This thesis will attempt to understand the social function of the Radha Krishna temple as a symbolic focus for Guyanese Hindu ethnic identity in Canada. The thesis will develop the concept of ethnicity, and seek to explain the role of religion in reinforcing ethnic sentiments among immigrant groups. There would seem to be a primordial human instinct to want to affiliate with persons like oneself in the formation of groups. Some groups are formed on the basis of a similarity in physical characteristics, or cultural traits such as language, kinship, race, or their place of origin (Herberg 1989:6; Royce 1982:19). The term "ethnicity" defines the "shared sense" or "feeling" of

oneness or "peoplehood" that characterises such groups (Rauf 1970:109; Gordon 1964:24). According to Fitzpatrick (1966) an ethnic community is:

a group of people who follow a way of life or patterns of behaviour which mark them out as different from the people of another society in which they live or to which they have come. They... have generally come from the same place, or...they speak the same language, probably have the same religious beliefs. They tend to "stick together," to help and support each other (1966:6).

According to this definition, commonalities among people, their distinctiveness from others and a shared sense of mutual obligations towards one another are the marks of ethnicity.

Unlike the ethnic community which is made up of individuals, the ethnic feeling (that sense of belongingness) is a social form or a process. In describing the dynamics of this feeling Isijaw (1990) identifies two aspects: its outward expression on the one hand and its manifestation in more subtle forms (1990:36). The former embraces a demonstration of such overt traits as the speaking of particular languages, sticking to cultural "traditions" and taking part in ethnically specific concerted activities (1990:36). Activities such as patronising ethnic religious groups or educational institutions and participating in ethnic based associations are also ways in which ethnic identity is outwardly expressed (Isijaw 1990:36). Internally, ethnic sentiments are expressed in more subtle forms such as subscribing to specific culturally accepted norms,

ideologies, or beliefs (1990:36). Following the above definitions, I describe Guyanese Hindu immigrants in Canada as an ethnic group. As a people, Guyanese Hindus, have all emigrated to Canada from a common source, namely Guyana. They descend from a common East Indian ancestry, share similar physical as well as cultural traits, and subscribe to similar religious as well as philosophical ideals and participate in cultural activities as a unit. What further marks them out as a distinct group from the East Indians who immigrated directly from India, as this study will show, is their shared sense of history as indentured labourers in Guyana. It is on this history that their entire predicament in Canada hinges. In the chapters that follow I will show that this historic experience defines a unique Guyanese Hindu identity and lies at the root of the community's project to invent a Hindu tradition.

One trend of postmodern times is the increase in the rate of interaction between cultures. While this postmodern development can be attributed to improvements in trade, cultural relations and an expansion in international communication (Royce 1982: 108), political conflicts and economic hardship are also forcing people to leave their homes for safer and more stable regions of the world.

While people move more than ever before, there still are major problems faced by immigrants in the process of adjusting to new social situations in the host cultures (Royce 1982). Scholars have enumerated

problems such as culture shock, racism, the antagonistic attitudes of host cultures, the immigrants' feeling of rootlessness in the host culture, and the threat of assimilation as attendant to the migratory process (Henry 1983; 1994; Mol 1986; Royce 1982; Srivastava 1983).

In the face of these problems, there is usually a felt need among immigrants to create in-group support networks, and religion is one of the most important factors helping to consolidate these group networks (Mol 1986; Royce 1982:277). Religion helps sustain a group's ethnic feelings, and also creates avenues in which members of immigrant communities are able to socialize with each other (Knott 1987:161; Royce 1982:227).

Royce describes how the threat of cultural assimilation, and the subsequent fear of losing ones' native cultural values work together to heighten the immigrant's concern with protecting his or her cultural values (Royce 1982:134). Immigrants revitalize their traditional religion in order to nourish and reinforce the cultural values upon which their ethnic identities depend (Royce 1982:134). Royce's point is that the function of religion as an integrative cultural symbol becomes more vital among the immigrant groups which feel the strongest need to sustain ethnic sentiments.

I argue that while scholars of ethnicity assert that religion reinforces ethnic sentiments by facilitating interaction among members of the ethnic community many of them do not explain what in religion enables it to play this

function successfully. The fact that religion provides a venue for the interaction of members of immigrant communities is not in doubt, but in my opinion it is not simply enough to assert that religion provides a venue for the interaction of members of immigrant communities. Interaction among immigrants could be facilitated in a number of ways other than through religious activities. The question therefore should be what is there in religion that makes it the most common means of reinforcing ethnic feelings among immigrant groups? Why is it that immigrants, even those who before immigrating might have taken religion for granted, tend to become more religious on their arrival in the host culture?

In this study we shall see why the Guyanese Hindus turned to religion as a symbolic focus of their ethnic identity. I will argue that religious activities in the temple do not simply facilitate the regular interaction of members of the community but that religion as the important unifying symbol is ideally suited for the creation, shaping and sustaining of the community's identity.

I subscribe to Geertz's anthropological view which sees religion as having an "intrinsic double aspect, being both a "model for" and a "model of" culture (Geertz 1973:93). Drawing on Geertz's insights, I argue that Hinduism both embodies the values and norms of Hindu culture and gives "expression" to them (Geertz 1973:95). For members of the temple community, Hinduism embodies the values of a specific Hindu identity-the Guyanese Hindu identity. In

this connection Hinduism plays a crucial role in the transmission of Hindu cultural values to Guyanese Hindu immigrants who not only face the threat of assimilation into western culture, but need to develop a unique sense of their Hindu identity. For them, the religion is vital in reviving Hindu traditional values, which are gradually fading away among Guyanese Hindus.

In its "model for" role, religion conditions, directs and guides individuals by "inducing" the appropriate "dispositions" to specific situations (Geertz 1973:95). In the context of the present study, I will show that through the temple's group singing, and their participation in communal meals and festival celebrations, a strong feeling of communal solidarity is reinforced among members, which enables them to face challenges as immigrants. In times of stress which form part of the process of living as immigrants and therefore marginal people in Canada, it is the group's show of solidarity and the teachings of the religion which cushion individuals.

In a nutshell, one of the attempts of this study is to demonstrate how the Radha Krishna Hindu temple functions as a symbol of Guyanese Hindu identity. In this study, the Guyanese Hindus are taken to be a single ethnic group within Canadian society. In spite of their very diverse Hindu ancestral backgrounds (because their ancestors came from different regions and castes in India), the immigrants from Guyana are bound together by a common history of indentureship, and to a lesser extent by cultural attributes acquired from the

Caribbean region. Guyanese Hindus constitute a variant of East Indian Hindu identity, but as their experience in Canada has shown them, it is a clearly distinct variant. I will argue that the Radha Krishna temple has become one of the most important venues for the reasserting of this identity, and its importance grew as the ethnic identity of the group in Canada developed. The temple community now sees itself as a central voice for the transmission of the values of this Hindu identity to subsequent generations of Guyanese Hindus to be born in Canada. I will argue that the intensifying of this ethnic concern comes from the fact that the Guyanese Hindus of Canada are conscious of their unique ethnic situation as a twice displaced group. Because the culture of Guyanese Hindus combines Hindu and Caribbean attributes, Guyanese Hindu identity has an unclear status in the social setting of Canada. The Guyanese Hindus have found during their years in Canada that they are not able to identify with either the Caribbean or East Indian ethnic communities who arrived in Canada at much the same time. Hence there is the need for them to invent an independent Guyanese Hindu identity which uses an invented Hindu religious tradition as its cultural symbol.

We turn now to the second theme, the, "invention of tradition." Hinduism in the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple can be understood as an "invented tradition." The concept of "invented tradition" has been the focus of postmodern studies in history and anthropology (Cannadine 1983; Hobsbawm

1983; Kessing 1989; Clifford 1988; Ranger 1983). In this study, I draw mainly on the concept as it has been defined and developed by Hobsbawm.

Hobsbawm (1983) defines an "invented tradition" as:

a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past (Hobsbawm 1983:1)

To express Hobsbawm's definition in lay terms, "invented tradition" refers to a set of societal norms, institutions and practices that have been deliberately or inadvertently re-established by a community which seeks to forge a link with its past history.

The notion of "invented tradition" is not interchangeable with that of "custom," for whereas "customs" (routine practices of daily life or cultural events) are perceived as constantly changing, "invented traditions" are expected by the inventors to be perceived as unchangeable (Hobsbawm 1983:2-3).

"Immutability" is thus a crucial element in an "invented tradition". The "old" tradition is thought of as providing a model for the invention of the "new" one. This means that, even though a tradition is said to be "invented" it is given the same old symbolic value, function, force or meaning held by the old tradition (Ranger 1983:254-255).

Invented traditions are attempts at perpetuating norms or institutions supposedly rooted in the past in order to deal with emerging social situations

(Hobsbawm 1983:2). In this connection invented traditions tend to give the impression that the traditions thus invented have remained just as they were in the past. As Cannadine notes of the maintenance of the "pageantry" of the British monarchy in an application of the concept:

...the ceremonial is now splendidly performed so much so that observers have assumed that this was always the case (Cannadine 1983:102).

Cannadine's use of the verb "assume" underscores the fact that "inventions" are simply pretensions but which foster in the participants a deep sense of psychological comfort from their attachment to their past traditions. As Hobsbawm notes, the continuity that the traditions seek to establish is simply 'make believe' or "factitious" (Hobsbawm 1983:2).

It is important in Hobsbawm's view to maintain the distinction between norms or institutions which develop as a result of "routine" practice, and those that are self consciously invented (Hobsbawm 1983:3). "Routine" practices or "conventions" are not really "inventions" because they are designed to serve specific pragmatic ends and are not imbued with the additional symbolic significance that invented traditions have (Hobsbawm 1983:3). It is important that the tradition thus invented have deep symbolic or ideological value for the inventors (Hobsbawm 1983:3).

Two factors heighten a community's predisposition to invent tradition (Hobsbawm 1983:4). First, when radical or drastic changes in society destabilize the social basis of existing norms and practices, new conditions emerge for which the old traditions might not be suitable (Hobsbawm 1983:4-5; Ranger 1983:211-263). As the existence of communities depend on their traditional institutions and norms appearing to be relevant it then becomes imperative for the leaders to come up with new traditions.

Second, when an old tradition becomes irrelevant or when its custodians have died off, it becomes necessary to invent a new one (Hobsbawm 1983:4-5). In these situations, the invention of tradition occurs as a response to social change. Inventing of tradition is really a process of cultural rejuvenation.

Hobsbawm describes the functions of invented traditions as of three kinds (Hobsbawm 1983:9). As a package of cultural symbols, some traditions are invented to serve as symbols of a group's identity (Hobsbawm 1983:9). This allows us to see the function of invented tradition as an integrative symbol and it clearly establishes a link between the invention of tradition and group identity. Trevor-Roper (1983:15-41) demonstrates the invention of a "highland tradition" by the Scottish as an identity symbol and a sign of resistance against the British. In this thesis I argue that, both in Guyana and Canada the function of the "invented Hindu" tradition is predominantly of this type. Invention of the

Hindu tradition in these contexts must be looked on as a communal project embarked upon in response to the need for a group identity.

Invented traditions also function to set up new traditional offices or practices, and/ or reinforce already existing ones by placing an authoritative cultural stamp on them (Hobsbawm 1983:9). Thirdly, traditions are invented with a view to aiding in the transmission of certain cultural values or norms and other symbolic cultural forms to subsequent generations (Hobsbawm 1983:9). As we shall see in this study these three functions of "invented" traditions are inextricably connected and often "overlap" (Hobsbawm 1983:9).

A great deal of the discussion on invented traditions has focused on their impact within the socio-political sphere (Cannadine 1983; Clifford 1988; Hobsbawm 1983; Kessing 1989; Ranger 1983; Trevor-Roper 1983). Proponents of the concept have sought to demonstrate how traditions are invented and also how the invented traditions function as culturally integrative socio-political symbols (Cannadine 1983: 101-64; Clifford 1988:277-345; Hobsbawm 1983:1-15; Ranger 1983:263-309). In a study based on societies in the Pacific, Keesing (1989: 19-42) demonstrates how natives rework past traditions as symbols of resistance against their colonisers. The concept, however, seems useful in a broader sense as well, and helps to explain the human adaptive response to novel situations in all domains of life. In this study I will adopt the concept to help explain a development within a religious tradition - the Hindu religious

tradition. This study will attempt to show that Hinduism as it is practised in the Guyanese context is an invented religious tradition. Hindu immigrants to Guyana lost much of their religious traditions as a result of their migratory experiences and the severe restrictions of the indentureship period. To exist in Guyana as a cultural unit when the indentureship ended, Hindu immigrants invented a version of their lost Hindu traditions and institutions. This invented Hindu tradition served as a symbolic cultural integrative tool for the Hindu immigrants to Guyana. The process of inventing the Hindu tradition is being taken up again today by a fourth generation of the initial Guyanese Hindus in the Radha Krishna Hindu temple at Cambridge, Ontario. This present process must be understood as an adaptive response on the part of this generation of Hindu immigrants to their new social and cultural situation in Canada. Heavily acculturated by both Caribbean and Western cultural values, this generation is literally "fashioning out" a Hindu religious tradition to serve as a symbol of their Hindu ethnic identity. In doing this they are following their ancestors in Guyana whose adaptive skills were evident in the invention of the Hindu tradition they undertook at an earlier date.

In this study I apply the concept of "invented traditions" to contexts where there is extensive cross cultural encounter. I argue in discussing the practice of Hinduism in Guyana and Canada, that local cultural elements tend to be blended into the Hindu religious practice, and eventually become

indistinguishable parts of a "Hindu" religious tradition. In this way newer inflection of meanings become attached to earlier Hindu concepts, norms, and institutions, and in the process, a new version of Hinduism is invented in the context of these intercultural encounters. The development of newer forms of the Brahman and Pandit institutions, for instance, new forms of Kali worship, and the institution of The "Katha" (sermon) within the temple ritual are but a few of the features of this newly invented Hindu tradition. In these developments it will be seen that the inventors have drawn on the symbolic force of the "old" Hindu tradition to make these new inventions effective. It will also be seen, especially in the temple's activities, that the goal of inventing a Hindu tradition is to inculcate into members traditional Hindu values as well as to transmit these values to subsequent generations in Canada.

Diverging somewhat from Hobsbawm's perspective, anthropologists argue that, because traditions are merely products of the ongoing cultural process of inventing, it makes no sense to talk about an authentic tradition or identity (Clifford 1988; Handler 1986; Handler and Linnekin 1984). Handler and Linneken, argue that the authentic/unauthentic dichotomy can have no meaning from the anthropological point of view (Handler and Linnekin 1984:273-289). They argue that there is therefore no such thing as a "genuine" or a "spurious" tradition (Handler and Linnekin 1984:288). The genuineness of a tradition rests completely on how its bearers interpret or define it, and not on its nearness to a

certain source or "past" supposed to be pure (Handler and Linnekin 1984:286). Authenticity is defined in relation to the "present." It is "self-defined" and self "assigned" (Handler and Linnekin 1984:286).

Handler and Linneken also challenge Shil's (1981:162-163) idea that an immutable essence in tradition survives the dynamism that underlies phenomenal existence (Handler and Linnekin 1984:274). In their view there is no such "essential core" or "persisting identity", as the essential core is equally caught up in the flux (Handler and Linnekin 1984:274). Invented traditions retain their authenticity in the minds of the inventors in spite of constant "reinterpretation" (Handler and Linnekin 1984:274).

Handler and Linnekin therefore question the determinism that underlies conventional understanding of authenticity. This understanding stresses nearness to the "pure", "pristine" or the "unadulterated" as essential to authenticity (Handler and Linnekin 1984:281). On the other hand their argument underscores the significance of the insider or practitioner perspective as a crucial element in defining the authenticity of a tradition.

I do not totally share this "liberal" approach of Handler and Linneken, which portrays authenticity in a totally subjective way. I view this as an extreme position, as it could place the authenticity of tradition at the mercy of totally arbitrary definitions. Following this line of argument to an extreme any modern Guyanese Hindu practice could be defined as "Hinduism."

Nevertheless, Handler and Linnekin's argument is helpful in gaining an understanding of the practice of Hinduism in the Radha Krishna temple. Insofar as this study treats the Hindu tradition as an "invented" tradition, we are trying from an anthropological point of view to avoid any questions about its authenticity or genuineness. Hinduism as it is practised in the Radha Khrishna Hindu temple can only be defined by the worshippers. The focus of my discussion will be on these participants and their understanding of Hinduism. In this perspective, the thesis will show that Hinduism as it is practised in the Radha Krishna Hindu temple has as much force and meaning as Hindu religion practised in any other cultural form. For the people who worship in this temple, being "Hindu" has a meaning which they consider quite different from being "Indian" or being "Indian Hindu". They do not consider that the Hindu practice of India is a standard for them. What best suits their purposes in the present cultural context is what matters for them, and they do not seem concerned about the nearness of their religious practices to what is considered to be proper Hindu tradition in India. This leads to complications for them when they are in touch with recent immigrants from India, but in an anthropological context it poses no problem. I will define the Hindu tradition of their temple just as members themselves define it.

In conclusion, the thesis provides a case study of Hobsbawm's concept of the invention of traditions. It demonstrates the invention of the Hindu

religious tradition in two contexts of intercultural encounters, first in Guyana and now in Canada. The thesis builds on Hobsbawm's concept to show how intercultural encounters shape the human inventive process. As we shall see from the developments in Guyana and in the Radha Krishna Temple, alien cultural elements become incorporated into the Hindu tradition in the inventive process. The thesis also demonstrates the inter-connection between the invention of a Hindu tradition and the reinforcing of a sense of Hindu identity among Guyanese Indians, and demonstrates the ways in which the temple in Cambridge functions as a symbol of Guyanese Hindu ethnic identity in Canada.

Notes

1. A good example of this style is demonstrated by Kirin Narayan (1989) in her ethnography on the role of folk narrative as means of teaching in the Hindu religious tradition. In this monograph Narayan carefully weaves details of her personal background and her encounters in the field into the main body of her ethnography. I have been greatly inspired in my study by Narayan's style of ethnographic representation.
2. My curiosity was heightened by my Christian religious upbringing which had given me the impression that apart from the Christian faith, all other traditions were heathen.

CHAPTER TWO

HINDUISM OUTSIDE INDIA

Traditionally, Hinduism has not been a missionary religion. The kind of proselytizing or missionary activity associated with religions such as Christianity and Islam has not been a part of the Hindu religious heritage. It is for this reason that the relatively recent development of Hindu temples in non Hindu contexts raises new scholarly questions.

In this chapter, I review some of the recent literature on this new development in the Hindu religious tradition. This review will only briefly look at new developments in the Hindu religious tradition as it is practiced among Indian immigrant communities in Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and North America. It is hoped that this review will provide us with a broader perspective in which to understand the events happening in the Radha Krishna temple. Although that temple is quite unique in many ways, it will be better appreciated when it is seen as a part of a larger development in modern Hinduism.

Hindu migration to many parts of the world and the different situations of Hindus in non-Indian cultural contexts has generated considerable interest among researchers (Adhopia 1994; Burghart 1987; Henry 1983; Klass 1961; Srivastava 1983). Somewhat less research has been done on the specific

question of the practice of the Hindu religious tradition among Indian immigrants (Burghart 1987; Mbiti 1992; Oosthuizen 1993). For the most part, the religious aspects of Indian immigrants' lives in other cultures is usually mentioned only in passing, in the standard anthropological studies (Crowley 1960; Klass 1961; Oosthuizen 1993). Nevertheless, and by drawing inferences from the description of other aspects of Hindu culture in non Indian cultural settings, it is possible to gain insight into the way in which Hinduism as a religion is influenced by the new cross- cultural settings in which it finds itself. Hindu culture and religion were traditionally very closely interconnected and in these new situations the interconnection is still sustained so that any effect on one is likely to be mirrored in the other.

The spread of Hinduism to other non-Indian cultures is not a totally new phenomenon. George Michell (1977) suggests that as early as the third and fourth centuries B.C., Hindu infiltration into other cultures began (Michell 1977:18). This earlier spread of Hinduism was associated with the general spread of Indian culture into such nearby cultures as Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Southeast Asia (Burghart 1987; Kinsley 1993; Michell 1977). Not much is known about the ways through which Hinduism infiltrated these non-Indian cultures, but Hindu priests seem to have accompanied the traders who ventured into these nearby cultures and they are likely to have been instrumental in the spread of the religion (Michell 1977:18).

Burghart (1987) argues on the basis of historical and archaeological evidence that wherever Hindus migrated, settled or conquered, either the Hindu kings or traders sent for Brahmans from India to come and "consecrate" the land (Burghart 1987:3). Through this process the newly conquered land was ritually transformed, and came to be regarded as a part of the Hindu world. The local population came to be introduced to the Hindu caste system, and the kings sponsored the building of temples in these new territories (Burghart 1987:3). Brahman priests were invited from India to perform temple rites as well as rites of passage for the people (Burghart 1987:3). As these lands originally had non Indian cultures, the form of Hinduism that developed in these places was a blend of local elements and imported Indian features (Michell 1977:18). Adulteration of the Hindu religious tradition in such alien cultures is therefore an ancient pattern but in most of these situations Hinduism became the dominant or at least the elite voice.¹

Until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the dispersal of Hinduism to regions outside India, was restricted to the neighbouring areas, but since the mid-nineteenth century, Hinduism has begun to find its way into more distant cultures. This new spread has taken place primarily through the immigration of East Indians to these cultures, but it has also included in a minor way the proselytization of Hinduism by a number of new Hindu religious movements.² This new spread of the religion has been part of a general

improvement in international communications, which in turn has fostered an extensive interaction of all the major cultures. The modern world is literally a 'global village' in which diverse religious traditions co-exist as neighbours, and Hinduism has been drawn into this interaction (see Clifford 1988:13-14).

The newer spread of Hinduism has generated a great deal of interest among scholars, and a number of studies have focused on it (Bassier 1987; Bowen 1987; Klass 1961, 91; Knot 1987). One of the earliest and most thorough studies was a traditional anthropological study of one village in Trinidad by Morton Klass in 1961. Morton Klass provides a complete anthropological study of Amity, an Indian village in Trinidad made up of the third generation of East Indians who immigrated to Trinidad as indentured labourers in the late nineteenth century (Klass 1961:3). In this work, Klass shows that the social structure of Amity is a close copy of an East Indian village community (Klass 1961:3). In his findings Klass also points to a number of East Indian cultural practices that have been retained by the villagers (Klass 1961:3). He mentions in this connection institutions such as the caste system, the practice of in-group marriages and the practice of the Hindu religion, and contends that these traits must not be regarded as "fossils" or relics of Hindu culture but rather as part of an ongoing process of social and cultural development (Klass 1961:3-4). In his opinion, the village of Amity bears testimony to the ability of

East Indian immigrants to recreate a community reflecting the exact structures of their original Indian homeland (Klass 1961:3-4).

In Klass's discussion of the practice of Hinduism among the villagers of Amity, he argues that the diversity of their Indian origins, does not handicap their religious practice and that the villagers of Amity have been able to come to a common agreement on their religious practices over the years (Klass 1961:237). In describing the process by which this agreement took place Klass alludes to a reconstruction or re-invention of the Hindu religious tradition. Klass describes how some Hindu festivals have been modified, whilst newer ones such as Christmas have been introduced (Klass 1961:237). What is intriguing in his account is the inventive way in which the villagers come to a consensus on which rites or festivals should be performed or celebrated, who should perform them and the way it should be done (Klass 1961:237).

Hindu forms of religious practice such as the puja (worship), are still generally presided over by the Brahman priests, who generally control the expression of Hinduism in their dual capacities as pandit and gurus (Klass 1961:237). Klass also describes some newer developments which seem to undermine this exclusive authority of the Brahman. In this connection he describes an emerging group of non-Brahman religious leaders who are adopting the congregational weekly prayers they lead into Hindu temple practices (Klass 1961:237). This new practices indicate how continuous the

process of recreating the Hindu religion is. With Christian forms of worship being more predominant in the Caribbean, this new development seems to be evidence of the influence of Christianity on the Hindu religious tradition.

Similar phenomena have been described by other scholars writing about Hindus in the Caribbean (Bassier 1987; Mansingh 1987; Sahadeo 1987). Although themes such as acculturation and assimilation recur in these accounts, the most consistent theme in all these works is the idea of the re-invention or reconstruction of Hindu cultural and religious traditions in the Caribbean. What is obvious from these accounts is that to live together as an ethnic group, Hindu immigrants tried to rebuild the social as well as the religious institutions of their native home land and have used considerable inventiveness in the process.³

Left out in most of these discussions of Caribbean Hindu culture is the issue of how Hindu immigrants themselves perceived these reinvented institutions. We would like to know more about how these people understand their religious traditions. Do they consider themselves to be following orthodox religious practices brought from India? Do they consider the new innovations to be acculturation, or do they speak of new religious forms at all? In studying the Guyanese Hindu temple community at Cambridge we will be able to ask some of these questions.

Although the literature on Hindus in Africa is more scanty, than on the Caribbean, it is evident from the accounts available that Hinduism is carefully practised among the Indian trading communities in West, South, and East Africa (Assimeng 1989; Bharati 1970; Mbiti 1992; Morris 1956; Oosthuizen 1993). Mbiti's account, although sketchy, is by far the most extensive account on the practice of the religion in Africa.

In these places, many East Indians have settled as traders since early in the period of European colonial rule in Africa (Mbiti 1992:251). The Hindu communities in these places carefully subscribe to Hindu beliefs and traditional Hindu cultural as well as religious practices (Mbiti 1992:252; Oosthuizen 1993:295-298). Mbiti notes that in East Africa, Hindu temples tend to include a variety of Hindu deities and people worship together irrespective of "caste" (Mbiti 1992:252). The only condition of worship is that the appropriate Hindu rituals of purity, such as the taking off of footwear before entering the temple, must be observed (Mbiti 1992:252). He notes however, that Hindus in East Africa practice Hinduism more carefully at home than in the public temples and most have shrines in their homes (Mbiti 1992:252).

African scholars also describe what seems to be a tendency towards syncretism in the practice of the Hinduism in Africa (Assimeng 1989; Mbiti 1992). Mbiti discovered that images in altars in many homes included icons of deities and religious personalities from other religious traditions such as

Christianity (Mbiti 1992:252). He also found that some Hindus have begun to consider the Nile their sacred river and see it as local substitute for the River Ganges (Mbiti 1992:252).⁴ What is intriguing about Mbiti's accounts is the revelation that a number of Africans, especially African women married to Indian men, but also native African men who have learned to speak some of the Indian languages, are considering becoming Hindus and that Indian Hindus have wondered how to "create" new caste categories in order to accommodate them (Mbiti 1992:253). This indicates the possibility of a shift in the definition of what it means for one to be a "Hindu".

In a similar vein to Mbiti, Assimeng (1989:141) alludes to syncretic developments in the practice of Hinduism in his description of "The Christ Yoga Church" in Ghana. According to Assimeng this Church, which is attended largely by Ghanaian Hindu converts, "blends" aspects of Christian worship with Hindu practices such as yogic meditation. Not much has been written about such syncretic developments elsewhere in Africa, and one doubts whether it is very common. Oriental religious groups are new to the African religious scene, which has hitherto been dominated largely by Christianity. The survival of these groups as religious bodies in African society will depend largely on their success in recruiting members from already established Christian churches. Perhaps the blending of Hinduism with Christian forms of worship is an attempt by Hindu religious groups to accommodate themselves to the new environment

and put themselves in a better position to compete for members with the Christian churches. One is curious to know whether these Hindu religious groups are drawing on elements from traditional African religions in order to attract more African members into their fold.

In an attempt to refute Bharati's (1970) claim that the little tradition is absent in Africa, Oosthuizen (1993) differentiates between the Little (or local) Tradition and the Great (or all Indian) Tradition in South African Hinduism. As Oosthuizen (1993:295) describes it, even though there is no self conscious support for the Little Tradition in South African Hinduism, there are elements of local traditions preserved in some of the rituals people perform (1993:295). Oosthuizen acknowledges however that as most of the Indian immigrants in South Africa live in urban areas, the elements of the little tradition that are still practised are publicly held in contempt (Oosthuizen 1993:296).

Literature on religion in Africa shows a recent upsurge in the growth of groups representing various modern expressions of Hinduism. These groups are said to be very "significant" in West Africa (Assimeng 1989). For instance, mention is made of a Hindu monastery in Ghana which has among its followers some members of the Ghanaian elite (Assimeng 1989:141). Other groups such as The Hare Krishna movement, Sri Sathya Sai Baba and Ananda Marga are becoming very popular especially in both West Africa and East Africa

(Oosthuizen 1993:296). On the whole however, there seems to be a general paucity of studies on Hinduism in Africa.⁵

Turning to research on East Indian immigrants in Britain we find studies on how Hindu immigrants get around their traditional differences to establish a "standard" form of Hindu worship (Knott 1987). Knott shows how both Gujaratis and Punjabis, two groups from different regions in India, participate consciously in the worship and management of the Hindu temple at Leeds (Knott 1987:157-179). The two groups would normally practice different forms of Hindu worship: while Gujaratis are accustomed to practising the offering of light, Punjabis have a preference for the offering of fire (Knott 1987:163). Their new temple rituals at Leeds involve the combination of elements from each of these traditions and in this way, they "standardized" their form of Hindu temple worship with a view to accommodating the needs of both groups (Knott 1987:163). While this kind of development indicates that the recreation of the tradition is understood to be a pragmatic response to a new situation (Hobsbawm 1983), it also means that Hindu laity and ordinary practitioners, rather than sacred texts or stipulations of tradition, are taking on a new and important role in determining how the religion should be practised (see Burghart 1987:231). Burghart (1987), Bowen (1987) and Knott (1987) also show how Hinduism is becoming an "ethnic" religion in these alien settings. Basing his observation on the "Shree Hindu temple" in Bradford, Bowen for instance

notes that the members of the temple have done away with all kinds of traditional Hindu divisions: "Caste", Sectarian, or regional (1987:24). This development is seen in the way other images of deities from other sectarian Hindu traditions are worshipped together with Ram the presiding deity whose image is in the inner chamber (Bowen 1987:15-21). Burghart also thinks the temple's name, "The Shree Hindu Temple" is a radical departure from the Indian practice of naming temples after the presiding deity (Burghart 1987:232). He argues that by calling the temple "Shree Hindu Temple" rather than the "Shree Ram Temple," the members of this temple were emphasising the ethnic significance of the temple rather than the religious (Burghart 1987:232). The endeavour of the Gujarati and Punjabi Hindus to establish standard forms of worship at the Leeds temple (Knott 1987) can be interpreted in a similar way and what both accounts suggest is that Hindus in these settings are beginning to see themselves as one collective unit rather than as seriously belonging to different regional or sectarian Hindu traditions. Hinduism in non Indian cultures is often representative of a common ethnic Indian identity and where this is the perception it overrides regional, sectarian or caste considerations.

Other accounts allude to the very innovative and ecumenical forms Hinduism is taking in Britain. Taylor's (1987) material on "the community of the many names of God" established by a Sri Lankan in 1973 in Wales is a good example of this development (Taylor 1987:108). In the temple of this

predominantly Hindu community are images of Hindu and non Hindu religious figures (Taylor 1987:108). Taylor mentions pictures of Guru Nanak, an icon of the Buddha, icons of Jesus, Mary, and St. Francis of Assisi and writes also about how they recite the "Lords Prayer", and observe Christian festivals such as "Christmas" in this temple. Yet all these varying elements are incorporated into a Hindu religious framework (Taylor 1987:108). What I find fascinating about Taylor's material is his observation that, from an inner perspective of the members of the community, the religion is not syncretic in any way. On the contrary, the community perceives its religious practice as a culminating point for all religions and at the same time as distinct and above them (Taylor 1987:106-107). Hinduism in this context could be rightly said to have assumed a self-defined identity, for while we might describe the practices of this community to be syncretic it does not seem so to the practitioners (see Handler and Linnekin 1984)

Burghart (1987), drawing on material from Carey (1987) and Menski (1987), discusses how transformations are occurring in aspects of Hindu belief and thought in an encounter with the western world view. He discusses in detail the significance Hindus in Britain are now attaching to the need to understand what their "mantras," and rituals mean (1987:237-241).

Briefly stated, Burghart's point is that understanding either divine utterances or rituals is generally of no important significance in Hinduism

(Burghart 1987:237-238). What Hindu rituals and divine utterances mean are considered to be inconsequential to their efficacy (Burghart 1987:238). "Rituals" and "mantras," it is believed, would yield desired results whether the actors understand them or not, for all that is important is the evocation of the right formula (Burghart 1987:237). In contrast, Western culture places considerable emphasis on the meaningfulness of human as well as religious experience (Burghart 1987: 237).

Carey, Menski and Burghart show that Hindus in Britain are beginning to be concerned with the "meaning" of their religious rituals and beliefs, as a result of their encounter with Western culture (1987:240). In her study of the "initiation of Monks" in the Rama Krishna mission in England, Carey demonstrates how it becomes imperative for the "Guru" to explain to the neophyte what the Sanskrit "mantras" used in the ceremony mean (1987:147). Traditionally only the sound of the mantra mattered.

Menski (1987) notes that Gujarati youth in Leicester find the Brahmanical marriage ritual, performed exclusively in Sanskrit, to make no sense to them, and lament about their difficulties in understanding what this means (Menski 1987:198). Hindu priests therefore find it necessary to give explanatory comments in English, or in one of the vernacular Indian dialects in order to explicate the rites and the rationale behind their performance (Menski 1987:198). The significance of these interchanges lies in the extent to which

western cultural categories are beginning to impinge on Hindus' self evaluation of their traditions. Hindu immigrants in Great Britain, a different cultural context, begin to examine their beliefs and practices in the context of Western culture. For them, like for native born members of Western society, rituals, whether Hindu or Western, must be understood by the performers. The meanings of rituals and utterances which they had taken for granted becomes of crucial importance to Hindus in an alien cultural milieu that attaches importance to meaning.

Focusing our attention now on North America, the theme of the function of Hinduism as an Indian identity symbol recurs in the sparse literature on Hindu immigrant communities (Badwarj and Ra 1990; Leonard 1993; Raymond 1987).

In a historical study of a Punjabi immigrant group that immigrated to Southern California as farmhands at the turn of this century, Leonard (1993) describes how intermarriage between these men and Hispanic women who are mainly of Catholic religious persuasions radically transformed their sense of Indian identity and their religious practices (Leonard 1993:165). According to Leonard, this East Indian immigrant group assimilated into American culture but still managed to retain a vague sense of its Hindu identity, the values of which their wives, though, Spanish and Catholic, were instrumental in transmitting to subsequent generations (1993:165).

What is intriguing about Leonard's account is the extent to which the worship forms of this group, though regarded to be Hindu, had become greatly transformed. The traditional Indian gender segregation in temples was not practiced. Families sat together at worship. Neither was the normal Indian yogic posture of sitting at worship adopted. The congregation sat on chairs instead. Prasad was served and eaten in a dinner fashion (Leonard 1993:167). Yet this group maintained the Hindu identity of this worship form and developed their own sense of Indian identity around it (Leonard 1993:168) thereby reflecting Handler and Linnekin's position that the authenticity of reformulated tradition is self defined (1984:286).

In a similar study of Hindu religious organisations in the United States Raymond (1987) attempts a typology of the groups. Included in this typology are domestic groups organised especially by families of newly arrived immigrants, and those groups who rally around teachers for the purpose of studying Hindu scriptures (Raymond 1987:26). Raymond also mentions groups whose membership cuts across all South Asian nationalities and those that are based on affiliations with specific languages (Raymond 1987:27). As in all the previous studies, the fundamental function of these groups, apart from providing venues for worship is the transmission, of Hindu values to generations of immigrant Hindus who because of exposure to Western culture are vulnerable to assimilation (Raymond 1987:26-27). To further such goals, these groups

greatly protect their ethnic boundaries and select from a repertoire of Hindu symbols, some of which they adapt to their cultural situations in order to demonstrate their identity (Raymond 1987:27).

In a study based on East Indian communities in the New York region Bhardwaj and Ra (1990:211-212) forcefully put forward the argument that Hinduism in the United States remains largely an individual rather than a group oriented religion. Its practice, they maintain, is still largely an individual affair and the role of temples as foci for community identity is very minimal. Hindu temples tend to be more significant as worship places rather than as bases from which communal life is regulated. Hinduism, therefore, in their view has not been that instrumental in reinforcing ethnic sentiments. One finds this development quite strange among East Indians immigrants who have been described elsewhere to have a tendency just like any other immigrants to develop their sense of identity around their religious practices. Literature on the practice of Hinduism in Canada seems extremely limited. While studies exist on East Indian immigrant communities, scholars seem to be silent about the religious aspects of their lives (Buchignani 1983; Henry 1983; Srivastava 1983). In one such study Adhopia (1993) makes allusions to the degree of Westernization that might be occurring in Hindu religious practice in Canada. He describes how in some Hindu communities in Toronto and other cities, Diwali, a popular Hindu festival, is given a North American "touch" by the

organization of such North American cultural forms as beauty pageants, public dinners and dances and banquets as aspects of the festivals (Adhopia 1993 :183). The absence of information on the practice of Hinduism in Canada is quite alarming, given the large number of Hindu immigrants and temples in Canadian cities. Perhaps this reflects a general lack of interest among Hindu scholars in Canada on this recent development in the religion's history. As this development is relatively new, it is hoped that with time scholars will devote more attention to its understanding.

To conclude, our overview of the development of Hinduism in immigrant communities has demonstrated a number of themes. One consistent theme is the idea that the practice of Hinduism constitutes an important aspect of the lives of Indian immigrants in their host cultures, a fact which might be attributed to the strong religious foundation of the Hindu culture.

The literature also demonstrates the highly adaptive potential of the Hindu religion in new environments. Hindu immigrants draw on their own cultural heritage, as well as elements from their host cultures, in renegotiating new Hindu cultural and religious identities. Hinduism is thus being redefined and being experienced in many new ways in these settings. The specific geographical context, however does influence the direction of the religion's development. Thus there is quite a bit of variation in the ways in which Hinduism is practised among Indian immigrants. In most of the contexts the

worship procedures are being "standardized" in order to accommodate the regional diversities in individuals' religious backgrounds. Elements such as ritual restrictions based on caste and gender differences are often being overlooked greatly. The need to create and sustain a Hindu ethnic identity seems to be overshadowing such regional caste or sectarian considerations. In other words ethnic considerations are becoming entangled with the need to practice Hindu religion and temples are functioning as foci for the defining, re-defining, and assertion of Hindu identities.

In addition to traditional Hinduism, that is perpetuated among immigrant Indians, more modern forms of Hinduism are rapidly finding their ways into other cultures and being embraced primarily by non-Indians especially in sub-saharan Africa and North America. Hinduism is also exhibiting a number of syncretic traits as it adapts to new environments.

Quite absent from most of the literature, however, are discussions of the opinions of individual Hindus in the communities studied regarding the forms in which they practice the religion. Also, issues of the historical development of Hinduism are not adequately addressed in the literature. Indian immigrant communities are not ahistorical entities. Neither are Hindu religious beliefs and practices timeless or unchanging. History thus becomes relevant to our understanding of the practice of the Hindu religious tradition outside India. In this regard it might be important to know how the practice of Hinduism began in

such distant cultures, how it has developed over the years, and what local factors influenced the patterns of its development in particular places. This historical element will be an important focus of this study. In the next chapter we will examine the History of Hinduism as it unfolded over the years in Guyana. We will also see how these historical developments are relevant for a better understanding of the Radha Khrisna Hindu temple community, the focus of this study.

Notes

1. Younger, personal communication (March 1995).
2. Neo-Hindu religious movements such as the Hari Krishna, the Divine Life Mission and the Sri Satya Sai Baba movement are said to be engaged in active proselytizing campaigns in many non Hindu settings. See for instance Bromley and Shinn (1989), Assimeng (1989), Klass (1991) and Oosthuizen (1993).
3. Bassier's (1987: 270-293) account of Kali worship in Guyana, for instance, discusses the proliferation of Kali cults in Guyana in the early 1960s within the context of the political developments of the time. According to Bassier, this development was a symptom of the alienation East Indians experienced in Guyana following the overthrow of the Hindu political leader Cheddi Jagan in 1964. In the face of the resurgence of the longstanding Creole antagonism against them, East Indians, especially those of Tamil origin formed cultural organisations which used invented Kali cultic practices as symbols of their Hindu identity.
4. The river Nile is the longest river in Africa. Taking its source from Lake Victoria in the highlands of East Africa, the Nile flows through Uganda, Ethiopia, and Sudan before entering into the Mediterranean Sea in Egypt.
5. The absence of studies on Hinduism in Africa may be the result of an age long lack of interest in that area of studies. This is reflected in a general absence of programmes in Hinduism in Religious Studies departments of many universities, the majority of which were originally established as theological schools.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HISTORY OF HINDUISM IN GUYANA

This chapter of the thesis serves a double purpose. It is a sequel to the previous chapter in that it continues to trace the history of the Hindu tradition in a non-Indian setting. It also provides a background for the subsequent chapters in that it describes the historical background required for an understanding of the community which has developed the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple in Cambridge. As a symbol, the temple is the embodiment of the values of a culture whose present predicament was defined by the historical events of the past century and a half.

In the history of the temple, the Indian indentureship to the Caribbean which began in the mid-nineteenth century is seen as the beginning of the community's history. This historical event lies at the root of the series of events which finally culminated in the formation of the temple. This chapter will in a sense take us backward on a journey through time to the past of the Guyanese Hindu immigrants of Cambridge.

The chapter begins with a brief introduction to the Guyanese geographical and cultural setting. I then discuss the historical events that led to the indentureship. This will be followed by a reconstruction of the history of the

Hindu religious tradition during the indentureship. I will argue on the basis of historical evidence that under the strictures of the indentureship, Hindu immigrants lost much of their traditions.

The chapter then goes on to demonstrate how a Hindu tradition was invented in Guyana by the indentured labourers. I will argue that the social conditions of the immigrants after the indentureship compelled them to invent their tradition as an integrative cultural symbol. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the basic elements of this invented tradition, and shows how subsequent acculturation gave this recreated Hindu religious tradition an unclear status by the time the present generation was prepared to emigrate once more to Canada. In view of the paucity of literature on the development of the Hindu religious tradition in Guyana, I have had to draw on records of parallel developments elsewhere in the Caribbean for inferences in my reconstruction.¹

THE SETTING: GUYANA

Geographically, Guyana is situated on the northeastern coast of South America. It lies east of Venezuela and north of Brazil (Depres 1994:633; Newman 1964:1). The name "Guyana" is a modification of "Guianas", a South American Indian word which means "lands of waters" (Newman 1964:1; Rauf 1974:32; Singh 1987:9). This name reflects the physical conditions of the land,

in that Guyana receives copious amounts of rainfall and is drained by many rivers (Newman 1964:1; Smith 1962:2). Covering an area of 83,000 square miles, Guyana approximates Great Britain in size (Newman 1964:2; Rauf 1974:32).

The current population of Guyana is about 748,000 (Despres 1994:635). Apart from the native South American Indian indigenous settlers of the land who live predominantly in the middle belt of Guyana, the Guyanese population is composed primarily of the descendants of immigrants (Newman 1964:17-18; Rauf 1974:34).

Some of these immigrants (the Creole), were brought to Guyana as captured slaves from West Africa in the middle of the eighteenth century (Newman 1964:18; Singh 1987:10). Others, mostly from India, China and Portugal volunteered to work as indentured labourers on the sugar plantations in Guyana during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Rauf 1974:34-37). Both of these groups eventually adopted the land as their permanent home (Bassier 1987:272; Newman 1964:17-18; Rauf 1974:34). In a sense therefore, the whole society of Guyana is an immigrant community. The assembling of these different ethnic groups within Guyana makes it a culturally pluralistic society (Rauf 1974:34). The Guyanese population comprises East Indians, Creoles (descendants of African slaves), mixed people, Amerindians, Portuguese, Chinese, and Europeans (Newman 1964:43; Rauf 1974:35). East

Indians, the focus of this study are the largest single cultural unit of the population in Guyana constituting a little over half the total population. (Despres 1994:635; Rauf 1974:35; Sahedeo 1987:245). The majority of the East Indians live in rural Guyana where they are engaged in agricultural occupations either on sugar plantations or on their own farms. In more recent years, however, many of them have taken advantage of Western education as a way of enhancing their social mobility, and a number of them are wealthy businessmen, or doctors, and are counted among the Guyanese elite (Ramcharan 1983:51; Rauf 1974:36).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE INDENTURESHP

The Spanish sailor and explorer Christopher Columbus was the first European to discover the country known as Guyana in 1498 while on his third expedition to America (Henry 1994:3; Newman 1964:16 Smith 1962:13). Because of the harsh physical conditions of the region, Columbus and his sailing crew, bypassed Guyana without establishing a settlement (Henry 1994). The Dutch colonised the area in 1580 and established three colonies, namely Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice but in 1803 transferred control over the area to the British (Newman 1964:17; Rauf 1974:30; Singh 1987:10). It was under British rule that the three regions which now comprise Guyana (i.e. Demerara,

Essequibo and Berbice) were united in 1831 to become British Guiana (Newman 1964:17).²

Even before the beginning of British control over Guyana, a wave of British planters, lured by the prospects of huge profits moved into the area (Newman 1964:18-19). The planters were attracted by a booming sugar industry in the eighteenth century. Sugar cane cultivation had become a very profitable venture, following an expansion in the sugar market especially in North America and the other British colonies (Klass 1991:15; Newman 1964:18). Large tracts of arable land were developed into cane fields by British plantation owners (Newman 1964:19; Smith 1962:2). To supplement local labour supply from the thinly populated islands, the plantation owners turned to the importation of slaves from West Africa (Dwarka 1970:1; Klass 1961:4; Newman 1964:18-20).

Historical changes in the mid nineteenth century in India and Guyana sparked off a chain of events which eventually culminated in the emigration of East Indians from the Indian subcontinent to Guyana and other Caribbean islands (Buchignani 1983:68; Dwarka 1970; Mansingh 1987: 295-296; Newman 1964:19-27). Slavery as an institution came under severe attack from a number of anti slavery and humanist groups in England and North America in the early nineteenth century and was ultimately abolished in the British colonies, including Guyana in 1838 (Dwarka 1970:5).

The abolishment of slavery led to an acute shortage of labour on the sugar plantations in the Caribbean region and Guyana was among the regions to be hardest hit by this shortage because it had a limited local population (Dwarka 1970:5; Newman 1964:25; Singh 1987:2). Faced with a shortage of a cheap and reliable supply of labour, British plantation owners established the practice of indentureship in order to supply the labour force needed on the cane fields (Nath 1970:35; Newman 1964:25; Rauf 1974:2; Singh 1987:2).

At first, indentured labourers were imported from such regions as China, Africa, and Europe and from elsewhere in the Caribbean region, and were bonded on contracts for specific time periods (Newman 1964:25). Freed African slaves still living in Guyana were also employed partially on the plantations and paid for their services (Newman 1964:24-25). The success of these arrangements was short-lived as the indentured labourers proved to be physically unfit to work on the plantations, and the cost of employing the services of the more suitable freed Africans proved to be too high to be met by the plantation owners (Newman 1964:25). Plantation owners searched for labour that was cheaper and more physically suited for work on the plantations (Dwarka 1970; Klass 1991:18-18; Newman 1964:25-27).

As if by design, just as historical circumstances in the Caribbean were creating a labour shortage, events were occurring on the Indian subcontinent which would contribute to trigger off a migration of large numbers

of East Indian indentured labourers to the Caribbean. The juxtaposition of these historical events happening at these distant regions was quite a coincidence and involved major changes for a large block of human beings.

British colonists had established hegemonic rule in India by the middle of the nineteenth century and had begun to initiate political and socio-economic reforms (Mansingh 1987:295). These reforms had serious social implications for many people and brought a great deal of instability and severe hardship especially on rural people (Mansingh 1987:295 -296). Coupled with their already poor conditions, the new unemployment, hunger, and starvation made living conditions quite unbearable for many of these Indian villagers and it became necessary for many villagers to emigrate from their homes in search of better living conditions (Mansingh 1987: 295-296). The opportunity of finding wage labour could not have come at a better time for the indentured labourers even if their contracts involved having to cross the Indian ocean with all its ritual implications which was originally thought to involve ritual contamination (Burghart 1987: 1-2; Crowley 1960:851; Harasingh 1987:175-176). Thus when the British planters initiated the programme to recruit labour from the Indian subcontinent, many were willing to embrace it as an opportunity to escape from hard times (Singh 1987:4).

Lower caste people also saw the recruitment programme as a good way to escape from the social restrictions imposed on them (Singh 1987:4).

Originally, many indentured labourers did not intend to remain in Guyana: their aim was to work, make savings and return home at the end of their contracts to enjoy better living standards in their communities (Mansingh 1987:272).

The migration of indentured Hindu labourers began in 1830 (Bassier 1987:271; Dwarka 1970; Klass 1961; Mansingh 1987). Selection and drafting of labourers was done by British agents stationed at posts established in the port cities of Madras and Calcutta (Dwarka 1970; Newman 1964). British officials supervised the recruitment, passage, and settlement of indentured labourers on the Guyanese Island (Newman 1964:27).

Indentured labourers were on five year contracts and were required to work throughout the week except on Sundays for a shilling per day (Newman 1964:27). In addition, they were entitled to free accommodation and health care (Newman 1964:27). According to the terms of the indentureship contract, indentured labourers had the prerogative of seeking other forms employment, or new employers and were entitled to a free return home at the end of the contract (Nath 1970:41-47; Newman 1964:27).

By the end of the nineteenth century, large populations of East Indians, had migrated and settled on many islands of the Caribbean as indentured labourers.³ As Hindu culture and religion are inextricably connected, the migration of these large number of indentured labourers meant the transplantation of Hinduism into the Caribbean. In the subsequent years the

circumstances under which the Hindu religious tradition would develop would be conditioned in a major way by the circumstances surrounding the indenture system in the Caribbean region.

The point of this brief historical description of indentureship is to indicate the series of historical events that culminated in the immigration of Hindus from the Indian subcontinent to Guyana and the Caribbean islands. Consistent with my earlier proposal that more attention is to be paid to the relevance of history in the development of the Hindu religious tradition in immigrant Hindu communities, I will in the next section try to show how these developments were significant in establishing the direction of the development of the Hindu religious tradition in Guyana.

It is also clear from the historical outline that the indentured Indians were brought into Guyana to occupy a specific structural void in the economic system (Bassier 1987:271). The indentureship was a direct and immediate replacement to the institution of slavery. Symbolically, then, indentured labourers inherited the social stigma that was associated with the slave status in Guyanese society. As we shall see as the thesis proceeds, this social situation played a significant role in the nature of the developments that led to the invention of a Hindu religious tradition in Guyana. First, however, we need to examine how Hinduism as a religious tradition was practised among the indentured labourers in Guyana.

HINDUISM DURING THE INDENTURESHIP

There are no detailed and consistent records on the practice of the Hindu religious tradition by the Indian immigrants in Guyana during the period of the indenture. Even when scholars make allusions to this topic in the context of discussions on the general development of Hindu culture, their accounts are patchy. We do not know with any certainty how Hinduism came to be practised in Guyana. It is also not even clear whether there were any Hindu temples or any organised form of the religion during much of this time.

At this point, we might have to base our reconstruction of the history of Hinduism during the indentureship on the accounts available of the life stories of the indentured labourers. This seems to be a reasonable thing to do because of the close connection that exists between Indian culture and Hinduism as a religious tradition.

Hinduism as a religious tradition is distinctive in the degree to which it pervades Indian culture, a fact which has led scholars to describe it as "a way of life" (Burghart 1987:10; Harasingh 1987:167). The day-to-day existence of a Hindu is permeated by religious considerations. A Hindu picks up the religious tradition as he or she grows up and participates in domestic rites, and communal rituals, and ceremonies (Fuller 1992:3-21; Kinsley 1993:5-7). While not as identical as African culture and religion, still the dividing line between

Hinduism as a religion and Hinduism as a culture is so thin that they seem to be inseparable. Hindus travel with their traditions ingrained in their daily lives.

Contrary to Crowley's (1960:185) suggestion that the indentured labourers left their religion behind when they emigrated from India, the evidence seems to be that Hindu indentureship in Guyana was the sole channel through which the Hindu religious tradition first infiltrated into Guyana. As Mansingh notes of the indentured labourers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, they:

were proudly aware of the fact that Lord Rama, Krishna, Buddha, and Mahavira were born in their midst. They may never have read the scriptures, but the philosophies of their great teachers were ingrained in their names, customs, traditions, and proverbs (Mansingh 1987:297).

Certainly, East Indian immigrants immigrated to Guyana with their Hindu religious beliefs intact.

The East Indian immigrants in Guyana came from different villages and different regions in India and many of their villages of origin are said to be located on the outskirts of the port cities of Madras and Calcutta (Dwarka 1970; Klass 1961). Other labourers were recruited directly from the "bazaars" of Calcutta and Madras where they worked as labourers (Nath 1970:35; Klass 1991:20). A few labourers were also recruited from the outlying villages of Gujarat in the west and Bihar in the east (Rauf 1974:46).

As these locations are situated within different regions and have different linguistic backgrounds the Indian immigrants can be said to have been drafted from "far flung and culturally diverse" regions of India (Crowley 1960:851). There was certainly a demographic imbalance in their composition.

There is some uncertainty among scholars concerning the caste origins of the indentured labourers. According to Klass, indentured labourers were predominantly lower caste people (Klass 1961:11). Klass's position is based on Cummin's observation that the plantation owners in the Caribbean had a preference for the Chamars and other low castes rather than for the relatively more reputable land owning agricultural castes (Klass 1961:11). Mansingh (1987), on the other hand, seems to suggest in an essay on East Indians in the Caribbean, that indentured labourers were predominantly from agricultural castes (Mansingh 1987:296). In the face of this contradiction, we might better rely on Crowley's account as more credible and realistic. Crowley (1960) suggests that individual indentured labourers were recruited from all the castes and classes (Crowley 1960:851). These included even the high-caste Brahmans, some of whom were experts in Sanskrit and some religious and ritual specialists (Crowley 1960:851). The majority of the indentured labourers however, he suggests were probably untouchables or from lower caste groups and were "poor", illiterate and came from the countryside (Crowley 1960:851). In any case, the caste backgrounds of the indentures were varied.

The origins of the Hindu indentured labourers provide important clues about their possible religious orientations. Considering the diversity in their regional, linguistic, and caste backgrounds, the Hindu indentured labourers must have arrived in Guyana with equally varying Hindu religious persuasions. This must have been so because religious affiliation and ethnic or caste identity are coextensive in Hinduism. Narayan makes this point clear when she writes:

from region to region, caste to caste, sect to sect and even family to family there is a diversity in Hindu practice and belief (Narayan 1989:35).

Considering the highly diversified backgrounds from which they came, it is unimaginable that worship could have been easily organised among the indentured labourers. How could a consensus have been reached among them with regards to their rites, rituals, or beliefs? How could they have juxtaposed and sorted out these differences? What would have been deemed to be the appropriate rites or rituals in their new setting? One could imagine a situation in which different caste or regional groups vied for the dominance of their rites or rituals and a situation emerging that was quite chaotic. The point is that the historical evidence seems to indicate that during the indentureship, an organised form of religion was improbable or at least quite minimal.

The social conditions under which indentured labourers lived and worked must also have greatly limited their religious practices. The indentured labourers were crowded together in residences formerly occupied by the Negro

slaves (Bassier 1987:272; Klass 1991:20). They were subjected to a very rigid work schedule and were compelled to adjust their lifestyle to suit the work schedule (Klass 1961:25; Bassier 1987:272; Newman 1964:49). As the proper performance of Hindu religious rituals requires elaborate attention to details such as timing (Fuller 1992:62-68; Michell 1977:63), most of the rituals must have been curtailed and many probably never performed.

There is also evidence that the plantation overseers were apparently intolerant of the practice of Hinduism by the indentured labourers. Klass (1961) notes that Indian customs and religious practices were held in contempt and sometimes even prohibited by the British plantation owners in Trinidad (Klass 1961:25). Comparable data on Guyana is not available, but the possibility of similar conditions prevailing in Guyana can be inferred from comments made by plantation owners in Guyana. The Guyanese historian, Dwarka Nath (1970) quotes a British government official as having said of the immigrants:

unfortunately the bright beams of Christianity have not shone among them and it is much to be lamented that they are left so entirely destitute of religious instruction as scarcely to be raised above the beast of the field...(Dwarka Nath 1970:17).

These words underscore a generally negative attitude towards the customs and religion of the indentured labourers on the part of the planters and the government. More broadly considered, the words reflect the typical nineteenth century Western contempt for non-Christian religious practices (Mbiti 1992:6-

14). Following the evolutionary theory of Darwin which came to dominate much of nineteenth century thinking, Western culture was assigned the highest status among all civilizations. Christianity became a yardstick used by this era for judging the legitimacy of other religious traditions. Relatively unknown and highly misconstrued, religious traditions such as Hinduism were largely considered to be "heathen" or "devilish" and condemned on such grounds (Despres 1975:95). Dwarka's (1970) statement above thus furnishes us with a valuable clue about the generally prejudicial attitudes of the plantation officials towards the East Indian immigrants and their culture. Apparently the practice of the native religion of the indentured labourers was discouraged by the plantation owners. There is evidence from the indentureship in Trinidad which points to the fact that significant numbers of the indentured labourers converted to Christianity (Klass 1991:22) and it seems probable that there were similar conversions in Guyana. Considering the prejudices that underlay Western attitudes towards Hinduism generally during this period it would be expected that the Hindu indentured labourers in Guyana would have been targets for Christian missionaries.

Traditions do not exist in a social vacuum and can seldom be sustained in a disarrayed social system. Hinduism especially derives its force as a religious tradition from the Indian social structure and the survival of the religious tradition would seem to depend on the Hindu social system, the caste

system, in that the daily practice of temple religion is built around this system (Hutton 1963:117;121). For instance, the social structure determines which individuals are assigned specific religious functions, and how Hinduism is organised as a religion (Hutton 1963:121; Kinsley 1993:153). When Hindus emigrated or conquered other lands it was traditionally taken to be imperative that they establish a Hindu caste system in their new environments as a precondition for the practice of their religion (Burghart 1987:1-3). This tradition underscores the importance of a Hindu social system serving as a precondition for a successful practice of the religion so that in the absence of an organised system or the caste structure, one would expect the practice of the religious tradition to be greatly hampered unless dramatic changes could be made.

The social situation of the indentured labourers as we have just described it must not have been congenial for the development of a routine practice of the Hindu religious tradition. The normal conditions required for the routine and careful observance of organised religious rituals could not have existed during the years of the indentureship. In the absence of an organised Hindu social life and a routine practice of traditions, the essential elements of the Hindu culture must have been all but obliterated during the indentureship.

Furthermore, while the gradual loss of traditional Hindu norms and practices among indentured labourers was going on there must also have been some level of assimilation into the previously established Creole patterns of life

(Smith 1962:125-126). It is normal for newly arrived immigrants in an area to model their patterns on those of the already existing groups. Conversions to Christianity must also have taken their toll on the viability of Hindu norms and practices.

At this point, we might suggest that although the evidence is quite patchy a reconstruction of the religious lives of the Hindu indentured labourers is possible on the basis of our knowledge of their historical circumstances. On the basis of such historical evidence we might surmise that in view of the restrictions on the expression of their culture, indentured labourers must have greatly modified or lost much of their cultural tradition during the indentureship. It follows then that the social conditions of the indentured labourers and the restrictions on the practice of their traditions set the stage for the next period when a process of religious invention resulted in the rebirth of the Hindu tradition in Guyana.

AFTER THE INDENTURESHIP

The practice of the Indian indentureship in Guyana and the Caribbean Islands ended in 1917 (Singh 1987:5). Following the abolition some individual indentured labourers and their families did return to India although the majority remained settled in Guyana where they were granted full citizenship (Bassier 1987:275).

In the years following the end of indentureship system, the East Indians who had chosen to remain in Guyana began to move from the plantations into sections of the larger Guyanese society to seek better sources of livelihood. While the majority took to larger scale farming (as estate or plantation owners) others engaged in retail trade in small towns or owned rice mills (Bassier 1987:275). Thus as the system of indentureship ended, the Indian immigrants had begun to switch from thinking of returning to India and to figure out where they fit in Guyana which was now accepted as their home (Bassier 1987:277; Newman 1964:49).⁴

THE INVENTION OF THE HINDU TRADITION IN GUYANA

The two periods-indentureship and settlement in the history of the indentured labourers must be considered very distinct phases. Their initial period was considered very transient and their settlement very final. Having decided however to stay, the Hindu indentured labourers suddenly realized that the traditions they had taken for granted over the years were now crucial to their cultural survival as a group in Guyana.

As a core element of culture, tradition is a common denominator that binds members of an ethnic group together (Royce 1982:146). Ethnic identities are invariably defined on the basis of the affiliation of members with a specific tradition or a set of traditions.

In a more broadly considered sense of the word, tradition refers to the "transmissible" elements of cultures (Shils 1984:12). These elements include the religious and ideological presuppositions, norms, and practices of a people (Shils 1984:12). Other elements of tradition are "institutions" and physical objects such as artifacts imbued with culturally mediated symbols which generations of a society inherit and transfer to subsequent ones (Royce 1982:147; Shils 1984:12-13). As symbols of cultural identity, traditions serve as integrative elements in societies. Traditions become the basic foundation of group solidarity. The maintenance of tradition is therefore an imperative for group cohesion (Hobsbawm 1983:9).

Considering this function of traditions, we might raise the following fundamental questions: what happens when loyalties to a group's cultural traditions are highly diversified? How do these diversified traditions play their integrative function?. How does a group which has lost much of its essential tradition as a result of historical circumstances integrate its members? On what symbol or set of symbols does the existence of such a group as an ethnic unit depend?

The hypothetical questions posed above relate specifically to the predicament of the Hindu tradition in Guyana after the indentureship. As an immigrant group settling in a newly adopted home, East Indian indentured labourers in Guyana faced the uphill task of reorganising themselves as a social

group and a cultural unit. This task was set against the background of their highly diversified cultural backgrounds and their greatly attenuated traditions.

One factor which accounted for the urgency among the indentured labourers to form a common bond was the structural threat posed by the presence of the Creole population (descendants of Africa slaves). A tendency to copy the lifestyle of their former slave masters characterized Creole life after slavery (Newman 1964:47). Many of the Creole people were very keen to acquire Western education and aspired for higher social status through Westernization (Newman 1964:47-48). In this connection the Creoles not only perceived the East Indians as culturally and racially different, but, more importantly, as potential competitors for available jobs because of their large number. These two groups were soon rivals in the adopted homeland (Newman 1964:52).

Even though it is a relatively subjective factor, one of the problems faced by indentured workers was the uncertain states that their positions left them with. Because indentureship was seen as a replacement of slave labour, it was indirectly identified with slavery and the indentured labourers inherited some of the stigma associated with being a slave (see Royce 1982:119). Indian indentured labourers were stereotyped as "slaves" and this must have militated against their ready acceptance as equal members of the larger Guyanese

community especially by the Creole population which was fiercely proud of its "freed" status (See Rauf 1974:2).

Furthermore, Newman notes that indentured labourers lived in relative seclusion and differently from the urban Guyanese community. In their own settings they cultivated thrifty and frugal lifestyles typical of marginal immigrant groups striving to 'make it' in their host cultures (Newman 1964:49). On this account they were called "Coolies" and this label came to be imbued with stereotypical images characterizing the "fierce economic drives" and "extreme thriftiness" which were alleged to be exhibited by the Indian indentured labourers (Klass 1991:19-20; Newman 1964:49). The Creole antagonism therefore was probably based on the perceived inferior social status of the Indian immigrants as well as the potential threat they posed on the job market. Whatever the reasons, it is clear that, East Indian indentured labourers confronted problems related to their decision to settle in Guyana which reinforced their need to identify as an ethnic group. The Creole hostility was a day-to-day threat and they felt an urgency to define and protect a valid basis of ethnic identity.

These developments echo Royce's (1982) idea of "polarization". According to Royce, "polarization" occurs when "dominant" or already established ethnic units stress the contrast between themselves and immigrating groups (Royce 1982:197). Polarization is done by pointing to the

distinctiveness of their traits as against those of the immigrating group. On the basis of the idea that they share a common trait, the "dominant" group creates a bond among themselves and against the immigrants, who are perceived as "intruders," socially inferior and threats (Royce 1982:197).

In the context of the present discussion, the Creole by virtue of their earlier settlement assumed a position of dominance. One suspects that indentured labourers did not really constitute a threat to the Creole until the end of the indentureship. They were during that period perceived as sojourners. Creole attitudes, however, changed when indentured labourers were granted citizenship in Guyana. The threat of the Indian presence became real and this resulted in Creole "polarization" (Newman 1964:50). The Creole reaction however then evoked a similar sentiment from the Indentured labourers who as a demographically larger group could think of themselves as dominant, and in the face of Creole hostility East Indians forgot their differences and sought to demonstrate their sense of collective identity as one East Indian cultural unit (Newman 1964:49-50).

The East Indian immigrants, however, faced a uniquely difficult internal problem in their bid to integrate around a common culture (Rauf 1974:107). This problem stemmed from their highly diverse backgrounds, their different languages, and the fact that the memory of their traditions was forgotten or vague (Rauf 1974:107). The indentured labourers were faced with

a social need but found that their traditions were too diversified and many had been forgotten.

This development reminds us of Hobsbawm's explanations of the contexts in which traditions are invented. According to Hobsbawm, traditions are invented in two main contexts: when changes in social conditions render existing traditions ineffectual and when old traditions become attenuated (Hobsbawm 1983:4). Traditions according to Hobsbawm are invented in these contexts to provide the inventors with a sense of identity. The Indian indentured labourers after settling in Guyana faced both of these situations (Hobsbawm 1983:4).

In keeping with Hobsbawm's description of the invention of tradition the Hindu indentured labourers tried to reproduce their past traditions as exactly as possible from their shared memories (Rauf 1974:107). The anthropologist Rauf describes the process vividly in the following words:

...They tended to hold strongly to their past traditions and tried to replicate as nearly as possible the Indian practices the knowledge of which was a part of their shared memory. To be Indian in the true sense was of great value to this group... (1974:107).

Traditional Indian ideas and customary practices were reintroduced and reinvigorated for the purpose of infusing in the immigrants a sense of their Indian identity. According to Rauf, beliefs in Indian concepts such as karma, and

dharma, and cultural notions such as the sanctity of the cow were reworked and reinforced by this generation in order to emphasize their "Indianess" (Rauf 1974:107). In the context of Hobsbawm's analysis, this era in the history of Indians in Guyana would best be described as a period of the rejuvenation of the Hindu tradition as a powerful cultural symbol of group integration. In this context, a general Hindu tradition was invented by the Indian immigrants as a foundation for the establishment of their "Indianess".

As a detailed discussion of process of the invention of tradition in Guyana is not possible because of the lack of documentation, I provide only three illustrations of aspects of the "invented" Hindu tradition in Guyana from my analysis of the historical evidence. These are the institution of the Brahman, the religious role of the pandit and the practice of Kali worship.

The Brahmanical office is the most eminent in the Hindu caste system.⁵ The high status of the Brahmanical office issues not only from scriptural or legal backing, but also from the role the Brahman holds in society (Dumont 1970; Hutton 1963; Sharma 1977). Brahmans are primarily charged with the performance of priestly duties on behalf of the society and they essentially symbolise the link between the sacred and the secular world (Kinsley 1993:153; Sharma 1977). Through the practice of his duties, the Brahman priest maintains the harmonious balance between society and its divine protectors. The functions of the Brahman priest are therefore crucial to

the maintenance of order (Fuller 1992:106). On this account, he enjoys many exclusive privileges in Hindu society. Brahmans are perceived as knowledgeable people and greatly revered on this account. They function as social counsellors and advisors on scriptural and legal matters and they often served in the courts of Hindu Kings both as priests and counsellors (Sharma 1977). Because of these traditional functions, the Brahmanical institution is imbued with authority superseding any other institution in Hindu society. The Brahman is an important community symbol of authority. Everybody looks up to the Brahman for leadership in Hindu society. Attainment to Brahmanical status is by birth. It is not an office that can be achieved by human effort or assigned (Sharma 1977:1). In his account of the invention of Hindu traditions in Guyana, Rauf points out that the Hindu immigrants could not reproduce the caste system in its entirety and exact native Indian form (Rauf 1974:107).⁶ From his account we surmise that the difficulty issued from the fact that each of the villages from which the indentured labourers immigrated must have had a local caste system unknown or inapplicable elsewhere. This situation made it quite impracticable to assign specific castes to individuals in the new, Guyanese situation. Smith (1962) also summarises the Guyanese Hindu caste situation in the following words:

Caste no longer exists, except in a very attenuated form which is of minor significance, so that one of the distinguishing characteristics of traditional Hinduism is completely absent (Smith 1962:120).

Interestingly, however the Brahman priesthood as an institution was retained and it was imbued with much of its traditional symbolic Indian authority by the indentured labourers (Rauf 1974:107). This inventive exception, one suspects must have been on account of the indispensability of the Brahmanical institution in religious and social organisation as I have described above.

The Guyanese Brahman institution must however be understood as an invented Hindu institution and we must recognise that it has assumed new inflections (Rauf 1974:107). The traditional Indian qualification of "birth" and "ritual purity" as the distinguishing marks of Brahmanhood became less significant in Guyana (Rauf 1974:107). Prime importance in the new setting was rather attached to personal "conduct" and "knowledge" of Indian traditions and customary practices (Rauf:107). According to the new criteria, Brahmanhood is really an achievable status in Guyanese Hindu society, and is no longer exclusively assumed by birth. It is not clear what procedure is used to determine who has acquired enough knowledge and who has led a life worthy enough of emulation to become a Brahman according to the new criteria but it would appear that any ordinary member of society has the potential of becoming a Brahman and could officiate in religious ceremonies as a priest.

One suspects that there are at least some self-designated Brahman individuals or families.

It must be stressed that in inventing the Brahman priesthood tradition in Guyana, the indentured labourers were responding to the exigencies of their social conditions. In a situation of a general absence of naturally born Brahmans and pressured by the times for an authoritative symbol of tradition, the indentured Hindus acted in expediency in compromising the rigid requirements of natural birth and ritual purity.

At the risk of oversimplifying, I would suggest that in pure Indian Hindu terms the legitimacy of a Guyanese Hindu Brahman is in question. The question is difficult because we cannot be sure whether his Brahmanhood is a recreated one or whether it does in fact involve a biological lineage. As Brahmanhood becomes a humanly assigned status in the Hindu diaspora it is possible that there will be self designated Brahmans among the invented stock. The aspiration to attain a higher status in society is an inherent human trait and where the opportunities avail for individual Hindus to become Brahmans, it is quite likely that some will seize this opportunity. As later chapters of this study will however show, it is not for outsiders to judge the authenticity of the Guyanese Hindu Brahman. What is more important is how the Guyanese Hindus perceive Brahmanhood and how they evaluate the status of the invented Brahman office.

THE GUYANESE PANDIT AS AN INVENTED RELIGIOUS SPECIALIST

Even more complicated than the institution of the Brahman is the invention of the office of the Guyanese Hindu pandit. In the traditional Hindu setting a pundit was a teacher or a learned scholar (Kinsley 1993:188). He especially teaches traditional grammar and philosophy (Kinsley 1993:188). Hindu pundits are not usually associated with ritual duties, though Majumdar (1962) mentions an instance where people consulted pandits on spiritual matters in an Indian village (Majumdar 1962:323). Some consultation might be in order because by virtue of their scholarship, which includes knowledge of the sacred texts and religious discourses, pandits may be regarded as qualified to offer counsel and guidance in spiritual and ritual matters. The traditional Hindu office of the pandit is nevertheless a scholarly office and not a religious one. The designation "Pandit" or "pandiji" in Indian Hinduism is a mark of high scholastic achievement somewhat quite similar to the "Rabbi" in the Judaic tradition.

The Guyanese Hindu pandit is an invented office. The title defines an office much broader in meaning than is implied in the Indian setting. The Guyanese pandit seems to somehow combine the roles of a Brahman priest and a guru or spiritual master.

A guru in the Hindu religious tradition according to Narayan is a person who has "achieved mystical insights" and who transmits the knowledge

so gained from such insights to a network of disciples (Babb 1986:35; Narayan 1989:82). The term guru denotes a person of eminent status (Narayan 1989:82). Gurus are accorded great reverence as mystics with unparalleled superhuman insight (Babb:1986 62-63, 75; Narayan 1989:82). Gurus are believed to enlighten their followers on truths out of reach of commonsense understanding. Individuals either follow their family guru or arbitrarily determine their own guru to whom they relate on a highly "personal" level (Kinsley 1993:148; Narayan 1989:82). The gurus's office and status is sustained by the network of followers he or she has and this following in turn depends largely on their charismatic attributes which appeal to his or her followers (Babb 1986:178-179; Narayan 1989:84). The fame and popularity of some gurus earns them the loyalty of an expansive network of followers some of which extend beyond the Indian subcontinent and gurus such as Sai Baba have achieved international fame for their miracles (Babb 1986:184-185).

The three traditional offices of Brahman, Pandit, and the Guru, seem to have coalesced into the office of the Guyanese Hindu pandit. In the first place the Guyanese pandit officiates in the temple, at other religious ceremonies and during the performance of customary rites in the capacity of a priest (Klass 1961:147).

On a more social, level the pandit functions as a counsellor and a spiritual guardian dealing with members of the community on a client basis. In

this capacity the pandit becomes a guru or godfather for many families (Klass 1961:146-147). He oversees the welfare of his godchildren until they are ready to marry and he presides over the marriage ceremony (Klass 1961:146-147; Rauf 1970:86-89). In this form of pandit-client relationship one sees the replication of the traditional guru-follower relationship. Even though he performs the traditional functions of a Brahman priest, the Guyanese pandit also operates very much according to the model of the guru as well.

The pandit's status is clearly dependent on the support of his network of clients or followers. As noted by Harasingh while describing a similar development in Trinidad, individual zeal, acclaimed knowledge and "personal attributes" are elements that pandits draw on to sustain and expand their network of clients and also to secure their reputation (Harasingh 1987:174). This underscores the fact that in the Guyanese Hindu, or Caribbean context, charisma, communal support and approval clearly overshadow the traditional Hindu elements of birth and ritual purity as the basis for developing the priesthood.

It is not known how exactly this development came about in Guyana. In the absence of any ethnographic study done on the phenomenon we may risk some suggestions. One might suggest in the first place that the development of the pandit office was a practical response to the absence of men of the Brahman caste in Guyana to serve as priests. In such a situation,

individuals reputed to be good pandits were asked to assume priestly roles as well.

Secondly the development of the office of the pandit could have been a further development of the invented Brahman institution. As Brahmanhood had become an achievable office and was no more based on birth, the possibility was opened to individuals to manipulate popular support in claiming the office. A show of religious zeal, a claim to exclusive knowledge or a display of charismatic attributes were certain to earn one the allegiance of the client network whose support was required to legitimate one's claim to Brahmanhood (see Harisingh 1987:174-175).

Thirdly the institution of Pandit could also have developed from the influence of elements of the African traditional religion practised by the Creoles in Guyana. The traditional priest in African religion especially in West Africa is also an important community figure imbued with traditional authority (Mbiti 1992:183; Opoku 1978:75). He is the community spiritual leader, a representative and spokesman for the communities' deities and ancestors and intercedes on the behalf of the community (Mbiti 1992:183; Opoku 1978:75). He is a the village medicine man, or the witch doctor, and he deals with members of his community on a client basis (Twumasi 1975: 34-35). The ubiquitousness of the priest's social and religious functions marks him out as a figure of communal authority. From the descriptions of his roles in the Guyanese Hindu

communities, the Pandit resembles the traditional African priest. Considering the cultural context of this development, I suggest that the Guyanese Hindu institution of the Pandit could be a replication of a Creole traditional practice. This development is possible not only because African religious practices are still prevalent among the Creole population, although in invented forms (Smith 1960:35-46), but also because in immigrant societies, the traditions of earlier arrivals tend to structure the norms and practices of later arrivals. As later arrivals Indian indentures could have modelled some of their practices after already established Creole norms. The following passage by Smith (1962) describes how "obeah" a West African derived occultic practice involving spirit invocation and possession is embraced by African as well as East Indian specialists:

When the Indians came they brought with them a collection of lore which was not basically dissimilar to that possessed by the Africans and there has been a remarkable merging of beliefs and practices into one general colony wide system common to all. Today the majority of the obeah men are East Indians...(Smith 1962:125-126).

Such instances provide a strong case for the possibility of intercultural borrowing between the East Indians and Africans.

The invention of Kali worship which I will discuss shortly is even more obviously an illustration of this point. Whatever informed its invention, the Guyanese Hindu Pandit was invented because the traditional institution of the

priest and the requirements proved to be redundant in the face of the new social conditions of the indentured labourers. As they required a symbol of authority to legitimate life in their communities they invented the Pandit institution (Hobsbawm 1983).

KALI WORSHIP IN GUYANA AS INVENTED AND ACCULTURATED

As I have tried to show from the historical evidence, a fierce drive to demonstrate a sense of Indianess characterised the behaviour of East Indians in Guyana in the years immediately following the end of the indentureship. This drive manifested itself in the inventive process of which the Pandit and Brahman institutions are illustrations. The force of this inventive process did not however seem to have a longlasting effect on East Indians in Guyana. Younger generations did not seem to share the strong sense of Indian identity that drove their ancestors to invent their traditions (Rauf 1970: 109).

Caught up in a post-independent Guyanese era of increasing urbanization and a preoccupation with social mobility, this generation tended to be more receptive to change and acculturation. Concern for the maintenance of an Indian identity gave way to a preoccupation with urbanization, acquisition of Western education, conversion to Christianity and interaction with larger Guyanese society among the younger generation (Smith 1962:141). The implication of this development is that with the younger generations, the Hindu

tradition was becoming increasingly Westernized and Creolized and more vague. Rauf captures the situation of post-indentured Guyanese Hindu generations vividly:

...people in the younger generation cannot name places in India from which their ancestors came. They can trace their ancestry back only to their Guyanese ancestors. Their knowledge about Indian tradition is derived from secondary sources and represents for the most part, a watered down version of the original tradition (1974:18).

From Rauf's description it could be surmised that the rate of de-Indianization increased with the generations. In another episode, Rauf demonstrates the extent of the acculturation process among members of the younger generation:

... during marriage ceremonies, while the older generations exhibited deep respect for the sanctity of the events, the younger generation celebrated the occasion in the Creole fashion by holding drinking parties, playing cards and performing suggestive dances.

The anthropologist further describes how the married couple after hurrying through with traditional Hindu rites and rituals changed into typical "European Western style wedding gown and veil and full suit" (Rauf 1970:110). The point of citing these instances is to show the extent to which the present generation of East Indians in Guyana, unlike their predecessors, seem to have assimilated to a Westernized or Creolized way of life.

In what follows I analyze the worship of Kali in Guyana as another illustration of the level of acculturation to which the invented Hindu tradition was subjected in the subsequent years after the indentureship.

Kali is a famous Hindu goddess with a reputation for being frightening and terrible. Her attributes have been clearly summarised by Kinsley in the following words:

She is always black or dark, is usually naked and has long dishevelled hair... she has long , sharp fangs ,is always depicted as having clawlike hands with long nails, and is often said to have blood smeared on her lips. ...She is usually shown on the battle field, where she sits on a corpse surrounded by jackals and goblins (Kinsley 1986:116).

Kali, as Kinsley's description suggests, clearly contradicts the stereotypic submissive faithful Hindu wife or mother model of many goddesses. In spite of this character, Kali's worship is popular in India especially among lower caste people in Bengal and other parts of the south, for whom Kali symbolises motherly protection (Bassier 1987; Kinsley 1986; Nicholas 1982; Preston 1980).⁷

Tamils and other South Indians regard Kali as the wife of Siva and credit her in their lore for her role in the destruction of a devilish race (Bassier 1987:270). In Kali worship, blood which features greatly, symbolises fertility, and the vigour of life represented by her strength and dominion over demons in the mythology (Preston 1980:10). Blood sacrifice which is a regular feature of

Kali worship is therefore intended to satisfy Kali's insatiable craving for blood (Kinsley 1986:131).

In Guyana, a form of Kali worship is practised among descendants of South Indian indentured immigrants (Bassier 1987 :279). My analysis of this form of worship as an invented tradition is based on Bassier's description (1987).

In describing Kali worship as "invented" I look first at the social context in which it developed. Guyanese Hindu control over politics began to wane after 1964 when Dr. Cheddi Jagan, an East Indian statesman, lost the seat of government to a Creole dominated political party (Bassier 1987). In the years that followed, there was a resurgence of the Creole antagonism against the East Indians and the latter became subjected to acts of discrimination and intimidation by the Creole population (Bassier 1987:278-279). Feeling alienated and disillusioned by the political system, East Indians responded by forming ethnic organisations as a basis for demonstrating their Indian solidarity and they "invented" a form of Kali worship as an identity symbol (Bassier 1987: 270-293). The popularity of Kali worship after 1964 therefore is attributed to the drastic change in the conditions of the East Indian immigrants in Guyana and in this connection was an "invention" or a rejuvenation of a past Indian form of worship for Indian groups faced with the need for an identity and a symbol of protection and vitality.

Bassier's account reveals a number of innovations which have developed in Kali worship over the years. In the first place Kali temples are normally referred to as "churches," an exclusively Christian term (Bassier 1987: 281, 285, 290). The usage of this term betrays the possible Christian backgrounds of the practitioners but also the Christian flavour in Kali worship in Guyana. Together with the weekly congregational pattern of worship which has been adopted by the practitioners of Kali worship in Guyana (Bassier 1987:284), the term "Church" is an indication that Western cultural forms have blended into what is supposed to be a Hindu worship form.

Furthermore, though basically Hindu in origin, Kali worship is embraced in Guyana by different racial and ethnic groups and people with differing religious orientations (Bassier 1987:284). It has become a universalised form of religious practice, "a melting pot" as Bassier describes it (Bassier 1987:284). Bassier writes about non-Indians, especially the Creole, who embrace Kali worship with the explanation that there is a striking resemblance between the worship of Kali and elements of their West African traditional religious heritage (Bassier 1987:284). Although quite subjective, one sees from his account traits of a West African cultural practice in Kali worship. This is the practice of fire eating, a common West African traditional religious expression of the potency of ones' spiritual prowess (Bassier 1987:284).⁸

Signs of inventiveness are also seen in the re-interpretation of traditional Hindu beliefs associated with Kali. Kali's destruction of the demons and consumption of their blood is no longer attributed to her insatiable craving for blood, in Guyana (Bassier 1987:286). Rather, this is explained as the only recourse of action opened to the Goddess, and blood sacrifices made during Kali worship in Guyana is not perceived as satisfying Kali's craving for blood but as a re-enactment of Kali's mythological victory over the demons (Bassier 1987:286).

Bassier's description of Kali worship in Guyana indicates elements of cultural ambiguity. Kali worship does not seem to have a clearly defined cultural status. It seems to combine Western, Hindu as well as Creole cultural elements in its Guyanese form. As Hobsbawm (1983:10) indicates, such ambiguous elements are traits of invented traditions. In this connection it seems reasonable to suggest that Kali worship as it is practised in Guyana is an illustration of a Hindu worship form invented, and later influenced by a process of acculturation.

To conclude this discussion, I will summarise the main points of the chapter's argument. As this chapter has demonstrated, Hinduism lost much of its essential nature as its organised practice was greatly stifled during the Indian indentureship in Guyana. When they were confronted with the issue of existing in Guyana as a cultural unit after the indentureship, Hindu immigrants revived their lost traditions as a symbol of their Indian identity. This process

demonstrates clearly the correlation between the creation of identity and the invention of tradition. Elements of the Hindu tradition were substantially modified in this inventive process. The Hindu caste system for instance became greatly de-emphasised. "Invented" Brahman and Pandit institutions emerged. As subsequent generations became heavily acculturated and the majority converted to Christianity, the status of the Hindu religious tradition became increasingly vague and unclear. This change is seen in the form in which Kali worship is practised. Its vagueness and ambiguity are signs of an invention but also a testament of the general status of Guyanese Hindu Culture. Highly acculturated, combining Creole, Hindu, as well as Western elements, Guyanese Hindu culture has no clearly defined status. For Hindus in Guyana this might not have any significant implication, but as we shall see in subsequent chapters of the thesis this development has significant implications for the members of the Radha Khrishna Hindu temple in Cambridge.

The members of the Radha Krishna Hindu temple appeared on the Canadian cultural scene with an unclear traditional and religious status or identity. Soon they realised that their survival in the new multi-ethnic environment of Canada as a cultural unit depended on their identification with a specifically defined tradition. Sensitized to this need especially by the presence of East Indian immigrant groups coming directly from India and considering their traditions to be "pure," Guyanese Hindus were plagued by a feeling of insecurity

and intimidation. They would have to invent a "new" Hindu tradition in Canada if they were to exist as a cultural unit and in this process the religious tradition began to undergo yet a second process of invention. As the focus of the thesis shifts to Canada in the next part, we shall see how this new inventive process in Canada is gradually unfolding.

Notes

1. I have drawn largely on concepts and ethnographic work on India as well as Guyana to develop my arguments in this chapter. The use of the concept of "invented tradition" to analyze the Hindu experience and the development of the religion in Guyana is however, my contribution. Also the treatment of the Guyanese Hindu institution of the Pandit, and Brahmanhood and such worship forms as Kali worship as instances of this inventive process and the suggestions made in this regard are mine.
2. British Guyana attained independence from Britain in 1966 and dropped the prefix "British" from its official name from then. See Despres's account on the History of British Guyana under the topic "Guyana" in Encyclopedia Americana 1994, Vol.13, page 634.
3. Other indentured labourers from the Indian subcontinent immigrated to other islands such as Trinidad, Jamaica, St. Lucia and St. Vincent, all in the Caribbean region, in subsequent years to work on sugar cane plantations (Mansingh 1987:271).
4. A number of reasons are offered to explain why many indentured labourers settled in Guyana after the indentureship in spite of their original plans to return home at the end of the contract. Rauf (1974:47) records in his ethnography on a Guyanese Hindu village a story recounted to him by one of his informants to explain how his grandfather (the narrator's) had married an untouchable girl and could not return to face the consequences of breaking a basic caste marital rule in his original Indian village. It might be that such intercaste marriages were quite common and partners or their children risked the possibility of stigmatization if they returned to their native Indian villages. Other scholars attribute this development to the suitability of Guyanese geographical conditions for indentured labourers who came from Indian villages with similar geographical characteristics (see Bassier 1987:274). It is also possible that having crossed the "ocean" on their journey to Guyana, indentured labourers had become ritually contaminated and did not know what to expect if they went back (see Crowley 1960:851).
5. For a discussion of the Indian Caste ideology and social structure, (see Dumont (1970), Hutton (1963), and Kinsley (1993 Ch. 8).
6. Rauf does not use the concept of "invention of tradition" to define these developments though it is implicit in his analysis. I am analyzing his account from the point of view of this concept as Hobsbawm defines it.

7. Bengal occupies the deltaic regions of India where the sacred river Ganges empties into the Indian Ocean. A distinct element of Bengali culture is the celebration of motherhood. Mothers are perceived as deputies of fathers and expected to be accorded almost the same degree of reverence and dedication by their offsprings as fathers. This development is reflected in the unique significance that is attached to goddess worship in Bengali culture and Kali is one of the most important Bengali goddesses. A Kali shrine in Calcutta, the capital of the Bengal region, is an important pilgrimage spot in India. See Nicholas's essay "The Village Mother in Bengal" (1982:193-209). See also Whitehead, "The Village Gods Of South India" (1921:17).

8. The practice among traditional priests or priestesses of cults known as "voodoo shrines" or of ordinary individuals believed to possess occult powers putting such powers to test is a common West African cultic practice. Among my native Ewe, the ability of a traditional priest or a magically powerful individual to "eat" a piece of hot burning wood, or cut him or herself with a razor-sharp blade without showing pain is seen as a sign of great potency. There is a probability that this West African practice, possibly retained in some form among the Creole, has infiltrated into Kali worship. As Bassier describes the practices, devotees of Kali demonstrate the potency of their "supernatural powers" by enduring the ordeal of being whipped with horse-tail whips or consuming fire or molten camphor without showing any sign of pain (Bassier 1987:284) Given the West African origins of the Creoles, one thinks it is reasonable to suggest that such African practices are finding their way into Hindu religious forms in Guyana.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EXPERIENCE OF IMMIGRATION

INTRODUCTION

The discussion of how the Radha Krishna Hindu temple in Cambridge came into being is started in this chapter on the experience of immigration. In discussing this history we will see why the Guyanese Hindu immigrants in Cambridge came to feel that the formation of a worshipping community was a necessity in their new situation. In this chapter I start to make the argument that the origin of the temple was a response to the situation the Guyanese Hindus found themselves in first as immigrants but more importantly as a cultural unit involved in a second migratory experience. This second migratory process places Guyanese Hindus in a unique cultural situation which has reinforced their need to construct their own very specific sense of ethnic identity drawing on a reconstructed Hindu religion as a central cultural focus. The temple therefore can be seen as a religious response to a social need. The social need arose when the community found that in an important way it was set apart from both the wider community of North America and the immigrant community which had come directly from India.

My discussion of the temple's history will be placed within the broader context of Hinduism as it is practised in the larger Hindu immigrant community. In certain general ways the circumstances of the Radha Khrisna temple's origin in Cambridge are consistent with a general pattern of development emerging in Hinduism as it is practised outside its traditional Indian homeland. It is, however, distinctive at the same time because the community is made up almost exclusively of people from Guyana and because some of the local features of the community evolved in the smaller urban environment of Cambridge itself. In what follows I briefly describe as a prelude to the discussion, some general trends that seem to be emerging with regards to the origin of temple communities in the practice of Hinduism in Hindu immigrant communities.

EMERGING TRENDS IN ORIGIN OF HINDU TEMPLES

Traditionally, there has been a relationship in Hinduism between the origin of temples and political developments in Hindu society (Michell 1977:53, 89). The building of many Hindu temples was sponsored by religiously zealous Hindu rulers or members of a particular elite who at the same time often determined the architectural styles of the temples (Michell 1977:89). Many Hindu temples, are therefore, products of the initiatives of the elite in society.

When Hindus conquered other territories or became involved in trade in other lands, it was also the new Hindu rulers or the newly wealthy merchants who sponsored the building of temples and it was they who sent for Brahman priests from the Indian homeland to preside over worship in the newly constructed temples (Burghart 1987:3).

In India and in nearby areas where the Hindu religious tradition was embraced, the role of royalty and aristocracy in the origin of temples is a well known phenomenon (Michell 1977:89; Preston 1980:25). One explanation why only the elite seem to have been involved in building major temples could be the exterior elaborateness of Hindu temples. Because it was considered important to make temples elaborate, their construction was an expensive project which could be financed only by wealthy rulers and wealthy members of society (Michell 1977). Temples, therefore, had great political significance and became symbolic expressions of the power and wealth of the rulers.¹ The point here is to stress the significance of the linkage between royalty, aristocracy and the sponsorship or patronage of religious life in Hinduism.

Though quite sparse, studies on Hindu immigrant communities show certain interesting modifications emerging in the social units responsible for the origin of Hindu temples (Bowen 1987:16 Knott 1987:165; Taylor 1987:117). There is first of all a close connection between the specific social situation of the Hindus who are immigrants in host cultures, and the nature of the temple

community. The origin of temple communities in immigrant settings seems to result from the need of the Hindu immigrants in their respective new societies to come together as a unit and define a common Indian ethnic identity. In this connection I suggest that Hindu temples are becoming significant as communal rallying points for Hindu immigrants. Social factors rather than political power or accumulated wealth, are largely responsible for the origin of the temples in the immigrant settings. This represents a general shift in the nature of the political significance attached to temples.

Secondly, there seems to be in immigrant communities a tendency for temples to evolve around Hindu priests or zealous laymen. Some of these priests are not always necessarily men of Brahman descent as was the case in the traditional Hindu settings. The leaders in the immigrant temple communities are ordinary members of their communities believed to possess divine attributes which are taken as the main basis of their charisma.

Ethnographic studies on Hinduism in Great Britain, for instance, have shown that lay members or ordinary working class Hindu immigrants, have been largely responsible for the origin of temples in the Hindu immigrant communities. In Taylor's study of the "Community of the Many Names of God" a Sri Lankan Saivite temple community in Leeds, he relates the story of Guru Subramaniam, the son of a lay Sri Lankan Buddhist. Subramaniam became the pivot of a Hindu temple community in Wales after an alleged spiritual encounter

with Siva in which he became endowed with superhuman qualities (1987: 100-117).

In the Caribbean Hindu communities, it seems to be the pandits who are the "hub" around which temples develop (Klass 1961:146). Some of these pandits were "ordinary" members of society, who became gurus and are not necessarily of priestly background or pure Brahman lineages (Klass 1961:147-149; Rauf 1974:93). These men sometimes attained their status as pandits through training, but must simply depend on the support of fellow pandits or the patronage of a network of clients in the community for establishing their legitimacy as pandits (Klass 1991:62,97; 1961:147-149). On account of the respected social role they are given and the recognition accorded them by their communities as spiritual leaders, they become rallying points for the members of the community (Klass 1961:149; Rauf 1974:95-96). The role of these charismatic men in the development and running of the temple communities of the Caribbean has been crucial (Klass 1991:40).

In general I agree with Burghart (1987:231) in suggesting that in Hindu immigrant communities lay Hindus are taking on leadership roles and are playing a more active role in the development of temples. This new trend is not occurring in isolation. It is one of the adaptive responses Hindu immigrants are making to their host cultures. Living in the midst of "strange" people and customs, Hindu immigrants have found that they need to be less attached to

specific features of traditional Hindu ritual, to caste and to geographically defined custom, and they need to act in concert as one ethnic group. Hindu temples become important rallying points for creating an ethnic identity for the whole Hindu community. There is a connection between the origin of Hindu temple communities and the quest to create Hindu ethnic identities.

It is in the context of this general trend in Hinduism as it is practised in Hindu immigrant communities that we must understand the origin and the development of the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple in Cambridge. To understand how the temple originated, the specific migratory experience of Guyanese Hindus, and the pivotal role of the pandit (formerly a lay worshipper) will be seen as factors in the development of the temple community.

GUYANESE HINDU IMMIGRATION INTO CANADA

The history of the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple as a religious institution has not been treated in this study as an isolated incident but is examined within the broader context of the migratory experiences of Guyanese as an immigrant group in Canada. The temple has assumed a central role as a symbol of the community, and its origin was closely linked with the situation of the Guyanese Hindus as an immigrant group in Canada. It becomes necessary therefore to start our discussion by understanding something of the nature of this immigration process.

Migrating into Canada from Guyana was hardly possible before the 1960s (Henry 1994; Walker; Wood 1983). Canadian immigration policy prior to that time was very restrictive and non Europeans, were generally not allowed entry into Canada (Henry 1994:121; Walker 1984:10; Wood 1983:6-7). The United States and Great Britain were at that time the more common destinations for immigrants from the Caribbean (Walker 1984:10).

Apart from students from the Caribbean who were permitted to study in Canadian universities, and soldiers who had fought for the British in the Second World War, the only avenue opened to people from the Caribbean to enter Canada was through the "West Indian Domestic Scheme" (Henry 1994:121; Walker 1984:10). This was a special program involving the recruitment of young single females from the Caribbean to work as domestic servants for Canadian families (Walker 1984:10). This scheme did not involve people from Guyana primarily, and it is not even known whether any Guyanese Hindu women came to Canada through this arrangement.

From 1962 onwards, however, immigration policies in Canada became more relaxed towards Third World immigrants, when a number of changes were made in the regulations (Henry 1994:121; Wood 1983:7). Under the new regulations, entry to Canada was granted to immigrants irrespective of race or place of origin (Li 1991:264).

Even though sponsorship of relatives was still a major source of immigration, a new system was introduced whereby individuals with relevant skills were selected from their home countries and granted immigrant status in Canada (Wood 1983:7). Many people from the Caribbean countries took advantage of this new system with the result that a wave of skilled and semi-skilled immigrants from the Caribbean including Guyanese made an influx into Canada especially between 1967 and 1981 (Li 1991: 264).

Studies dealing exclusively with Guyanese Hindus in Canada are relatively few. Immigration documents dealing exclusively with Guyanese Hindus as a cultural unit are equally rare. It is apparent that Guyanese Hindus are classified by various authors either as South Asians or East Indians, or simply as Caribbean. This fact foreshadows the identity problem these immigrants were going to face in the years to come.

In one of the few studies on Guyanese and Trinidadian Hindus in Canada, Ramcharam (1983) mentions two important factors as being responsible for their immigration to Canada. The first of these was a desire to escape harsh social and economic conditions in Guyana and to avail themselves of opportunities for employment and higher standard of living in Canada (Ramcharan 1983:52).

The second reason why Guyanese Hindus migrated to Canada at this time according to Ramcharan was political "intimidation" of Hindus

associated with the initial establishment of a Creole dominated government in Guyana in the late 1960's (Ramcharan 1983:52). The long standing antagonism of the Creole and Hindus resurfaced after 1964 following the overthrow of Hindu leader Cheddi Jagan and the establishment of a Creole dominated government with the resultant discriminatory policies against Hindus (Bassier 1987:277-279; Ramcharan 1983:52). This situation created a new and specific impetus for Guyanese Hindus to flee to greener and safer pastures in Canada and to other more developed Western societies (Bassier 1987:278; Ramcharan 1983:52).

In keeping with their aspirations for employment and the enjoyment of a higher standard of living, the Guyanese Hindu immigrants settled predominantly in the urban centres of Canada even though they had lived in the countryside in Guyana (Ramcharan 1982: 52-53). The greatest number settled in the province of Ontario with the largest percentage of these in Toronto (Ramcharan 1982: 52-53). Montreal and Quebec have also been noted as attracting a number of Guyanese Hindu immigrants and pockets of them also settled in communities in Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia (Ramcharan 1982:52-53). As the present study is focused on the worshippers of the Radha Krishna Hindu temple in Cambridge our discussion will be based on accounts of their migratory experiences.

PERIOD OF MIGRATION

A striking characteristics of the Radha Krishna Hindu temple community is the number of years the majority of the worshippers claim they have lived in Canada. In fact the average number of years of a typical worshipper's stay in Canada is between fifteen and twenty years. It follows that the majority of the members of the Radha Krishna temple community arrived in Canada within the period of heavy immigration between 1971 and 1981 with a few from a slightly earlier time. Some of the worshippers are however relatives of earlier arrivals and came under the sponsorship of the latter. Some of these "late comers" arrived as late as two years ago. We may presume that as the migratory process is a continuous one, new members of the community must be arriving in Canada everyday.

REASONS FOR MIGRATING TO CANADA

In terms of their expressed reasons for migrating to Canada, members of the temple community dramatically reiterate the two reasons reflected in Ramcharam's account (1983:52). The majority explain that the primary consideration underlying their immigration into Canada was the desire to find a job and to enjoy a higher standard of living which they often refer to as "the good life". The expression "good life," a common cliché among the

worshippers, refers invariably to the "benefits" supposed to accrue from their coming to Canada.

Patrick, a middle aged man and the secretary of the temple illustrates this point in his story. He arrived in Canada seventeen years ago after having been granted a landed immigrant status while in Guyana. Patrick had just completed training as an electrical technician in Guyana. On arrival to Canada, Patrick and his family had stayed for a few months in Toronto before moving to Hamilton later for work. The family moved to Cambridge when Patrick later got a job with the Ontario Hydro company. Patrick explains his reasons for coming to Canada:

Why do you think anyone would forsake his country, his friends and relatives to come all this way and live here for all these years? It is only because here we can find jobs. I mean good jobs... and make a decent living... a good life. We all want a good life. That's why you are studying or?(he spoke hesitantly). Even if you came here to school it is all for the good life... and perhaps for those of us lucky to make it here maybe it is good karma (meaning results of good conduct in a previous experience) that has brought us here.

Patrick looks back to the early days of his stay in Canada as "not very pleasant," He explained that although he felt he was quite well trained he could not easily find a job that matched his qualifications. "I felt really frustrated having to take any job that was available," he explained to me. Comparing his present condition to his peers still in Guyana he expressed great satisfaction

with what he described as his quite modestly successful life. "I wouldn't have achieved as much as I have if I hadn't come up here" says Patrick.

Pandit Danaan, one of the temple's priests re-echoes this point with his account:

I had just completed a college degree in chemistry and had signed a two year teaching contract with the Government. So, I had a job. But I was seeking better prospects. When I heard it was possible for one to come to Canada simply by applying for a "landed" I quickly sent for the papers and applied. Luckily I was granted my "landed" and a visa. But then I had to fulfil the terms of my contract first, so I allowed my brother to come... and he sponsored me later.

For Danaan it was not the quest for a job specifically, but the prospects of enjoying better living standards that motivated him to migrate to Canada. Other members of the temple community listed specific benefits of migrating: good education for themselves and their children as well as the prospects of enjoying a more decent life and being in a position to help relatives at home. Coming from a Third World society myself I was in a better position to understand the motives of the worshippers for migrating to Canada. In Guyana as in most other Third World societies with unstable economies, migrating to seek jobs in the more advanced Western countries is often viewed as the key to enhancing one's social mobility.

For some members however, there were secondary reasons for coming to Canada. As most of the women especially explained they had to emigrate from Guyana in order to be reunited with their spouses in Canada. Other members notably, children or relatives of initial immigrants offered similar explanations. Yet there were those for whom the sheer satisfaction of escaping the restricted life of Guyana and living in a Western society were factors that attracted them to Canada. After explaining that she came to Canada in 1981 envisioning to join her husband in Waterloo, a female member of the community who said she grew up in Georgetown, an urban setting in Guyana, explained her lifelong ambition to travel abroad in a casual conversation:

I have always dreamt of being like the people we saw in those Western movies... You know what I mean, people living in luxury, riding in all the nice cars, the sky scrapers and all that stuff. In Guyana we even heard that abroad, buying a car for example was just easy. Kids bought cars? can you just imagine that?... I always wanted to go abroad (she spoke in an excited mood).

For this lady who expressed so much satisfaction with her stay in Canada, life abroad held a different meaning for her when she was in Guyana. Her considerations were not necessarily economic, but the need to fulfil a curiosity about what it would be like to live in an environment she could only imagine during her youth.

For Mati a lady in her early thirties migration to Canada enabled a new beginning to life. Mati who has barely stayed in Canada for a year,

recounted her story: She had just come out of a bad marriage and had become a target of public ridicule in her Guyanese village on account of her decision to divorce her husband.² Unable to bear this, Mati escaped to Canada a year ago with the help of her mother who is a landed immigrant in Canada. For an individual like Mati, Canadian society offers a refuge from all forms of pressure from her traditional society.

One gets the impression that most Guyanese still in the homeland similarly yearn for an opportunity to travel abroad. Canada, Great Britain (which temple members refer to simply as London) and the United States (especially New York) were especially mentioned as places which hold special attraction for Guyanese Hindu immigrants.³ "If all Guyanese are granted visas to come to Canada today, I am sure that country would be empty in no time", commented a young member of the community, while stressing the overwhelming desire of Guyanese in the homeland to travel abroad. "Every body dreams of coming here," he concluded.

In our chats many of the worshippers recounted stories of the difficulties they went through trying to obtain visas to join their families or relatives in Canada, but while recounting these stories often their initial facial expressions of bitterness would change into a broad smile when they got to the climax of the story: the point at which a visa was finally granted by the officials of the Canadian High Commission. There, their whole life story came together

in the "once in a lifetime" opportunity to come to Canada. For worshippers and other Guyanese at home therefore, Canada symbolised a place of unlimited opportunities and hope, and the chance to come to Canada to "enjoy the good life" is seen as a lifespring.

Ramcharan's (1983) other observation about political and racial tension in Guyana was not reflected very strongly in the responses I received during my interviews. Some members of the temple did admit to the existence of tension between the ethnic groups in Guyana, but they always explained that incidents of open hostility were quite rare. Whether they down played the racial tensions because I was of African background I do not know, but members of the temple now describe their memory of Guyana as a country where they lived peacefully. One member explained that the hostility in Guyana was a thing of the past and the present generation gets along in all spheres of life. He pointed out that inter-marriages between different ethnic groups which were taboo in the past are now commonplace in Guyana. I suspect that Ramcharan has a point because there were sharp political clashes just at the time of heaviest emigration, but the members of the temple community do not remember Guyana in terms of those clashes.

MIGRATORY PATTERN

Listening to temple members recount their migratory experiences, I noticed a fairly consistent pattern in their stories. In the first place the majority of the members said they migrated from villages in Guyana. Apart from their relatives and a few friends, members hardly knew each other prior to their arrival in Canada. As they commonly explained, "we came here as strangers."

The majority of temple members especially the very early immigrants, normally the men but also a couple of women, said they arrived in Canada without their spouses in the hope of finding jobs. This move happened if they had been "lucky" as, they put it, to be one of those granted an immigrant status or a work permit while in Guyana. In a Canadian economy presumably experiencing a boom after the Vietnam War of the 1960s most of these Guyanese men and women explained that they had relatively little difficulty in finding jobs in factories and restaurants and in the construction and electrical firms of Hamilton, Toronto, Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo where they settled.

Worshippers explained that they performed different kinds of tasks in these work places: janitors, waiters, factory hands, security personnel. Others claimed they took on jobs as delivery boys, dishwashers and cleaners in restaurants. Some were also cab drivers. Some explained that in order to save enough money to sponsor their family members they sometimes did two jobs

and initially took on jobs irrespective of their skills and qualifications. Many changed jobs very often in their earlier years. Gilbert, a middle-aged member who joined his girl friend in Cambridge sixteen years ago lists a number of jobs which he has changed over the years. He explained that he held some of these jobs simultaneously. He had once been a "pizza delivery boy," driven a cab for a company in Waterloo, worked as a janitor cleaning a bank after working hours and he is currently working as a factory hand in Kitchener. The priest Danaan, recounted how after obtaining a college degree in Guyana, he arrived in Canada unable to easily find a suitable job:

You must understand why you have come into the system that's all... if you will worry about all your qualifications, you had better stayed put in Guyana... here you must be prepared to do any work that will give you something...

He went on to narrate how he faced difficulty looking for a job that suited his qualifications. He taught for sometime in a school and then decided to retrain and get a degree in Religious Studies at the University of Waterloo, but now works as a factory hand in a plant in Kitchener. Similar experiences are described by members as characterizing the first few years of their stay as immigrants in Canada.

After establishing themselves in Canada and saving enough money, worshippers said they sponsored their spouses, children and other relatives to come to Canada. Sponsorship of relatives is a major channel through which

subsequent immigrants arrive in Canada. Spouses of the male worshippers especially arrived in Canada through sponsorship.

Nevertheless some members of the temple explained that they originally came to Canada as "visitors", and then extended their visas and applied for a "landed" (Permanent Resident) status after they had found permanent jobs in Canada. A middle-aged male worshipper recounted how he had come to the U.S on an American-Guyana friendship association ticket, but did not return to Guyana after the year long-program. He came to Canada in 1973 on a Visitor's Visa and extended his stay after he found a job in Stoney Creek near Hamilton, Ontario. He became a Landed Immigrant subsequently and now lives in Kitchener with his family and works at an automobile factory. Even in the case of such members they always felt it was incumbent on them to sponsor a relative into Canada at a later date. The more elderly members often try to list the number of relatives they have "brought" into Canada and do so with a sense of pride. The pattern of migration is thus for one person to come first, and then literally "pull" other family members to Canada at later dates. I observed that worshippers who had not been among the initial immigrants were sponsored by their relatives - either a daughter, a son, an uncle, or an aunt or a brother or sister. The obligations on the individual to help fellow kinsmen in the context of Guyanese Hindu villages, where the "family" is defined in the communal sense of an extended network of kin relationships,

seems to find an expression in this pattern of chain migratory trend (See Rauf 1974:59).

CHOICE OF SETTLEMENTS

When I began the study, I wondered why Cambridge had a special attraction for the Guyanese Hindus. My initial impression was that there was a close-knit Cambridge community made up exclusively of Guyanese Hindus and that this served as a source of attraction for subsequent arrivals to Canada. In talking to the members of the temple I realised that no such Guyanese Hindu community existed. Members of the temple community have actually integrated quite thoroughly into larger Cambridge. I realised also that members of the community came all over from the various communities around Waterloo and Kitchener as well and they lived in relative isolation from each other. The "pull factor" in the members' decisions to reside in Waterloo, Cambridge and Kitchener was not the ties to a closed Guyanese Hindu kin community but the jobs available there. Of course some members live in these cities because they were the places they settled in when they joined their sponsors and because of the proximity to relatives and friends. As a family explained, they remained in Cambridge because that was the first place they settled in when they arrived in Canada and it was where they made their initial acquaintances. However, consistent with their original reason for leaving Guyana, the availability of

working opportunities was the greatest pull factor for the members of the temple community to the three cities of Cambridge, Waterloo and Kitchener. This pattern seems understandable as manufacturing plants abound in Kitchener, Cambridge and Waterloo and these offer members of the community avenues for gaining employment.

Some members did express a special preference for the small cities in contrast to such big ones as Toronto. "We come from small villages, and are not used to city life... we like to stay in the smaller places, they are more like home," explained a member. Such explanations were given mainly by the elderly members. The comment "Cambridge is small and quiet," recurred in the responses of worshippers to questions regarding why they chose to settle in Cambridge. I came away with the conclusion that for the majority of the members of the temple who migrated from small villages in Guyana, the choice of smaller cities was a deliberate attempt at minimising the effects of change and culture shock.

MIGRATORY EXPERIENCES

Members of the temple community tend to be quite general, vague and rather dismissive about their earlier experiences of life in Canada. For them the grim realities of initial difficulties seem to have become overshadowed by their success in adapting to Canada. Accounts of some of their retrospective

experiences in Canada contain allusions to the "hard days" of loneliness, shock, racism and many other challenges such as the difficulties encountered in getting stable jobs. An earlier migrant for instance recollects how he felt when while riding on a subway train in Toronto in 1977 a Canadian child kept pointing at him while whispering something to the mother:

I felt awkward and really bad, it was as if something was wrong with me. I just couldn't tell why the kid pointed at me. But it made me feel really different.

This member attributed the incident to racism which he explained was quite rife in the 1970s in Canada. Others often recounted, amidst outbursts of laughter, how intimidated and "stupid," they had felt initially in the face of Western technology on arriving in Canada. A lady recounted her experience with revolving doors:

Revolving doors and escalators! I always got confused whenever I used them. The first time I was in one (revolving door), I thought I was trapped in it. I still avoid them as much as I can. Then there are these shops with mirrors. I entered this shop in Kitchener and was admiring some clothes. I kept walking and walking only to see my face on the wall. The store looked bigger and bigger and it took me some time to realise that I was facing a mirror that made the room to look bigger. I felt really stupid that day.

Some others expressed intimidation or their feeling of "smallness" or how overwhelmed they were when they arrived in Toronto from their villages in Guyana for the first time. The cold winter conditions in Canada were also a

common complaint by members. "Grandpa" the temple's caretaker recounted his experience:

I arrived here in December 1977. After four days I got a job as diesel mechanic. On my first day at work I bared my back as I used to do in Guyana. "Hey! go put on something," they said to me. But I didn't mind... and I tell you I nearly died from Canada cold that day.

Nevertheless, there was a tendency among members to emphasize the remoteness of such incidents and experiences and to down play their effects. "Just one of those things you experience when you come to a new place," they would normally say. On the contrary they tend to have a fairly positive appraisal of their conditions in Canada. For many of them the ability to own a home, a car and have a stable job seems to have special significance. It was the mark of success. Often they would compare their present situation to that of their peers still in Guyana and say "We wouldn't be able to do these things had we remained in Guyana," or "Our peers are still struggling there."

Most of the members especially the elderly however, tend to share a common and grave concern for the younger generation (those born in Canada). Many feel that their children have no sense of their Guyanese cultural roots. They complained about what they described as a lack of discipline among Western children and lament that their children might grow up emulating these values. In fact, they are quite critical about Canadian or generally Western "moral values." For instance, while recommending what she describes as "extra

care" or concern for children in Canada, Grandma, one of the earliest arrivals and oldest member of the community thinks "The children are spoilt here. "You are even afraid to punish them when they go wrong lest they call to the authorities to be taken away from you. Comparing this situation to what prevails in their Guyanese villages, Grandma prefers the latter. "There they grow up learning to respect, and for a child respect is the thing" she says. "They are like coconuts," says Ted a young accounting clerk from Waterloo while describing Canadian born generations of the Guyanese Hindus. "Inside, they are white (Western). They are Guyanese only outside". His analogy of a coconut underscores the experience of Western assimilation that the younger generations are undergoing in Canada.

EARLIER RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES IN CANADA

In a previous section of this study, I mentioned that the East Indian indentureship which resulted in the earlier migration of East Indians from India to Guyana occurred in the early Nineteenth Century, starting in 1838. The members of the temple community belong to the fourth generation of these initial indentured migrants. That this generation of Guyanese has very little contact or direct knowledge about their native Indian homeland and the Hindu religious tradition as it is practised in India follows from their history as a

generation born outside their traditional Indian home and in an environment of increasing acculturation.⁴

None of the members described having ever visited India, though quite a few explained that some of their relatives had visited India at some time on pilgrimages or merely to see the "ancestral home." The majority of the members of the temple also explained that they neither spoke nor understood any of the traditional Indian languages. Worshippers described their knowledge about India and Hinduism as having been learned from their parents, grandparents and other relatives who in turn had passed on what had been transmitted to them by earlier generations. In addition some worshippers said they knew a little about India and Hinduism by practising the reinvented form of the tradition in Hindu temples or Kali churches and for a few, in the neo-Hindu groups such as Sai Baba, Arya Samaj, Divine Life Mission which have developed missions in Hindu immigrant communities. As was explained by a prominent member:

I have always been Hindu, My parents never became Christians. In Guyana, temples are known by the name of the village and our family attended church in the Mandir in our village in Georgetown(the Guyanese capital) every Sunday so... I (stressing the "I") learnt about the tradition from childhood.

What this fellow refers to as the "tradition" is however the invented Hinduism that he grew up inheriting from his parents.

The majority of the members including the pandit who founded the group had converted to Christianity or were born into semi Christian families in Guyana before they came to Canada.⁵ These members explained that they arrived in Canada as Christians and not as ardent followers of Hinduism. They had worshipped with a wide array of Christian denominations during the early years of their stay in Canada. For instance a family worshipped in a Catholic church during their early years in Toronto. When they moved later to Dunville, a small community between St. Catharines and Niagara Falls in Ontario, they worshipped with an Anglican congregation. Before the temple community was formed in 1975 this family worshipped with the Nazarene Church with a number of other Guyanese families in Cambridge. Likewise, the wife of one of the pandits had indicated on the first day of my visit to them that before her husband formed the group they had worshipped as Catholics. Proximity to a church and the availability of friends, preferably Guyanese but sometimes Trinidadian Hindus among the congregation according to some members determined which Christian churches they attended. Most of the members actually "converted" to Hinduism only after the temple community was formed.

I was told by a member who was a school teacher in Guyana prior to her arrival in Canada that conversion to Christianity by East Indians in Guyana was not usually the result of deep conviction. It was a question of expediency at various times in Guyanese history. Other worshippers were quick to remark,

that they were forced to be Christians in the mission schools they attended in Guyana.⁶ As was the case in many European colonies, schools were often the breeding-ground of church congregations. Schools were mission-controlled and natives who later on held positions in the church were almost always trained in these mission schools. Becoming Christian was often a corollary to becoming formally educated. For the Hindus of Guyana who saw education as a means of enhancing social mobility, going to school was inevitable, and that often meant giving up their traditional faith.

That members showed so much zeal in re-converting to Hinduism in Canada is significant. In a sense it underscores their yearning for the opportunity to reassert their traditional Hindu ethnic and religious identity more than a mere wish to practice the Hindu religion.

The very few members who had tried to maintain a Hindu religious identity in Guyana explained that after their arrival in Canada, the lack of Guyanese Hindu temples frustrated their effort to practise Hinduism. They said that they continued to perform some domestic rites and rituals but most did not do so regularly. Only a couple of these members claimed that they had been steadfast in the practice of Hinduism before the temple community was formed.

The point here is that traditional religious beliefs and practices especially when they constitute an indispensable aspect of a people's culture as in Hinduism are seldom totally lost or forgotten. They are so ingrained in a

society that they continue to be are a hidden part of peoples' lives and thoughts. However, conversion to other faiths and difficult historical circumstances sometimes render it impossible for people to practice their traditional religion. When this happens, the essentials of the peoples' indigenous religious beliefs and practices become vague in their minds and are sometimes even lost altogether. This appears to have been a pattern in the experiences of the temples members for whom it was not always possible to practice Hinduism for a number of generations.

To conclude, I briefly address the fundamental question of what these migratory experiences and backgrounds of members point to, regarding the focus of the study - the formation of a temple community and the invention of a Hindu tradition. First, the migratory trend described by the worshippers, indicates that new arrivals into Canada are somehow assured of a cushion against initial difficulties, as they are taken care of by the sponsors until they settle down in Canada. This nevertheless does not detract from the need of the community to create a group network. As migrants, seeking mainly for a means of earning a living in an unfamiliar environment, such group networks could be important in providing information on available job openings for example. Furthermore, the fact that members do not live in a closed community but rather in isolation from one another is very significant. This situation reinforces the threat of assimilation into mainstream culture but also creates the need for

a common venue for social interaction. Even though Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge are relatively small sub-urban communities, for immigrants from villages in a Third World, the pace and size as well as experiences of living in these places were overwhelming, as the members explained through their stories. Even the cold winter was a rude shock. Others such as Patrick experienced the additional shock of being pointed to as "different" in a predominantly white Canada. It is obvious that members would seek a group network to turn to for security and reassurance. As we shall see in subsequent discussions, the need for a group was underlain by such considerations.

Members' general critique of Western values and their expressed concern for the values of subsequent Guyanese Hindu generations born in Canada underscore a deeper concern to protect their ethnic values as a way of ensuring continuity of the Guyanese Hindu culture in Canada. In this connection it is important to note the implication of the status their own Hindu cultural heritage on their arrival in Canada, a fact which undoubtedly contributed to heightening their fears. They arrived as a generation of Hindus born in Guyana with little contact with India and the way Hinduism is practised there. Furthermore the majority were born into Christian families or had become assimilated into the Christian tradition by attending mission schools in Guyana. Thus, they do not speak either Hindi or Sanskrit or any of the Indian dialects. For the few persons who practised Hinduism before the temple was formed it is

apparent that all they knew about the religion was what their parents taught them, and what they saw in Hindu "churches" in Guyana. As immigrants in Canada, conditions again prevented most of them from taking up a regular practice of the version of the religion as they knew it, and they must have lost the essentials. In a sense, whether they considered themselves still to be Hindus or had converted to Christianity, the Guyanese Hindu immigrants seemed to have been seriously handicapped in their practice of religion prior to the creation of a temple community. An ambiguity characterised the status of their traditional as well as religious identity. Especially for the majority who worshipped as Christians in the earlier phases of their stay in Canada, their practice of moving from church to church is to be seen as symptomatic of a deeper struggle with this ambiguity and it points to the need for a specifically defined identity.

These Guyanese Hindu immigrants had two options: they could have given up on Hinduism altogether, or they could have blended into the Hindu temple communities that immigrants from India were forming in Canadian cities. They chose not to do either. As we shall see in the next chapter, for the concerns expressed by the immigrants about the present generation and other special reasons, they were determined to give expression to their own cultural identity. Nevertheless, in the face of the ambiguity that marked the status of their own cultural identity, their only recourse was to eventually invent their

"own" Hindu tradition. As we proceed to the next chapter, we shall see how the aforementioned concerns and conditions of this migrant group and other special considerations set into action the inventive drive that resulted in the formation of a Guyanese Hindu temple community.

Notes

1. The sponsoring of temple building by Hindu rulers also underscores a fundamental Hindu belief in the symbiotic relationship between religion and political life. The Hindu royal institution derives its central importance from its role as the protector of the kingdom and its subjects and a Hindu king's responsibility towards his subjects is the maintenance of harmony whenever it is threatened. As social order depends on the performance of religious duties, by building temples, kings were providing their subjects with facilities by which order is to be maintained (see Fuller 1992:106-1207).
2. This respondent was met at the bus terminal at Galt. She complained bitterly about what she explained as a hostile social climate in Canada. Even though she was relieved to have escaped all kinds of pressure at home she explained she still missed her five year old son back in Guyana. While a member of the temple community she explained that she was not a regular attendant to the pooja.
3. A visiting pandit from New York explained to me that his Mandir in New York was one of the largest Guyanese Hindu temples in the "world" with a population of more than a thousand devotees.
4. Refer to my discussion of the acculturation of younger generations of Guyanese Hindus in the previous chapter. The Cambridge generation are part of the younger generation being described by Rauf (1974:18)
5. The Anglican and Catholic churches were mentioned by most of the worshippers as their former churches. Others however mentioned a Presbyterian mission church established by Canadian missionaries in Guyana. A family explained that their application for "landed," (permanent resident status) in Canada was recommended by ministers of this church.
6. Worshippers explained the predicament of the Hindu religion in Guyana in terms of persecution by the British colonial masters. One of the common stories I heard from worshippers was the practice of flogging individuals who failed to attend church service in the mission schools they attended as children.

CHAPTER FIVE

MEMOIRS OF THE TEMPLE'S ORIGINS

INTRODUCTION

The Radha Krishna Hindu Temple does not have comprehensive written records either of the events leading to the origin of the temple or about the community's history over the years since its origin. The absence of detailed written historical sources has made the task of reconstructing the history of the temple and its community difficult, but in that the community is only a generation old I was fortunate in being able to rely on oral accounts of historical events from the people directly concerned. These accounts often sounded inconsistent however, and I was often annoyed that people's memories seemed to be unclear about what I would consider important dates, names and places. Notwithstanding this difficulty, I was able to piece together a reasonably complete picture and was able to check and recheck historical details as I understood them with the leaders, priests and other founding members of the temple. One reason for telling members of the community how I understood their account was to give them an opportunity to critique my account of their history, and to control any reconstruction of events that I might make. In this

way I ensured that the reconstruction was largely shaped by their voices, even though some of the interpretations had to be my own.

The aim of this chapter is to trace the temple to its origins. In the chapter we will see how the personal desire of one individual, a pandit, to perpetuate the traditional Guyanese pandit role in a Guyanese Hindu community in Canada, becomes enmeshed with the felt needs of individuals in the community to integrate as a unit in the face of their social conditions as a migrant group. The result of this process was the formation of the temple community.

I begin the chapter with the presentation of some of the different versions of the story. This is followed by an analysis of the events narrated to me. In this analysis I will discuss the main themes that underlie the events which culminated in the creation of a Hindu temple community in Cambridge. Drawing on views expressed by worshippers, I argue that the key to understanding the Radha Krishna Hindu temple tradition as "invented," and its function as a focus of Guyanese Hindu identity, lies first and foremost in an understanding of the motives the members had for creating the community.

THE STORIES

As a religious institution, the Radha Krishna Temple has a fairly recent history. Its origin dates from only 1975 when a small prayer group made

up of Guyanese Indian friends and acquaintances began to meet on Sundays to pray and sing devotional songs. This group was founded by a Guyanese Hindu immigrant who describes himself as a pandit, an office he assumed after arriving in Canada in 1969. There is no major disagreement among members as to how the temple originated, but members' versions of the story reveal a number of different emphases.

STORY ONE

"This temple began as a small group in 1975," began the secretary of the temple as he sat down one Friday evening in the temple library to recount to me his version of the story. I sat facing him, pen in hand and ready to start writing down the salient details of the story. The scent of incense pervaded the temple. In the background, I could hear the singing of the choir. Just behind us sat three women on two benches facing each other and deeply engaged in conversation. Elsewhere in the temple, worshippers were busily engaged in preparing the room for an event to be held on the coming Sunday. This was the "Kirtan Somela" which a worshipper had interpreted to me as "congregational singing and poetry rehearsals."

"Mr. Persaud and four other members came together to form a small prayer group which met in the basement of his home and they met every Sunday morning to sing bajans and chant mantras," the secretary continued his

story. "Which of the murtis (deities) did they worship then?" I interrupted. "No, they had no murtis then. This was only the beginning and they were even only a few persons. They would simply meet, sing and sing... then have some refreshment and everybody went home," he replied. "Where were you worshipping before this began?" I asked. "You mean, me as an individual or the whole group?" he asked in return. "Yes, you and the rest," I replied. "Well, some people were practising at home, I mean those who were Hindus. Some of us too...in fact the majority of us worshipped in the different Christian churches. My wife and I, for instance, worshipped with a church called the Nazarene Church here in Cambridge." I asked, "why did they start the group in the first place?" He paused for a while as if he was considering what to say. "Those were the early years," he began finally. "And we had just arrived in this place so green and fresh, so those who knew each other thought it was fine to have a small group like that. Many of these people had not even arrived here yet (he pointed to the rest of the members in the temple) but like now, we, those who were here, were living all over the place. Guyanese were in Galt, Preston, Chartsworth and name them all over Kitchener and Waterloo," he replied gesticulating as he did so. "Were there any specific goals for forming this group?" I tried to be more specific. "Well... what do I say... it wasn't actually well organised in the beginning but I'll say it was kind of a social group." "You had a name for this group?" I asked. "Not in the very beginning... but later we

called it the "Cambridge Hindu Society." I nodded, satisfied with the clue. "And how did the group grow this big... I mean how did you get to the Guyanese members?" "People got to know. There are quite a number of Guyanese people here, and when something is happening you don't know how, but news gets around fast. I don't remember seeing posters or hearing announcements anywhere. In fact I wasn't even a part of the founding group. Some of us joined later. I (with a stress) for example I was informed about the group at the work place by a member and he had also heard about it from somewhere... that's how most people got to know. After sometime I started attending too, I mean the group meetings... with my wife. And it was a good group...we all liked it."

Just then, a young man came into the temple. This fellow had been absent from the weekly devotional services for some time. I guessed that, when I heard the secretary ask him where he had been. The young man offered a number of excuses to explain his absence. The secretary however did not seem convinced. "That's what they all say. No time, no time, everybody says he has no time... But the fact is, we can all make time for God. That's what people don't know," he lamented to me. "Is it normal for members to absent themselves for very long periods from church?" I asked not really knowing how to respond to his lamentation. "There are people who come here only at Diwali or when they need to meet someone," he explained getting up from his chair. He left me for a while to go into his office. I quickly filled in the gaps in my

notebook. The women chatting on the bench had left the place. A young man had come to pick a book from the Library and was sitting on the bench reading with his legs outstretched. Eric's choir was still rehearsing their new song. It seemed the song was getting better now, as I could hear them sing for longer periods without interruption.

We had decided on a forty five minute interview and it was almost up when the secretary came back. In the next ten or so minutes the secretary rounded up his story, narrating how the number of members became large creating a situation of overcrowdedness in the founder's home. "People sat everywhere even on the staircases in Pandit's house," he explained. He also narrated how it became necessary for the group to change the venue of their meetings to a gymnasium in a public school in Cambridge, the problems they later realized connected with the use of the gymnasium and how the group eventually sought out a mortgage and bought their present structure in 1989. The noise in the temple had begun to subside when we completed our short interview. It was apparent that individuals had started leaving for their homes in small groups. As I thanked the secretary and left the library he recommended that I speak to the president and the two priests of the temple as well. I strolled over to Eric and his choir.

While on the return journey home, I reflected on the events of the evening. I had enjoyed the story although I still felt the interview was too short.

It sounded quite consistent to me. One theme clearly stood out in the secretary's accounts. This was the theme of the felt need of the community to integrate its members, a theme reflected in the label "society." The other clue I came away with was the idea that members were at this period in the early stages of their stay in Canada- "the early days" as the secretary had said. I thought this was important as it helped to explain why a group would strongly feel the need to integrate. Culture shock, a feeling of inadequacy in the face of a culture perceived to be superior to one's own, and other such challenges must have compelled individual Guyanese Hindus to come together. As I thought about all these possible explanations, the secretary's account reminded me of the loneliness and the other challenges I experienced during the early days of my stay in Oslo in 1992. I could identify with the felt need of the Guyanese immigrants to come together.

I still wondered however, how exactly the group began: whether it began as a religious group or whether the practice of Hinduism was only a later development. I had the clue from the secretary's story that these two factors were entangled with each other but then the sequence of the developments was still hazy and I felt I needed some more information.

STORY TWO

The president of the temple was the next person I talked to about the temple's origins, in a telephone interview. We had planned earlier to meet in the temple on a Friday evening but had decided on a telephone conversation as our meeting could not take place.

Despite taking a somewhat different slant the president's version of the story was identical to the secretary's in many respects. "That was a good way to bring the community together. In that way, we could bring them out of their hiding places," he explained when I inquired why the prayer group was formed in the first place. "Before then, we even passed by one another without knowing we all came from Guyana," he explained and then continued, "The aim was social, we felt as Hindus from Guyana we had to get to know each other. As for religion you can even stay in your room and practice it. It is the social aspect that was very important to us." "Do you mean to say that it was first of all a social group that developed into a religious one?" I asked, wanting to know the sequence in which the developments occurred. "You cannot separate these two things, religion and social life. Why do people worship in a temple when they can simply pray in their rooms? It is the group feeling that is important to them," he answered. In the language of the layman the president had provided me with a Durkheimian model for understanding the origin of their temple. "At first, we were meeting at Mr. Persaud's house every Sunday... then some of the

members felt that the venue should be rotated," he continued his story. "You mean they wanted to take turns in hosting the meetings? Why did they feel that?" I inquired. I was curious because the secretary had mentioned nothing about this practice. I reasoned that it might have been an oversight on his part. "Well, some members felt it would be nicer if everybody had the opportunity to host the "pooja" in their home. Others felt they would invite blessings into their homes. Others just wanted to share the responsibility. I can't really tell which... but we felt it was a good move because in that way we could get to know where people lived." "Why did you think that was necessary? I mean why did you want to know about people's homes ?" I asked him, anticipating another important clue about the community. "You know what? When you first come to a strange country like this, it's like you can't see any thing clearly. You do not immediately understand anything that is happening around you. You feel lost! Completely lost! And you need people you can trust to show you the way around. So it was to familiarize more with members. You have to know your people (he was speaking to me), you have to be well connected. Just coming into a totally different country like this one without knowing anybody is like a slap in your face," he commented. "Some of us experienced it and we did not want subsequent arrivals to feel that way. It worked nicely," he continued, returning to the story, "until we started having trouble... people in the various neighbourhoods where we met started complaining about our noise, our,singing,

the scent of the incense, the bells, and all that stuff. And you know this place... if you don't respond to these kind of things you can land in serious trouble."

"Hope it never came to that," I said. "No, but we had to find a new place," he replied.

In the rest of his account the president also mentioned the gymnasium, but explained in more detail the reasons behind the decision of the group to find their own temple. "There too we had problems," he continued.

"We hired this gym and paid on an hourly basis, but the group was still young then, we were not too many and had little money. We didn't even have a bank account at that time. So, in order not to pay too much for the room, we always hurried with the pooja... But members weren't happy... especially the women... they said they couldn't socialize... they complained and complained that we should move and find our own place... It came to a point where some of them started boycotting the meetings." In conclusion the president like the secretary described how the group looked for a suitable place to buy, and eventually bought the present structure in 1989, on a mortgage which they are still in the process of paying off.

STORY THREE

"We simply met one day, I, Sandra's dad, and two other members and thought it was a good idea to have a group like this and call it the

Cambridge Hindu Association," began one of the pandits of the temple. It was a Sunday afternoon. The weekly pooja had just ended and worshippers were returning to their homes. I had phoned the pandit a week earlier to request an interview with him. Even though he had agreed to talk to me, he had added "The only problem is that I have rather tight schedule." Like many other worshippers, this pandit held two different jobs and had free time only on Sundays. We therefore agreed to meet in the temple after the worship for the interview.

I had arrived early enough for worship and had been able to conduct a few informal and casual interviews with a number of worshippers in the course of the ritual performances. I however had to wait a while to talk to the pandit after the pooja as he had to attend to what seemed to me to be an endless queue of worshippers apparently seeking his counsel on matters concerning them. The pandit beckoned to me from among the crowd of worshippers after his last client had left. We sat on the carpeted floor with our backs leaned against the wall of the temple and began the interview. In his version the pandit repeated almost all that I had heard from my first two narrators. His version of the motives behind the origin of the prayer group, however revealed a different emphasis which I found very insightful. "We needed to form our own group so that we could keep our tradition alive for our children too to learn," the pandit explained. "When you talk about forming your

own group, are you suggesting that there were other Guyanese groups around?" I asked thrilled by this revelation. "No, not Guyanese groups. At least not in Cambridge but there were quite a few Hindu, I mean Indian Hindu groups around, not too many temples though. But we wanted a group for Guyanese Hindus." Were any of you, I mean the worshippers, attending any of these Hindu temples?" "Most of the members were Christians when they first arrived in Canada, the majority of them. I have always been a Hindu. I come from a Hindu family and my father is a Brahman pandit and I learnt to become a pandit from him." As I heard the pandit refer to himself as a Brahman priest, I considered asking the pandit how certain he was about the genuineness of the brahmanical heritage of his family. Nevertheless, much as I thought this information was of some relevance to me, it dawned on me that it was a sensitive issue as it amounted to questioning the legitimacy of the pandit's claim to be a brahman pandit and of his status in the community. I feared that I could jeopardize my study by such questions.

"But I never attended any East Indian Hindu temple before we formed our group, I practised at home," he continued. "Did you ever consider attending Hindu temples at any moment before your group was formed?" "Not really," he replied. As if anticipating the question I was about to ask next, he continued "There is really no problem with going to an Indian temple, I know people who go. Hindus from Guyana. But the problem is, you feel out of place

there, you do not feel comfortable. The moment an East Indian sees you and hears you talk ... whether at work or in a temple or at any gathering, he knows right away from your accent you come from Guyana or Trinidad. Then they begin to look at you differently, which makes you feel like an outsider, not only in their temples, anywhere we meet." The pandit recounted to me an account of how a member's father who had passed away had always felt humiliated by the East Indians among whom he was working in a steel factory in Hamilton. "The moment he mentioned his name, they tried to tell him where he was coming from in India and the possible caste he was coming from. What we wanted to have was a group of our own, a Guyanese Hindu group." The pandit's emphasis on "own" sounded very definitive. It underscored a definite Hindu identity: that of East Indians from Guyana. This theme which had been hinted at the first two narrators was becoming clearer to me and had taken a wider dimension in the pandit's version. In what followed the pandit simply went over the events of the group's developments as I had already heard them. He emphasised, however in his conclusion that the continuity of the Guyanese Hindus as a unit in their present situation depended largely on "teaching our children our ways." This, he explained could be achieved only within the context of a larger group of which the "children" too become a part. The children especially, he had told me needed to cultivate a strong sense of who

they were and where they had come from especially as they were growing up in an environment different from home.

When I began the study I had no idea of what theoretical concepts I was going to use in my analyses. I had hoped however to come across evidence in the field that would inform my theoretical framework. When I questioned worshippers about how the temple originated it was solely for the purpose of getting a sense of the temple's history that I did so. Furthermore this was in keeping with my proposal to highlight the place of history in the development of the Hindu religious tradition in immigrant Hindu communities. Little did I envisage the relevance worshippers' accounts of how the temple originated would be to my theoretical framework. After my interview with the pandit, I began to have a clearer sense of an emerging theme, though in a sense it was still quite vague. Such themes as the need to form a support network, to keep the tradition alive, and to form a distinct group for Guyanese indicated to me that issues of identity might be at the root of the temple's origin.

While echoes of some of the themes in the leaders' and priests' versions recurred in the accounts rendered by other members of the temple, some versions tended to contain rather sketchy details, were often unclear or tended to be contradictory. Most of these versions contained nothing at all about the small prayer group meetings in the pandit's house which all the

leaders had indicated as marking the beginnings of the temple. A middle-aged lady began her account:

When we began it was not a big thing like this, We went to church in a classroom (not a gym) in St. Michaels high school. Then the authorities started making trouble for us. They restricted the duration of the pooja. Just after pooja, everybody went straight back home. We complained, we the women especially. Some members stopped attending.

"Why in particular did that bother you ?" I asked hoping to hear the women's own views. "Ah, what use was it if we had only the pooja and then went home? We could as well have remained at home!... We wanted time to chat!.. Thank God,... had we not got this place, the group would have broken up. It was quite expensive, but better than the school. At least we have our own place. Now we come here any time we want... And you see, you meet people from all over the place here." This lady had arrived in Canada late in 1988 when the group was still using the premises of the school gymnasium for their meetings and probably for her that was when the group began.

According to some versions, the prayer meetings began at a date earlier than 1975. Different views were however expressed regarding this earlier date. One such account follows:

This was in 1970, (the beginning of the Temple) the year after which he (the pandit) arrived here. He was a pandit before he came and when he came he saw the need to continue with the tradition. So he formed a group. It was a small group. People started patronising it only after we moved here in 1989".

On another occasion, two ladies debated on the correct date. While one insisted on 1975 the other thought it was earlier even though she was not certain when exactly. "It wasn't in '75, she insisted. "In '75, we started moving from place to place for the pooja. But pandit's group began before then." Such debates were not uncommon among worshippers as they were not always too certain about the exact date of the temple's origin. Debates also circled around issues of the relative roles of the pandit and the community in the formation of the prayer group. While some worshippers insisted that the temple owes its origin to the sole responsibility of the pandit others maintained that the communities role had been more pivotal.

A worshipper had informed me that the Radha Krishna Temple was a branch of a mother group in Guyana. According to this version, the founder, a pandit of a Radha Krishna mission in Guyana decided to establish a branch of the Radha Krishna mission in Canada after he had arrived in 1969. According to a variant of this version, as a certified pandit in Guyana, the pandit who founded the group risked a revoking of his credentials when he returned to Guyana if he did not continue the tradition. In this connection it was argued that the pandit, formed a group with the specific aim of protecting his credentials.

There was no doubt that most worshippers recounted their version of the prayer group's origin as they knew it and from rather vague memories. But there was no show of awkwardness from narrators. Each member told the story

either from what he had heard, or from what he thought and from when he or she joined the group. I had a feeling of being witness to the evolution of a Radha Krishna Hindu temple narrative discourse with varying versions.

Though I felt frustrated by these rather patchy and vague accounts I came to understand the position of my respondents. Historical details and the names of the founding members of the temple and what role each played in the origin of the temple is of no pragmatic value to members now. As working-class immigrants, the members are more concerned about existential issues and the temple is of relevance to them primarily insofar as it affords them a chance of meeting each other and creating networks which are relevant to their survival as immigrants in Canada. Issues connected with the temple's history seem inconsequential to their success or failure as immigrants. These are theological and academic issues that I am concerned about. The exact truth about the history of the temple was my concern and not that of my respondents.

This experience provided me with a new insight into the nature of fieldwork. I had gone to Cambridge hoping to obtain clear answers to my questions but this experience helped me to realize that our academic concerns are not always the same as the concerns of those who we study. Fieldwork is about negotiating between the different concerns of researchers and respondents. I began to realize also that my questions about the origins of the

temple were opening up some interesting stories even if I did not always get clear historical evidence.

As I consulted the files of the temple I realized that the temple had no historical records. All the information contained in the files had to do with matters of administration. These documents all dated from 1989 when worshippers moved from the classroom building to their present location, and the files had nothing on the prayer group. Curious about the different versions of the origin story of the temple I went to the founder himself to get what I expected to be an interesting story, and truly it was.

The founder of the temple, a stout man in his fifties, is married with three children. According to his version, which was fully related to me on telephone, he arrived in Canada from Guyana in 1969 as a lay Guyanese Hindu. In the first few years of his stay in Canada he lived in Hamilton in Ontario where he worshipped as a Catholic. In 1974 the pandit and his wife transferred to Cambridge and in Cambridge he decided to form a Hindu religious group in order to revive the Hindu religious tradition.

"It makes no sense to ask why the group was started. It is obvious," he said to me when I insisted on knowing what prompted him to form the group. He explained that he was motivated by two main considerations. One was the absence of a worship place for Guyanese Hindus in Cambridge. The founder argued that he felt the need for some organizational framework within

which Guyanese Hindus could practice the religion. Hence he decided to form the prayer group. The other issue he explained, was the need to "keep our tradition alive."

Contrary to all the other versions of the story, the pandit declared that he was not a pandit prior to his arrival in Canada. He said he learnt to become a pandit by himself by reading texts and learning how to perform the rituals from books published by pandits in Canada. My initial reaction on hearing this revelation was one of surprise. This issued from what worshippers had said earlier concerning his status as pandit prior to his arrival in Canada. I began to wonder how much of what I had heard was credible. At the same time however I was thrilled by this new discovery for I had proposed the argument earlier while preparing notes for my thesis that an emerging trend in the development of Hinduism outside its Indian home was the leading role that laymen played in the origin of temples and the organization of worship. I had specifically mentioned as examples the Guyanese Hindu institution of the pandit. Thus in the pandit's declaration that he was a lay Hindu and a self styled pandit, I found a concrete validation of my claims.

The pandit explained how he called his close friends together and suggested the idea of forming a small prayer group in his home. In this way began the prayer group which would blossom over the years into the Radha

Krishna Hindu temple. "It was God's doing that something that began so small had become as big as this," he concluded with quotes.

ANALYSIS OF THE STORIES

There are a number of levels at which we can analyze the events recounted in these stories of the prayer group's origin and its development into a temple community. At a superficial level it might be correct to say that the temple was the outcome of the personal initiative of an individual trying to perpetuate the Guyanese pandit tradition. In a more broadly considered sense, this personal initiative might be interpreted as an extension of the Guyanese Hindu pandit institution as described in an earlier chapter, and we might describe that institution as a hub around which the temple originated in the Canadian socio-cultural context. In appointing himself, a lay Hindu, as pandit and rallying support from acquaintances and friends to legitimate his position, the pandit was replicating the Guyanese Hindu model of panditship. In other words, the initiative of the pandit was an attempt at transplanting the pandit institution and extending its socio-religious functions into the Canadian context. The pandit's version of the story takes this view but most of the other versions have a different emphasis.

At another level we might examine the underlying themes that run through some of the other versions of the story. Underlying the story of the

prayer group's origin and development into a temple is a strong theme of the quest to belong to a group. This theme seemed to recur invariably in almost all the versions of members. It is perhaps most clearly spelled out in the explanation of the president that the prayer group was the only way in which members of the community could be "pulled" out of their hiding places and brought together as a group. It also recurs again when the president explains why rotating the prayer group meetings made it possible to get to know people's homes. This theme emerges again in the complaint of the women about the lack of time for socialization when they worshipped in the gymnasium and the same theme is also mentioned in the worshippers' expressed satisfaction with their present location.

To understand this emphasis in the stories, three factors relating to the members' social circumstances in Canada must be considered. The first of these is the residential patterns, the second is the historical setting of the prayer group's origin, and the third is the nature of the Canadian cultural environment and the predicament of Guyanese Hindu culture in Canada. The temple origin stories are really about these underlying social concerns. I will analyze some of these concerns in the context of other comments made by members in relation to the need to create a temple community.

The worshippers explained that they reside in suburban communities in Cambridge, Waterloo and Kitchener. They do not live in a single

ethnic community but are integrated into these suburban communities.

Individual worshippers live quite far apart from one another. Aside from a cricket club in Cambridge which a fair number of members say they belonged to before the formation of the prayer group, there were apparently neither formal nor informal ways of meeting regularly as members of a cultural unit. This settlement pattern is significant for our understanding of the origin of the temple community.

Sociologist Hans Mol stresses the role of religion in reinforcing ethnic sentiments. Focusing his analysis on religion and ethnic identity in Canada, Mol (1985:65) writes of the situation of immigrants:

The natural roots for personal or group identity have been torn and a strong urge develops to restore and nourish them (1985:65).

Immigrants in Canada are constantly aware of the erosion of their individual or group ethnic identity in the face of alien norms and values to which they must adapt, and rely on their religions as culturally reinvigorating mechanisms (Mol 1985:65). Mol mentions further that when members of ethnic groups live in separate communities and the opportunities for coming together are few, chances are that their cultural identities will become disrupted as there is a greater tendency of individuals to integrate more into the host culture (Mol 1985:65). In this connection, the residential patterns of the Guyanese Hindus in Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo area were identified by members as surely

predisposing them to the vulnerability expressed by Mol. The president of the temple made allusions to Mol's ideas when he explained that they related to each other as "strangers" before the prayer group came into being.

In a related argument Royce (1982) discusses the concern of immigrants about protecting their traditions precisely when they perceive that they are becoming totally assimilated into the host culture and subsequently loosing their ethnic identities. According to Royce, immigrants become involved more in cultural revitalisation in the face of the threat of becoming totally assimilated. They seek invariably to sustain a valid basis of their ethnic identity as their sense of being depends on this (Royce 1982:134).

Following Royce and Mol's analyses we can appreciate the motives of the founders of the prayer group as outlined in the temple origin stories. The founders foresaw the danger of loosing an already fading Guyanese Hindu culture to Western assimilation as individuals were dispersed. The founders of the prayer group through their initiatives realized the need to salvage the dying tradition and to build a protective hedge around it by coming together to revive, foster and sustain that identity through community group awareness. As the narrators of the different stories explain their motives, the goal was for the group to integrate and revitalize their traditions to ensure their continuity in subsequent generations.

The period in which the prayer group is said to have been formed (1975) is equally significant in helping to explain why the temple community was formed. Studies have mentioned that challenges such as a feeling of being invisible, culture shock, loneliness, and racism are faced by immigrants newly arrived in a host culture (Henry 1983, 1994; Mol 1985; Royce 1982). Often exacerbated by antagonistic attitudes displayed by members of the host culture, especially towards the immigrants who have migrated from a country that may be regarded as inferior, such challenges reinforce the feeling of the need for support networks within the immigrant group. Not only do these groups provide networks of mutual help, but they also provide alternative societies whose norms and values individual immigrants find to be more congenial than those of the host society.

In his discussion of the adaptation of East Indians in Canada, Srivastava describes the tendencies among East Indian immigrants in seeking out such groups (Srivastava 1983:40). In my discussion of immigration experiences of Guyanese Hindus I mentioned that worshippers made allusions to some of the challenges they confronted as immigrants especially in the earlier phases of their stay. According to the details of the story, the prayer group to which the Temple traces its origin was formed in 1975. If the peak of Guyanese Hindu immigration into Canada was the period between 1971 and 1981 it shows that many of the founding members had been in Canada

between five and ten years and still in the earlier phases of their stay as immigrants in Canada. This is when the need to form a support network was very acute as they were still trying to adapt to life in Canada, but it also was when, those who had arrived first felt confident that they could take initiatives and help others in their community.

Thirdly, the need the Guyanese Hindus felt to construct a support group can also be explained in terms of their experience of the Canadian multi-ethnic environment and the status they have discovered they had in Canada as an immigrant community involved in a secondary migratory process.

The Canadian cultural environment has been described by scholars as a multi ethnic or pluralistic, implying that Canada is made up of people with diverse ethnic backgrounds. The idea of pluralism according to Walker does not place a "demand" on immigrants to forego their unique cultural backgrounds and ethnic "identities" (1984:17). In this multi-ethnic environment, personal relationships and networks develop along ethnic lines and there is a strong tendency and almost a necessity for ethnic communities to form groups to reinforce their sense of collective identity (Currie 1991:420; Mol 1985:65). This situation is accentuated when immigrants belong to what is termed visible minority groups in the sense that they display distinctive physical as well as cultural traits separating them from the mainstream Caucasian population. As a

member of the temple community described it, the need to form a group became important because:

This country is a different place... not like the U.S, where there is a so called American way... Even there people stick to their culture... but let's put it this way, if you observe carefully this country, you will see that everybody (stressing this word) in Canada comes from some place, and they all try to identify with their culture or place... You have all these Italians, and Greeks all over, they all say they are Canadian but they have their own groups all over, I'm sure you have your Ghana group somewhere ... you may not know but I am sure there is one... or some Africa group somewhere. Every (stressing this word) human being needs some form of group."

The individual went on to explain the benefits of creating a group:

And it is important that one has a group like this... because look at us... here we are like sisters and brothers. You are alone here ... a stranger in somebody else's country ... you will need some help one day and with a group like this, you will always have people to fall on... No one wants to be alone especially in a different country! (he spoke hesitantly). You want to go to a place where you can call people by their secret names. Somewhere that when you talk people know what you are talking about. And you like that feeling... every body likes it.

Several other members had other ways of the emphasising the importance of a group network. One lady claimed she had lived in Hamilton in Ontario, and had worshipped in Christian churches there. She explained that although she enjoyed the services, especially the way the choirs sang, she was not a regular attender because there were no opportunities for socialization. "You go there

and that's it. You go home, but after church here (Cambridge), we now have our own things to talk about. Like you have some problem and you tell your friend and she can advise you," she concluded. In these ways worshippers tried to demonstrate that the driving force to form a temple community for Guyanese Hindus clearly stemmed from the felt need of individuals to identify with other from their own ethnic backgrounds. In a process parallel to that noted by Royce, this was because they had realized that other ethnic communities in Canada had formed groups (Royce 1982:135).

Other comments made by worshippers however revealed that there was a unique identity crisis confronting the Guyanese Hindus. For them the need for their "own group" as the pandit had stated had additional implications. It points to the uniqueness of their historical and cultural predicament as a community which has been twice displaced and which is relocating for the second time in history. The sense of "ownness" is to be understood more in relation to the presence of an East Indian immigrant community coming directly from India in Canada.

If culture could be likened to a terrain, it would be right for us to say that Guyanese Hindus occupy the borderland between the East Indian community and the West Indian or Caribbean community in Canada. As descendants of East Indians, Guyanese Hindus are biologically and historically connected to East Indians. In terms of certain cultural values and norms and

practices, however, Guyanese Hindu immigrants perceive themselves to be different from the East Indians immigrant community coming directly from the Indian subcontinent. Having remained in the Caribbean for nearly two centuries without much contact with the Indian sub-continent, Guyanese Hindus can be said to have developed a new culture - a blend of Hindu culture and norms, and the norms and practices of the Caribbean people. As worshippers at the temple explained, in terms of the hymns that they sing, the deities they worship, their rituals, and some of their values, they still do share some "Indianness," with East Indians. Nevertheless in that the majority of them have no knowledge of any Indian language, and mostly do not subscribe to the caste system, Guyanese Hindus are different in very important ways from East Indians. Such differences are even seen in the names of worshippers. It is not common to see an East Indian adopt a Western name except sometimes after conversion to Christianity. Members of the Radha Krishna Hindu temple have a combination of Christian and Indian names. Names such as, Patrick Ramcharita, Pamela Ram, or Sandra Persaud, are common. Since names are marks of owners' identities such names suggest that the owners share a Hindu and a partially non Hindu influence. They are indicative of the degree of acculturation the Guyanese Hindus have undergone. This difference is often stressed by the worshippers and it makes the integration and identification of Guyanese Hindus with East Indians quite challenging for the former.

In fact, members of the temple community were always quick to express a sense of detachment from India. Asked whether he would want to visit India some day, a worshipper quickly replied, "Me?! what for? Who knows me there? They will even look at me differently" (meaning they will regard him as a stranger). For this person India, though the ancestral home, is totally unfamiliar. Much as he might wish to know where his ancestors came, from he dreads the feeling of being alien in what is supposed to be his homeland.

Such feelings are extended towards the East Indian immigrant community in Canada as was expressed in one of the pandit's accounts of the temple's origin . In a similar explanation of the difficulties associated with attending worship in East Indian temples, another worshipper said:

People always say to me, 'But we are all from India.' That is true but our ways are different. You know our history? Our fathers copied a lot of new ways in Guyana and we took these up. It's like you and the blacks in Guyana. They came from Africa, but are you the same? You are different in your ways. Can you imagine them going to Africa now, no one knows them, they don't even know anyone there or where in Africa they come from... its like that for us too. When you live in a place for a long time, you become different... I hope I'm answering you.

Underlying this statement and other similar explanations of the difficulties relative to East Indians is a sense of alienation. Guyanese Hindus have come to regard themselves as quite different from the East Indians in Canada. One might see in this feeling a sense of inferiority. Though it is never explicitly

stated, the Guyanese Hindu immigrant certainly feels a sense of psychological detachment from the East Indian community. A worshipper commented to me in a conversation one Sunday afternoon, "As for me I will go to India, by all means." I inquired why he would want to travel to India. He explained, "Just to see the place and visit the temples... all these things that we do here. It is not proper Hinduism. The real Hinduism is in India. Hindu religion is like a stream... all that we do here are just like tributaries of that stream. Go to India that's where the head of the stream is." "But why don't you worship with the Toronto Hindu temples?" I asked, "... Well, (he smiled) ... What can I say? ... But I do not know the faces there," he managed to answer. Underlying this member's yearning for India seems to be a feeling of inadequacy or ambivalence as a Hindu and what seemed to be a longing to be more "pure." However, this member would not worship in an East Indian Hindu temple in Canada because of an underlying feeling of his inadequacy as a proper Hindu. He feels more at home with his people even though he feels the Hinduism practised in the temple is less pure.

There were some members who sounded quite polemical in their stance toward all non Guyanese Hindus. In their view, Guyanese Hinduism is the purest form because it has stood the test of British persecution in Guyana. "When people want to destroy a religion it is then that its practitioners protect it," a lady said, after narrating the story of Hinduism in Guyana. "We Guyanese

Hindus have been able to protect the tradition well because of hostile Christian attitudes around us."

What these different perceptions indicate about members of the temple community is that they have a great sense of uncertainty about the status of their Hindu identity and are sceptical that they would be acceptable among the East Indian community which migrated directly from India. This situation makes it impossible for the worshippers to identify with the East Indian community in Canada.

Their assimilation into Caribbean culture on the other hand is only partial. Culturally the Guyanese Hindus can neither identify with Hindu immigrants from India nor with the Caribbean immigrants in Canada. Confronted with the threat of being isolated culturally, the Guyanese Hindu community has turned to its own cultural resources to reconstitute a new sense of a specific identity based on a reconstructed Hindu religious tradition. In this way the predicament of the Guyanese Hindus as immigrants involved in a secondary process of migration helps us to understand why they saw the creation of a temple community which they refer to as their "own" as a necessity. This underscores the fact that their history is crucial to their definition of ethnic identity.

To conclude, it can be suggested that three themes recur in the origin stories which explain the underlying motives behind the origin of the

Radha Krishna Hindu temple. The first of these is the theme of the felt need to come together for the purpose of protecting a tradition for the subsequent generations of Guyanese Hindus in Canada. This felt need was reinforced mainly by members' sense of isolation because of their settlement patterns which also exposed them to the possibility of becoming culturally assimilated.

The second theme is the desire of members to form networks of mutual support in "this strange land." The third is the idea of creating a tradition or identity distinct from the East Indian community, which members find they cannot regard as their "own." This theme reflects directly on the uniqueness of Guyanese Hindu immigrants as individuals involved in a secondary migratory process. While emphasising different aspects of the needs of this migrant group, these three elements overlap and must be considered inextricably connected. All three themes are related to the social conditions of Guyanese Hindus as immigrants in Canada and point to their felt need to deal with a problem of identity. The origin of the temple follows the general pattern of other temples originating in immigrant Hindu communities, except that in this situation, the uniqueness of the migratory history of the Guyanese Hindu community determines the nature of the community identity.

To reconcile the pandit's personal story to the other stories we must reflect on the socio-religious place of the pandit in Guyanese Hindu communities. As the pandit is the pivot of Guyanese Hindu communal life, it is

only logical that any initiative to bring Guyanese Hindus together as a cultural unit should involve a pandit's efforts. The situation of Guyanese Hindus as immigrants in Canada and the pivotal role of the pandit founder can be seen as complementary. The temple's origin was a religious response to unique needs created by a social condition. As some members put it, the group began first as a social "thing" attempting to deal with a serious problem of identity, and it later became religious. In this sense the roots of the origin of the temple lay in an interplay between religious and ethnic considerations. Members of the Guyanese Hindu ethnic community sought to invent a Hindu tradition as a focus of their communal project. As Hobsbawm would put it, the founders sought to draw on the integrative function of an invented Hindu religious tradition to forge a connection with their past and to bring the members "from their hiding places." In my discussion of the function of the temple as a symbol of Guyanese ethnic identity, I will revisit these themes again. Given members' heavily acculturated religious backgrounds and their rapidly fading Hindu religion, the issue of how this group could identify a symbol for their own ethnic identity becomes puzzling. In the next section of this chapter I try to answer this puzzle as I briefly examine the inventive process as it was carried out by the members of this community.

THE INVENTIVE PROCESS

With the formal establishment of the Radha Krishna Temple community in 1989, the Guyanese Hindu religious tradition began a second process of invention in Canada. In describing the process as an inventive one I am implying that it was a deliberate reworking of a rapidly fading "Hindu" tradition by Guyanese Hindu immigrants. The majority of these had hitherto belonged to the Christian tradition from birth and had no formal Hindu religious backgrounds. This inventive process marked the beginning of a "new" phase in the development of the Hindu religious tradition. The Radha Krishna Hindu religious tradition could thus be best described as a tradition in its incipient stages.

From the early years of temple life worshippers have made a number of improvisations and innovations in temple worship. Worshippers explained that in this process they have had to "make do" with whatever cultural and religious resources they had at hand. In this process of improvising as they described it to me, worshippers were influenced by three main factors. First, they tried to reconstruct the tradition as they had known or seen it in Guyana. Thus, for example traditional Hindu deities such as Krishna, Rama, Hanuman, to mention just a few were introduced into the temple. The pandit office continued in the Guyanese Hindu tradition to function as the spiritual as well as the symbol of authority in the community. Brahmanhood also retained

its Guyanese sense. As a worshipper commented, when I asked him what the qualities of a Brahman were:

Anybody could be one. One simply has to be knowledgeable and lead a life worthy of emulation. After all, everybody is born with the propensity to acquire these values. No one is born a brahman.

Knowledge and good conduct and not birth or ritual purity have remained the essential qualities of the Guyanese Hindu Brahman tradition. The Guyanese Hindu stance on caste has also remained a part of the tradition in Canada. Members do not subscribe to the notion of caste.

Second, having previously been Christians, worshippers adopted certain Christian practices into their "Hindu" tradition. The Christian style of congregational worship together with sermon preaching constitute the main framework of worship in the temple.

Thirdly, the inventive process was largely influenced by the social conditions of the local Canadian or Western environment in which they now lived. In this connection they adopted certain Canadian norms and practices, and seriously considered their daily working patterns as immigrants in developing their religious practices. They have also tried to adopt certain norms of religious practice from the North American-based East Indian community. Thus, the founder, who became a self-designated pandit after his arrival in Canada, has had to rely on manuals of a North American version of Hinduism

still in the process of development by East Indian immigrants who arrived directly from India for guidance in performing the temple's rituals. It could rightly be said, therefore that the Guyanese Hindu immigrants of Cambridge picked bits and pieces from a "tool box" of cultures and religious traditions in this process of creating a Hindu religious tradition that satisfied them. In other words in recreating a "Hindu" tradition they have had to make concessions to their situation in North America, as well as to their earlier Christian and Hindu backgrounds.¹

The most pressing issue that confronted the temple community in its early years was the question of which deities or murtis were going to be installed in the temple, where they were going to come from, and by what procedure they were going to be installed. Listening to the accounts of how such issues came to be resolved, I discerned two main themes. In the first place there was a certain amount of arbitrariness involved in choosing temple deities and installing them in the temple. The choice of temple deities was determined largely by whichever images were available. Individuals were encouraged to donate the deity images they had in their homes, but as most members were not practising Hinduism before the origin of the temple community, not many deities could be obtained in this way. Images of deities had to be requested from Guyanese Hindu temples in other parts of the world. Through this process, some deities were sent from such far off places as

Vancouver, the United States of America, Guyana and even Great Britain.

Some members were also able to persuade Indian friends to donate some of their domestic deities to them. In this arbitrary fashion, images of deities were obtained from wherever they could be found.

The second theme is the idea of consensus. Whenever a deity image was obtained, the decision as to whether or not it would be installed in the temple was determined by the casting of votes by members. There was thus a common agreement as to which deities would be accepted and which would not. In what sounded to me like a rather interesting development, a member recounted how the image of the god Krishna, the presiding deity of the temple, became installed:

Albert: How did you decide on Krishna as the chief "murti" (deity)

Resp: You know what happened? It's an interesting story (Smiling)... We chose Krishna as the main deity even before looking for its murti! (image)

Albert: How did that happen?

Resp: Choosing a name for this temple was no joke. The Cambridge authorities demanded a name before registering the temple, and we had not thought of any at that moment... So we were pinned down. We had to hurriedly find a name... Now, there are many Hindu temples in Ontario and we had to make sure we didn't duplicate any of these, so we had to be careful. When we ran through the list (of Hindu temples in Ontario), there was nothing like "Radha Krishna Mandir" so we said yes! This should be it. The worshippers voted on it, and accepted it. But again the problem was where were we going to find a murti for Krishna?... Then, one day, a worshipper visited an Indian friend, a doctor in Hamilton and there was Krishna (an image) on the shelf! Quickly, the member suggested to his host that Krishna will be better served in a Mandir (temple) and without hesitation, the host agreed.

The worshipper went on to recount how they voted once again on the issue of installing this image of Krishna in the temple, and how after agreeing they had it installed. "Wonderful story!" he commented when he had finished, "God works in mysterious ways."

It is all too common for ardently religious people to offer religious explanations for whatever events unfold in their lives, just as the worshipper attributed Krishna's discovery to divine intervention. Krishna, however, as I saw it, was chosen for pragmatic reasons. The choice was made out of expediency. The name was chosen primarily because it gave the temple some uniqueness as the only of its kind in Ontario, which made it easily identifiable. Furthermore, the worshipper who discovered the image of Krishna simply happened upon it, and the decision to install it was made through consensus by the worshippers. What is further interesting to note, is that another murti of Krishna was found at a later date and it was also brought into the temple. The story illustrates the underlying principles of expediency, and the availability of cultural and religious resources. Moreover, the story shows that consensus was the criteria for the acceptance and formalization of religious practices, especially in the earlier stages of the temple's development. These principles of arbitrariness, expediency, and popular consensus have come to be accepted as the mode of adopting temple practices. By way of their constant practice in the very early days of the temple's history these principles have become a very formalized

process which determines the practices that are accepted by the temple community. Questions of which Hindu rituals are to be performed, which festivals are celebrated, patterns of temple worship and the organization to be followed are all determined in this way. As a leader said to me, " Much of all that we do in this temple depends on what the members want... we always consider what is good for them". It could be said at this point that while the pandit still stood at the centre as the pivot, of the community the consensus of the worshippers (the people) more than scripture or what is considered proper in the Indian Hindu tradition is the most important consideration when it comes to deciding what the modalities of the temple's practice should be.

The most recent development in the temple is the opening of a library in November 1994. Donations of books and other reading materials came from individual members. Other books were bought in Indian bookshops in Canada or imported directly from India. Explaining the rationale behind the creation of a library one of the priests said that the idea to have a library, was the replication of a practice they observed in many Canadian Christian churches. "This is geographical... a North American thing" he explained." The practice was adopted, he explained further, because "it was good... it would encourage members to read more about their religion and culture." Though quite non-traditional, the library idea was embraced because of its practical usefulness for the members of the temple community in the Canadian setting.

Worshippers have lately voted on and accepted the instituting of a Gita class which is to be modelled along the christian tradition of the Bible class.

In conclusion, I argue following Hobsbawm that the invention of tradition is a deliberate process of cultural or religious reconstruction or re-fashioning (Hobsbawm 1983:1). In this process the perpetrators employ their innovative and imaginative skills to improvise elements which ultimately become formally instituted as a part of their traditional practices through constant "repetition" (Hobsbawm 1983:1). In the process described above, members of the Radha Krishna Hindu temple community, after several years of acculturation, are seen to be embarking on a process of inventing an almost lost Hindu religious tradition. They draw mainly on the cultural resources immediately available to them. The crucial consideration for them was not to replicate a pure Hindu tradition. Although they founded the reconstructive process on the essentials of that religion, such as the use of murtis, and rituals, the members were more concerned with a religious practice that would serve their purpose in the Canadian context. The issue is not what is considered to be traditionally Hindu, but "what works for them." Pragmatic considerations seem to be an important principle underlying this inventive process.

It might be quite premature to determine whether these innovations will remain as a part of the temple's tradition in the future. However, I argue that so long as the practices serve the needs of the temple community, they will

remain as a part of its tradition. With time these will assume symbolic significances as "Hindu" practices in this temple for it is worshippers who imbue religious elements with symbolic significances. Granted that subsequent generations of Guyanese Hindus emigrate again sometime in the future, it is likely that in their practice of Hinduism, these inventions will become the core tradition around which new ones will be built. In this connection I argue that cultural elements are not essentially symbolic. It is practitioners who imbue them with symbolic significance. Subsequent generations will always look on these "creations" as "past" traditional practices and draw on their symbolic value as such to cultivate a sense of continuity. This is how traditions evolve and what we see happening in the Radha Krishna Temple is the development of a Hindu tradition in action. In the next chapter I shall examine the results of this inventive process as I discuss the temple as an institution and its worship tradition.

Notes

1. It must be noted that Guyanese Hindu immigrants have three different pasts, namely an East Indian past, a Guyanese past and a Christian religious past. In the inventive process of the temple tradition we see that they are forging a linkage with all their pasts while giving cognizance to their present.

CHAPTER SIX

THE TEMPLE AS AN INSTITUTION

The temple is the most characteristic monumental expression of any religious tradition which provides the venue for both the social and spiritual life of its community. Temples are therefore embodiments of the religious traditions practised in them as well as symbols of the communities they house. From the outset of this thesis I have tried to trace the history of Hinduism as it unfolded over the years through its journey from the Indian homeland to Guyana and Canada. In the previous chapter, I discussed the events that culminated eventually in the birth of the Radha Krishna Temple community. I also tried to demonstrate how this inventive project was carried out by members of the community. In these events we have seen how the history of Hinduism as a religion is closely connected to the predicament of a people the Guyanese Hindus. In this chapter, I describe the structure that testifies to the inventive efforts of the Guyanese Hindu immigrants- the temple itself. Also I describe the worshipping community the temple represents. The chapter is mainly descriptive. First, I describe the geographical setting and the physical structure of the temple. I then describe the temple community and its organizational structure.

THE PHYSICAL TEMPLE

The Radha Krishna Hindu Temple is located in the Blair community of Cambridge, Ontario. The temple is situated at "67 Old Mill Road" which is a few kilometres from the 401 Highway which runs across Ontario. Though this location is some distance from the centre of Cambridge, it is considered by the members to be an ideal location because it places the temple at a point where it is easily accessible to the Guyanese Hindu communities in Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo.

The temple is a wooden structure, concealed partially by the trees in the immediate vicinity. The architectural style of the temple does not resemble a typical Hindu temple. From the outside, the temple looks more like a Christian church than a Hindu temple, a fact explained by its history. During the hundred and twenty-three years of its existence, the temple building has changed hands three times. Beginning as a Mennonite church in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, the temple was later transformed into a Presbyterian church. This church was in turn closed down sometime in the middle of this century, and was eventually sold to the Guyanese Hindu community who converted it into a Hindu temple in 1989. Although it has since been modified to better serve a Hindu style of worship, the temple's architecture still has basically a Christian style, especially when viewed from the outside. As if

bearing symbolic testimony to the form of Hinduism practised within it, the temple is itself a reconstructed Christian-Hindu structure.

At the main entrance of the temple there is a sign post bearing the official name of the worshipping community: "The Radha Krishna Hindu Temple, Cambridge Hindu Society." The interior of the temple is spacious, and has a floor that is covered with a colourful woollen carpet. At one end there is a platform which serves the purpose of the temple's central shrine. There are nine images of deities on this platform. These deities are, from left to right: Ganesh, Durga, Shiva, Saraswati, Radha, Krishna, Laksmi, Rama, Sita and Hanuman. The main or presiding deity of the temple is Krishna, and his status as the chief deity is reflected by the position he occupies in the middle of the platform with his consort, Radha, on his left. All these deity images are dressed and adorned beautifully. Behind these images are large framed pictures of these and other deities. Beautifully coloured pictures of the deity Krishna with a flute, of Durga slaying a lion, and of Hanuman are framed and leaned against the wall behind the deity images.

A white curtain is hung between the deity images and the rest of the temple. This curtain is drawn to reveal the images during worship. The side walls of the temple are decorated with pictures of Hindu gods and goddesses with Sanskrit inscriptions underneath them.

Two other rooms, a kitchen and a library, adjoin the main worship area. The kitchen is used to prepare the meals, which are commonly included as part of the worship experience of the community. In the library there is a collection of English books on the Hindu religious tradition. There are also Sanskrit, Hindi and English versions of Hindu scriptures, and copies of the Hindu epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. A part of the room used as a library also serves as an administrative office. In this section, a telephone, files, and other administrative documents of the temple are kept.

The entrance hall leading to the temple is usually crowded with the shoes of the worshippers, which must not be taken into the sanctuary. This situation owes much to the fact that there seems to be no provision in this North American designed building for the worshippers' footwear.

The hallway, the library, the kitchen and the back portion of the sanctuary (partially separated by a wall pillar) provide areas for socializing without disturbing the sanctity of the area in front of the deities.

The temple building and interior arrangement seem to be quite different from the traditional temple building of India. In a way the distinction one finds in India between areas for socializing and areas for worship is replicated to some degree. There are two differences in the physical arrangements that are most striking are two. In the first place the images are all lined on a platform while in Indian temples they are generally placed in a dark

room known as the garbha grha, which is considered to be the "womb," and only the presiding priest has access to this room where he performs rites on behalf of the worshipping community (Michell 1977: 65-66).

The second difference is that in the Radha Krishna temple all the deities are together, while in Indian temples they are usually worshipped in separate shrines and it is very clear which is the single central deity of the temple. In that some North American Hindu temples follow the pattern of having multiple images on a well lit platform the Radha Krishna temple is not necessarily unique in this regard. Together with the library, this arrangement of the deities suggest the influence of local North American religious practices on the Hinduism of the Radha Krishna temple.

THE WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

Determining the membership of religious communities is often a tricky task. This difficulty issues from the fact that religious communities have different criteria for categorizing membership, and a researcher's concern for consistent and exact information might not necessarily be shared by the members of the religious community (Assimeng 1989:278). In the face of such a difficulty it is often only possible to provide approximations of total number of members in a religious group. In determining the exact number of members of

the Radha Krishna Hindu temple community, I encountered precisely this difficulty when I initially inquired about membership.

There are two categories of members in the Radha Krishna temple community. There are full members, on the one hand, and associate members or what are sometimes referred to as "visitors" or guests on the other. Full members are persons or families who have paid the annual temple dues of ten dollars per head.¹ These members have voting rights, and are eligible to stand for election and can hold offices in the temple.

Associate members are not obliged to pay temple dues but they have no voting privileges and cannot hold offices in the temple. Membership, whether full or associate, is open to anyone irrespective of sex, age or ethnic background although members of the community are in actual fact exclusively Hindus from Guyana. It is, however, recommended that only working persons consider becoming full members because of the general financial obligations involved.²

My difficulty in determining the total membership of the community stemmed from the fact that while the temple keeps a list of the names of the full members, it has almost no record of the large number of associates. I could not rely exclusively on the list of full members to determine who is really part of the community. New faces came to worship each week and keeping these faces in my memory proved quite impossible. Besides, I had great difficulty in identifying

all those who were considered full members, and wondered if they were all regular worshippers. In the end, in order to estimate the approximate number of members in the temple community I based my calculations on the number of people I saw at worship and the record of members names. Festivals and other important occasions provided another opportunity to gain a fairly good idea about the total population in that on such occasions as many members as possible made an effort to attend worship. I would estimate this "total population" of the community at approximately three hundred persons.³

The majority of the members live in Cambridge, but others live in nearby Waterloo and Kitchener. Occasionally, Guyanese Hindus from Toronto and other cities in Ontario also visit the temple, especially during festival celebrations.

In general, the members of the temple community live in parts of Cambridge, Waterloo and Kitchener which are a considerable distance from one another. Even though members mentioned a cricket, club which quite a number of the youth apparently belong to, the temple is considered the only venue where it is possible for the Guyanese Hindus to meet regularly as a group. This fact indicates the central role the temple has played in the social lives of the Guyanese Hindu immigrants.

One conspicuous feature of the worshipping community of the Radha Krishna temple is that it is comprised of family units. One frequently sees three

generations coming to worship together, with grand parents, parents, uncles and aunties and children of all ages taking an active interest in worship. However, all family members are not always present at worship on every Sunday. Occasionally a husband or wife will come to worship alone, but will usually explain that the partner or the children "could not make it" to worship that day because they were either not "feeling too well" or someone was on duty at work. At festival celebrations, or important occasions such as the visit of a renowned pandit, all the age groups are well represented.

Members of the community cut across all ages and sex lines. The sex ratio of members of the temple community is very even, as there are as many female as male members. Worshippers range in age from small babies to the very elderly. The majority are however in their early middle age. There is an active participation of the youth who are mostly children or relatives of adult members, but who often sit together and use the opportunity for important social contact with their peers during worship.

The majority of worshippers belong predominantly to the working class. Most of the male worshippers work as factory hands, clerical officers, technicians, accounting clerks, janitors and cab drivers.⁴ A few of them are self employed and own convenience stores in their communities in Cambridge, Kitchener or Waterloo. Although many of the female worshippers describe themselves as housewives, some of them explained that from time to time they

work outside of their homes. A few of the women, especially the younger ones, claim they have permanent jobs. Most of the youthful members of the temple are students in high schools or universities, but some are workers.

The majority of the adult members of the community have had some formal education in Guyana before coming to Canada. Most of them say they have had some form of training in technical and vocational skills. Quite a few of them are university graduates, or are currently attending universities in Canada. English is the medium of communication used in the temple, and the normal means of communication among most worshippers. A few older members however speak Creole with their elderly friends. Though often spoken with a rather heavy Creole accent, the English spoken by worshippers is quite intelligible. A few of the worshippers claim that they speak and read some Hindi.

As indicated in an earlier chapter, the majority of the worshippers have been resident in Canada for over fifteen years. Almost every member I spoke to has obtained permanent resident status in Canada. Although a few of the members express an interest in eventually returning to Guyana some day, the majority do not, and consider Canada their new home, although they still maintain some form of regular contact with relatives and friends in Guyana. The majority of the worshippers explained that they visit Guyana, from time to time. For instance, an elderly member claimed that he travelled to Guyana at least

once every year to visit his aged parents. One gets the impression however, that it is unlikely that most of the worshippers will go back to settle in Guyana for good, for they express an appreciable degree of satisfaction with their quality of life in Canada. In an attempt to justify his decision to remain in Canada, a fairly typical worshipper said to me:

"having stayed in Canada for over seventeen years, and currently maintaining a stable job, with a home and with my kids born and growing up here, I doubt if I am ever going back to Guyana. I still do miss my extended family ... and I will visit home once in a while, but never to stay there... I consider Canada to be my home now.

Similar views were expressed by many members of the temple community. The obvious conclusion one can draw from the expression of such views is that much as their forbearers did a hundred or more years ago when they found themselves in Guyana after the Indentureship, so most of those who migrated to Canada a generation ago have now adopted Canada as their new home.⁵ In a development aptly described as a replication of history, the fourth generation of the original immigrants to Guyana have adopted Canada as their new homes. This is very significant as it underscores the fact that, once again as a cultural unit this group of Hindu immigrants are confronted with a social situation that calls for the renegotiation of a new sense of identity.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Two models of temple organisation exist side by side in the Radha Krishna temple. On the one hand there is the Guyanese Hindu model with the office of the pandit as the central symbol of authority. On the other hand there is a Western bureaucratic pattern with a president and a body of executives at the helm of the temple's affairs. The fusion of these two models of organization, an old (Guyanese) and a new (Western or modern), gives the organizational structure of the temple a somewhat ambiguous character but which in itself is a mark of the inventive process (Hobsbawm 1983:10).

I begin the description with the pandit. The pandit office is an almost exact transplantation of the Guyanese pandit institution as I described it in Chapter Three. There are two pandits, one of whom is the founder. While the founder claims he "learned" to be a pandit after his arrival in Canada, his partner claims legitimacy as a true Brahman pandit. Both men are in their middle age. They work at manufacturing plants in Cambridge and Kitchener and have families in Canada.

As in Guyana the pandits provide the community with spiritual as well as social and moral leadership. They preside over the performance of weekly temple rituals, including the preaching of sermons or katha. The two men take turns weekly in the performance of their priestly duties. As spiritual leaders, their roles extend beyond the domains of temple life into the social as

well as domestic spheres of members' lives. They officiate at members' homes in the performance of domestic rituals, especially in the naming of newly born children. They also offer counsel in spiritual matters and lead prayer sessions in members' homes. As the pandits themselves explained to me, their network of followers extend to Guyanese Hindu communities in Toronto, Hamilton, and in other suburban communities. In these communities the pandits officiate at weddings as well as at funerals. In establishing such intercity networks of clients, the pandits are not simply replicating their traditional Guyanese roles in Canada, but are also expanding their operations beyond the confines of their own communities.

Members of the community accord the pandits great reverence as individuals with exclusive knowledge, especially knowledge to do with religious rituals. "They know the rituals and everything, talk to them," they frequently told me. " Others would quickly ask, "Have you spoken with the pandits?, they are the men here!." On account of their faith in the pandits' all-embracing and specialised knowledge, members consult them on a wide range of issues ranging from personal concerns to job-related matters.

The pandits are authoritative symbols in the community. They are perceived as indispensable to the existence of the group, a fact which finds expression in the manner in which members cluster around them especially after worship while others hang around waiting impatiently to "have a word with

pandit before he goes home." Such reverence is also expressed symbolically through gestures such as bowing in their presence or lying prostrate at the pandits' feet. Not only their popularity but also their success as pandits are enhanced and reinforced by their very friendly demeanour. They beam with smiles whenever spoken to, speak softly and reassuredly with members, hug them, play with the children and say kind words to them.

On the other hand there is a Western bureaucratic framework with the executive body of which the president's office is the highest, followed by the vice president, the secretary, and the treasurer. Within this framework is a principle of division of roles with subgroups and individuals assigned to certain specified roles. There is a singing band headed by a band leader. The band is responsible for the hymns that are sung during worship. The leader selects these songs and rehearses them with the members of the band on Friday evenings. The band is also responsible for the safe keeping of the community's musical instruments.

A youth wing headed by a president, a university student, coordinates the activities of the youth in the temple. This group plays a very active role in the organisation of the community's cultural activities. It organises the theatrical performances such as plays, singing, and poetry recitals that take place especially during festival celebrations. The youth wing also organises fund-raising activities for the temple.

Then there is the Lakshmi Sabha, or the women's auxiliary wing which co-ordinates the women's activities such as preparing the temple's communal meals, washing the bowls, and washing the murtis' clothes and curtains of the temple when they become dirty. Individual members also play important roles in the organisation of temple life. One of such people is "Grandpa", a retired mechanic and apparently the oldest member of the community. He is the caretaker of the temple. What is remarkable about these offices is that they are voluntary, a fact which bears testimony to the commitment of the members to the group. Elections are held for executive positions every two years. The other offices such as the band leader's and the caretaker's are permanent. Ad hoc committees are formed whenever the need arises to deal with emerging issues.

A practice which seems unusual in a Hindu religious setting is the electing of women to major offices in the Radha Krishna temple. An elderly woman called "Grandma," for instance, holds the privileged position of being a special aid to the priest who presides over the temples rituals.⁶ Another younger woman is the temple's treasurer. Other women are appointed on various committees in the temple. Why this practice struck me as "strange" is the subordinate status that women are traditionally assigned in Hindu societies. Hindu culture and religion is male-centred. A woman's social role is generally

restricted within the domestic domains and usually precludes the holding of high social or religious office (Babb 1989:142; Fuller 1992:20-21).

In electing women to positions of respect and social responsibility, the Radha Krishna Hindu "church" seem to be self-consciously reversing the traditional Hindu stereotype. According to one of the pandits of the temple, women - contrary to traditional Hindu belief - are as worthy of respect as men for their motherly and wifely roles. The pandit also stressed the richness of women's spirituality. He explained that in terms of spiritual capacities women were equal to men and deserve the chance to serve in important capacities in the "church". As a member pointed out to me later the twin names "Radha-Krishna," reflect this theme of gender equality in the church.⁷

In concluding this discussion, I look at the question of leadership in the community's organizational structure. Who is the most authoritative figure in this temple and how does the temple reconcile these two patterns?

The primacy of the pandit's role as leaders of the community is assumed by members and by the pandits themselves. Their leadership seems to be accepted by members not only on account of their current roles but on traditional grounds, for the place of pandits as leaders of temple communities is part of the Guyanese Hindu religious tradition. Their leadership is therefore taken for granted.

On the other hand, the office of the president of the temple is officially recognized as the highest office. While the members recognize the president's office as such they relate to the pandits with a deeper sense of loyalty and speak more highly of them. The question of authority therefore seems to be clouded with an ambiguity and it is not immediately clear to an outsider whether it is the pandit or the president who is in control of the community. In fact, one gets the impression that the pandits, especially the founding member, are the most authoritative figures owing to the manner in which worshippers relate to them. Nevertheless, as the president explained to me, pandits have no voice in the temple's administration. Like any other member they are subject to the voting process in matters of decision-making in the temple.

While reflecting a tension between the roles of the individual pandits and the community (represented by the executives), in the organisation of temple life, this situation is a sign of the inventive process. It reflects the tension between the need of the community to retain the traditional role of the Guyanese pandit as a symbol of religious authority to ensure continuity with the past and the need to adopt a bureaucratic organisational structure in response to existing social conditions as Guyanese Hinduism is transplanted into a North American environment.

In their own ways, worshippers attempt to reconcile the roles of the president and the pandits, with the explanation that their roles are complementary in that while the president's function is largely administrative, the pandits control the spiritual aspects of the community's life.

Notes

1. Each family member above the age of eighteen years has to pay this amount in order to be deemed a full member.

2. The community's main source of funding is voluntary donations from members. It however often becomes necessary for them to generate funds for specific projects. In such cases full members, are requested to contribute specific amounts of money per member in addition to voluntary donations. This situation often creates problems for non- working full members as their status as unemployed members renders them incapable of fulfilling their financial obligations even though they are full members.

3. This number is only a rough estimation. In the temple's register which does not seem up to date, about one hundred and twenty names are registered as full members. In all (both full and associate members) the women constitute a little over half the total population of members. Less than a third of the total population are children. The rest are men.

4. There is a conspicuous absence of individuals from the middle class, though during a festival in August I met a visitor to the temple who said he was a medical practitioner in London, Ontario.

5. Another common explanation worshippers offered for deciding to remain in Canada was that they felt it was better for their children to be raised in a Western environment. Members expressed a feeling of great satisfaction with Canadian educational standards which they think are high and seemed to be happy that their children are exposed to opportunities which they themselves had no access to as children growing up in Guyana.

6. Grandma is Grandpa's wife.

7. In Hindu mythologies especially of the gopi tradition of the Vaishnavite sect, Radha is cast in the role of the wife of Krishna as an avatara or incarnation of Vishnu who descended as a soteriological figure into the world. In some of these passages, the unity of Krishna and Radha is stressed and the idea is expressed that they exist as an "androgynous" unit (see Kinsley 1986, Chapter 6). The Radha-Krishna temple builds on this theme to argue that in the twin figure of Radha and Krishna we see a depiction of an idea of unity in duality and an expression of equality between sexes. Krishna, they argue could not

have done without his other half, Radha. In the same way, men cannot achieve much without their wives. In this way the temple justifies the assigning of women to responsible positions in the community by drawing on the authority of the scriptures.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

INTRODUCTION

Hinduism is so fluid in its forms and practices that the content and form of worship is not consistent even within the Indian subcontinent itself (Kinsley 1993:111). Worship forms vary by sect, by tradition, by caste and even from one temple to another and it makes no sense to talk about a strictly orthodox or standard Hindu model of worship (Narayan 1989:35).

On the other hand, however, Hinduism has a definite identity, which is thought of as very Indian. No matter its form or context there is always something uniquely Indian about Hindu worship, which marks it off from other forms of worship such as those found in the Christian, Moslem, or African religious traditions. These uniquely Indian features in Hinduism include for instance the Hindu deities, the temple rituals, the temple organizational patterns, and the sacred texts such as the Puranas and the Epics. To give an example, practices of temple worship are prescribed in a variety of Hindu texts some of which go back to the Puranas, or to even to the Vedic period (Michell 1977:63). Even though most temples modify these prescribed practices to suit their local contexts, Hindu temple

practices generally fall within a framework of rules outlined in these texts (Fuller 1992:66). There is thus a certain common frame of reference even though there is a great diversity of forms in which Hinduism is practised (Fuller 1992:63). This frame of reference is by no means regarded as a standard of orthodoxy. It is sufficiently clear to give the religion an independent and special cultural identity, but it does not give it a uniform ritual form.

In examining the version of the Hindu religious tradition found in Guyanese temples as invented practices, we expect that the general frame of reference into which all Hindu worship falls will still be discernable. In other words the "past Hinduness" still prevails. When the religion is practised in a context where it might be influenced by other forms of religious practice, or where conditions might even compel the practitioners to modify their practices as was the case in the Caribbean, it might prove difficult to discern the usual frame of reference in Hindu worship.

In describing the rituals of temple worship in the Radha Krishna Hindu temple, I will try to demonstrate how even though the temple's rituals are clearly intended to fall within the general framework of Hinduism, the form in which worship and temple life is organized reflects a strong Western or Christian influence. It could be suggested that a "Westernized" or "Christianised" worship system characterises the recreated version of Hinduism practised in the temple.

The resultant worship system might be described as an intricate blending of traditional Hindu and Christian or modern forms of Hindu worship.

THE WORSHIP SETTING

The term "worship" in the context of this discussion refers to the community's devotional services which take place in the temple on Sundays. For a number of members especially the women, worship is the single most important ritual in the temple. Worship, or what is termed by the group as Pooja, is of a highly congregational form, and takes place every week on Sundays between 10.30 a.m. and 12 noon.¹ Not only does it involve a spontaneous style of hymn singing typical of some christian churches, the preaching of a sermon, quite untypical of a Hindu worship form is a central feature of worship in this temple. Normal worship lasts about two and a half hours. The duration is longer during festival celebrations, or when a renowned Guyanese Hindu pandit visits the temple. On these occasions, special worship sessions are held on any day of the week that is convenient.

The worshippers are predominantly "church" members who come from Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo. These include Guyanese men, women, and their children. Occasionally, one meets "new faces" from far away cities in Canada, as well as a few from the United States. During a festival (Diwali) which I attended

in October 1994, I met some of these families who had travelled from far away places. A worshipper commented:

This is a special time ...it is like our Christmas, it is at Diwali that you see everyone in this temple, even, Guyanese people who you don't normally see at the mandir (temple) for church on Sunday.

He continued to explain that Diwali was a time when worshippers are sure to meet old friends including some of those who had recently arrived in Canada and those who always "hid" in their homes. "Every living thing comes out at Diwali" explained an excited worshipper in an attempt to emphasize the attractiveness of the festival. Such big events as festivals have a special attraction for worshippers. For many of them however, these are more important as times for socializing than simply worshipping.

On the average, the number of members who attend the Sunday devotions is between seventy-five and a hundred, and this number is fairly constant. On special occasions, the number of worshippers increases to over a hundred and fifty. Attendance to worship could however be abysmally low on some occasions. One important determinant of the attendance at worship is the work schedule of individual worshippers. The majority of the members explained to me that they work shifts and can attend worship only when they are not on shift that day. Others explained that they work in more than one place, holding both a regular job during the week and working on a part-time basis elsewhere on the

weekends. For such members it becomes difficult to attend worship regularly. For these reasons, some members are able to attend worship only once in a while.

Religious zeal or piety thus does not seem for some members to be the determining factor in the regularity of their worship attendances, but rather this is governed by the exigencies of their day-to-day affairs as immigrants. Patrick, the secretary of the temple, however, seems to have a different opinion:

Everybody has some time... No one can say he has no time ... You can always make time... The problem is we don't have time for God... People have time for other things but not God ... That's the problem."

For an individual like Patrick who attributes his modest success as an immigrant to good karma, a strong quest to satisfy a spiritual need must underlie the motives for worshipping in the temple. From his point of view then, it is a lack of zeal that is reflected in irregular attendance of members at worship. "Don't wait until Diwali before you come to church we all have to work together to keep this community going," I had heard him admonish members one Sunday after worship. On that day, attendance was very low and Patrick seemed quite unhappy about it. It seemed to me that for Patrick, attendance at worship was among other things a way of demonstrating one's membership in the community.

I also observed what seemed like a seasonal variation in worship attendance. While in the winter months the temple was almost always fully packed with worshippers, in the summer months attendance at worship tended to be very

low. A worshipper explained this trend by saying that most families would prefer to use their free times in the summer for outdoor recreation rather than to attend the pooja, sessions. "Everybody wants to enjoy the nice summer weather," the individual explained. "But in the winter, when it is cold, who goes out? It is then that you see people rushing to church," he concluded. What I gathered from this explanation is that worship for some members was a substitute for their recreational activities. This substitution underscores the social significance worshippers attach to the temple. More than simply a place for worship, the temple is seen as a venue where members come to seek relief from boredom and isolation by participating in the rituals and socialising with others.

One striking observation about attendance at worship is that women, who constitute about half the total population, are more regular, and seem to be more enthusiastic. For the majority of them who claim they are housewives, these are the times when they can take a respite from the drudgery of their routine household chores in order to "spend some time," with their friends. They are normally seen seated closer to the images and they do more of the singing during worship. Some women could however be seen engaged in conversations throughout the entire course of worship. At worship, people sit on the floor in a specific posture. Normally they sit in a yogic posture with their knees pointing outwards to their sides and their feet held together at their groin. Some who are uncomfortable occasionally shift to outstretched legs. Women and children

normally sit on the right side of the temple facing the shrine, while the men normally sit on the left. Children seldom stay put throughout worship. A typical Sunday worship scene is one of toddlers crisscrossing from one side of the temple to the other seeking their fathers or playing while their mothers and older sisters try to restrain them. The sight of young girls restraining toddler siblings while they scream and kick about is one of the common highlights of the worship atmosphere. Apparently, there are no strict rules regarding the sitting arrangement because some members, especially young married couples, can be seen sitting together either among the men or the women. A leader of the temple explained that the members themselves decided to adopt this sitting arrangement and sitting posture, because they felt it was the normal Hindu way of sitting at worship, and no regulation was set by the temple leaders.

Members dress in both Western attire and in traditional Indian costumes for worship. In the case of the latter mode of dressing, women and girls wear flowing gowns which are a Guyanese modification of the traditional Indian sari. The men normally wear flowing shirts over loose fitting pants. The priests always wear white shirts and loose white "pajama" pants, often with a white band tied around their waist. They also wear prayer beads around their necks. The white colour of the priests' attire is thought to be symbolic of the ritual purity associated with the person and vocation of the pandit.

WORSHIP RITUALS

As there is not much significant variation in the rituals performed in the temple every week, the following description of the temple's rituals is based on my observation of worship on a typical Sunday.

Grandpa, the caretaker of the temple, opens the doors to the temple. One Sunday, I engaged Grandpa in a conversation as I awaited the arrival of other worshippers. Grandpa seemed to derive a unique sense of satisfaction from his job as a caretaker of the temple. "I take care of the whole place and make sure the murtis are always in good condition," he proudly commented while giving me a tour of the temple. On this day, Grandpa took me into the kitchen and showed me where food was kept, where it was cooked and where the bowls in which food was served were kept. He explained that the fruits and food supplies in the temple were donations from members. "That is not ordinary water," he said pointing to two barrels containing what he described as "holy water." "That's holy water" he said. "The priests use it for their rituals and we buy it from an Indian shop in Toronto." For some time I wondered about the idea of "holy water" for it was a term I had hardly come across in Hindu religious language. It took sometime for me to realise that it was one of the Christian additions to the temple community's vocabulary.

The band leader, a young man in his mid thirties is normally one of the earliest to arrive. He is often accompanied by his wife and newly born baby, and he brings along with him the community's musical instruments a small drum, an

accordion, a sound amplifier and two loudspeakers which he always keeps in his custody. While he fixes the musical instruments, members of the choir arrive one after the other. The choir members are normally the first to arrive for worship. "Worship must begin with gaiety and life," the choir master once said while explaining why the band was the first to arrive. "We start the pooja with singing in order to put the worshippers in the right mood for worship," he explained.

Worship therefore begins with singing as soon as all the members of the "church choir" or the band also known as kirtan mundli are present. The term "church choir" sounded quite unusual to me when I first heard it. Explaining the use of such Christian terminologies by the members, one of the priests attributed it to the Christian backgrounds of the majority of the worshippers. In confirmation to the pandit's explanation an elderly man recounted me his experiences as an altar boy in a Catholic church in Guyana. On arrival in Canada, this fellow had worshipped with a Catholic church in Stoney Creek and joined the Hindu community only after he had come to Cambridge and had been invited to the temple by some friends. For such a person, it is significant to note that the issue of worshipping in an atmosphere of familiar faces was the overriding factor in his decision to become a Hindu after many years as a Catholic.

The prevalence of Christian terminology such as "church" "church choir" and "sermon" and "holy water" is a vestige of worshippers' Christian

backgrounds, but at the same time it betrays the Christian flavour in the present Hindu temple practices.

Singing in the temple is done to the accompaniment of musical instruments played by the "the choir". The members of this choir meet in the temple on Friday evenings to select and rehearse hymns that are to be sung on Sundays, and also to practice on the musical instruments. A striking observation in the temple is that the singing of hymns seems central to the religious experiences of most of the worshippers. Hymns are clearly as important to members as any other ritual in the temple and the majority of the worshippers take an active interest in singing hymns. Singing is oriented towards communal participation. The spirit of seriousness and dedication which characterises the Friday hymn rehearsals is itself a testament of the importance the members attach to hymn singing in the temple. Quite apart from the entertaining value of these hymns which liven up the worship atmosphere, they are essentially the medium through which worshippers pour out their sentiments towards the deities.²

As the songs are being sung, worshippers "trickle" into the temple. I always watched as newly arriving worshippers enter the temple, remove their shoes at the entrance and then go to sit on the floor. A worshipper sitting near me once explained that the practice of removing shoes was one of the traditional Hindu rules of ritual purity. He explained that leather, from which shoes are normally made is considered ritually unclean and therefore polluting. By entering

the temple with one's shoes on, it is believed that people pollute the temple and the deities in it. When this happens the deities become displeased and members gain no benefit from the rituals they perform in the temple. The main doorway to the temple is thus always strewn with shoes of many different sorts.

I made an interesting observation in the Radha Krishna temple, which shows the limit of this idea of pollution. While leather and even rubber shoes are not permitted in the temple, on account of their impurity, worshippers do not seem to be alarmed by the fact that leather hand bags are brought into the temple. I expressed surprise when I first realized this. In explaining this apparent contradiction, one worshipper commented:

Well, that's the belief, but not everybody remembers... a lot of members forget and bring in their leather bags ... I mean the ladies especially... but the real fact is the carpet (he said pointing to the floor). I mean... we cannot walk on the ground with our shoes and then bring the dirty shoes in here.

This worshipper had simply modified the traditional idea of purity to say that shoes could not be permitted in the temple because they bring in physical dirt and make the woollen carpet dirty. The impression I got from this explanation is that the underlying reason for the prohibition of shoes in the temple has come to have more to do with physical cleanliness than ritual purity. This might explain why rubber shoes, which are not really ritually polluting are not permitted into the temple. One could at this point suggest that even though the pressure to make the

temple practice at the Radha Krishna temple conform to norms of the Hindu tradition is strong, the laxity in enforcing the rules of ritual purity regarding leather products indicates that in this new Canadian context, significant weight is also given to other considerations. Considerations of cleanliness rationally require the banning of shoes from the temple where worshippers normally sit on the floor, but it seems that to enforce this rule, worshippers have invoked an idea from the Hindu religious tradition concerning the rules of ritual purity and pollution. One finds in this practice a re-echoing of Hobsbawm's observation that some traditions are revamped with a view to legitimate certain norms of behaviour as being consistent with the past ways. Apart from establishing a connection between the inventors of the tradition and their past, these revived norms or rules become imbued with symbolic authority and are complied with on this account. Reference to the past or the "traditional" makes the rules carry more weight (Hobsbawm 1983:9; Ranger 1983:254). In this instance Hindu traditional rules of ritual purity seem to be evoked to legitimate the regulation of not bringing foot wear in the temple for hygienic reasons.

On entering the temple, each worshipper walked up to the shrine and paid homage to the deities by either lying prostrate on the ground or bowing before sitting down. Worshippers, then joined the choir in the singing.

Many of the hymns sung in the temple are Hindi hymns which have been previously selected and arranged into hymn books by the choir leader.

According to the president, during the process of selecting these hymns, the primary consideration was to select hymns that are easy to sing and have lyrics that can be understood by all the members. Although the hymns have remained in their original Hindi, they have been transcribed into Roman script so that it is possible for the majority of members who cannot read Hindi characters, to sing along once they know the tune. Some of the hymns have also been translated into English so that members can understand the meaning, even though they are still sung in Hindi.

The hymn books are kept in boxes hung on the walls of the temple, and are distributed to members before each worship session begins. One finds that this process of carefully selecting hymns, transcribing them into Roman script, and translating them into English, illustrates the care generally taken in the temple in the process of reconstructing elements of the Hindu religious tradition in ways that serve the needs of a generation of Hindus who are living in Canada where the process of acculturation continues.

A founding member explained that one problem the community faced from the beginning was the lack of knowledge of Hindi by a majority of the members. This situation made it difficult to sing in Hindi as members could neither read the Hindi characters in the hymn books, nor understood what they meant. The problem is recognised as a result of their indentureship in Guyana when native Indian languages were lost. While only a few worshippers can read or speak

Hindi, the community finds the use of Hindi songs a rich cultural resource and a way to remind their children that they still have a language heritage.

One issue which intrigued me was the stubborn emphasis placed on Hindi in the temple worship. Hindi has been adopted as the medium of communication in which religious activities should be conducted in the temple. The singing is done in Hindi, and the scriptural texts used are Hindi (occasionally English) renderings of the original Sanskrit. The prayers are said to be Hindi, but in fact Sanskrit prayers mostly memorized by the pandit are read out from the Roman script prayer-books. During the last two years, Hindi classes have also been organised by the temple. These classes are held on Saturday evenings in a public school in Cambridge. An East Indian comes from Toronto to teach the classes. Even though attendance has been poor, the leaders of the temple are determined to keep the classes running. A discussion of the underlying significance of this practice will be taken up later in the thesis.

The singing at the beginning of the service gradually subsides and is followed by the chanting of mantras in Hindi, (really Sanskrit) marking the beginning of a series of ritual enactments. One of the priests (pandits) preside over these rituals, aided by Grandma. The traditional Hindu idea that temples are abodes of deities finds an expression in the temples ritual.³ The pandit persistently rings a bell during this ritual to awaken each deity, and Grandma

washes their feet by sprinkling "holy water" on them. The deities are attended to in order, beginning from the left and ending on the right.

Next comes the feeding of the deities. In the Radha Krishna Hindu temple there is an unusual arrangement in that this is the responsibility of the women, not the priest, though he presides over the ritual. The fact that women exclusively perform this role is said to be designed to reflect their social and domestic roles as wives and mothers. "Women are our mothers ..they see to our stomachs when we are hungry at home and it is only appropriate that they feed the murtis in their homes" explained one worshipper. Usually four women carry bowls of boiled rice and fruits such as bananas, apples, and oranges and place them at the feet of the deities for some time. The pandit consecrates these by sprinkling "holy water" on them. The women then pick some of these fruits and in a symbolic gesture mimic the act of feeding the deity images by placing a fruit near to the lip of each and then putting it back into the bowls. This is done for all the deities. Sometimes several women take turns in repeating the feeding ritual in the belief that special blessings can be obtained from the deities in return.

The fruits are then taken away to be cut into small pieces and shared among the worshippers. These cut fruits are known as the prasad or food that has been offered to the deity which the pandit described as follows:

Prasad is spiritual food. It is like the Holy Communion in Christianity. When we place those fruits before the murtis they eat, and transfer their spiritual qualities into it and then when we eat it we grow stronger spiritually.

Great importance is attached by members to the consumption of prasad, as it is believed that the consumer becomes suffused with the blessings transferred into it by the deity.

Although I had become quite accepted into the temple community, the reality of my outsider status still came into play every now and then during the course of the study. One of such moments concerned the eating of prasad. I was always sceptical about eating prasad, though I was cautious enough never to show my doubts. While in part a heritage of my family tradition of avoiding food that came from strangers, my scepticism issued largely from my Christian family background. For my faraway family back in Ghana, my visiting a Hindu temple was bad enough. To go beyond this point and eat food spiritually charged with the essence of a Hindu ('heathen') deity would be considered abominable. Thus even though I always ate the prasad in order to "behave" appropriately before my respondents, I have always had to endure an inner struggle with the issue of contaminating my Christian self and going against a family tradition.

Throughout the entire study, I was constantly caught up in such moments of tension between a dedication to the liberal orientation of academic enquiry which calls for objectivity and a suspension of "feelings" on the one hand,

and the exclusivist stance of my Christian background which demanded a denunciation of Hindu practices as heathen. The entire study was characterised by a struggle to maintain a balance between these two opposing forces and my encounter with the issue of eating prasad was only one of the highlights of this struggle.

The singing continues during the washing and feeding rituals and stops only at the start of the second phase of the worship, which is the preaching of the sermon, known by worshippers as katha. The sermon or katha, an important highlight of worship in the temple, is another good illustration of how the temple's Hindu tradition is "invented". The katha, or sermon is preached by the priest (pandit) who presides over all the day's rituals. A typical sermon lasts about thirty to forty-five minutes. On special occasions such as festivals, sermons last for more than an hour. The sermons are in English. The themes of the sermon depends on the preacher and the occasion. Themes are chosen to reflect specific events. If there is no special occasion, the priest arbitrarily chooses a theme or themes which he finds appropriate. However he explains to members why he has chosen a particular theme or themes. Many of the sermons are based on expositions of verses from the Hindu scriptures, especially the Gita and the Mahabharata, or from literary works of renowned Hindu theologians such as Tulsi Das and Ramanuja. I once saw a pandit, with an old English version of the

uparnisards, who explained that he got some of the themes of his sermon from that source.

It is intriguing to note how the priests try to blend in elements of what seem like Christian practices in the sermon preaching. The priest reads the verses of a given text in Hindi. He then translates them into English and expounds upon them, often drawing on day-to-day experiences for illustrations. While the pandit's approach to sermon preaching is very similar to the practice in many Christian traditions, the pandit also draws on traditional Hindu techniques or styles such as the practice of singing out the verses from Sanskrit scriptures while in actual fact reading from a Hindi text.

On one Sunday, I found the sermon to be rather discursive as the pandit focused on three themes and shifted from one to the other. The first of these was the theme of devotion in the Gita. In this part of the sermon, the pandit read the relevant sections of the Gita and expounded on them. "God is of manifold forms and is to be worshipped in any of these forms. In the Gita, Krishna reveals his many forms to Arjuna," he said as he read the relevant sections of the Gita aloud. "Whatever forms in which God is worshipped are inconsequential to the effect of worship. God can be worshipped at any place and in any form." At this point the priest digressed a bit, using the opportunity to condemn the exclusivist attitude of Christianity in condemning other religions as false. "Christianity has destroyed many cultures by claiming that God is in only one form," he said. "If you visit

places like Africa you will see how the richness in African culture and religion has been destroyed." He went on to explain how Western civilization and education has relegated traditional African medicine to the background." I nodded in agreement from where I sat. "Hinduism does not discriminate," he continued. "We Hindus accept God in any forms in which he reveals himself because we believe that all religions are revelations of God," he said sounding quite polemical. "This is the gist of the message of Krishna in the Gita". The priest later paused, and requested the worshippers to ask questions on issues they did not understand in the sermon or any other puzzle they had.

A young girl asked why the image of Mother Durga, one of the temple deities, had so many arms. "Good! That's very insightful. Some of these kids are really reflective," the pandit said, commending the young girl for asking the question.

Then, the theme of the sermon shifted to symbols in Hinduism. Moving from one deity to the other the pandit explained the symbolism attached to each deity's image. "Why do you think Mother Durga has so many arms ?" he said, repeating the girl's question and pointing to the image of Durga on the stage. He explained that Durga's symbols reflected the roles she played in the mythologies. The pandit explained that at a human level the symbolic gestures of the deities reflected certain mundane truths. In conclusion, the pandit explained that the multiplex nature and complex nature of Hindu symbolism cannot all be

comprehended by the unaided human mind. "This is why I say that what Hindu scholars know is only a tip of the iceberg. Hinduism is too complex to be studied and wholly known by scholars," he concluded. I felt a bit uneasy and guilty as I thought that comment was directed at me. I was reminded of Kirin Narayan's experience with Swamiji when conducting her ethnography (Narayan 1989:59-60).

The themes of the sermons are not always so discursive. On another occasion the pandits' sermon took the form of a lecture. The topic was the Hindu caste system. In an attempt which I interpreted as a justification of the casteless orientation of the temple's belief and practice, the pandit tried to demonstrate that the Hindu institution of caste as it is practically manifested in daily life in Hindu society had no scriptural basis. "Who wrote the scriptures?" he asked. "It was the priests. They wrote it to benefit themselves, for how can God being so good condemn a group of people he created himself to perpetual servitude?" The rest of the sermon was a condemnation of the inhumanity of the caste institution.

As I reflected on this sermon, I tried to rationalize the role of the sermons in general but specifically, the priest's position regarding the issue of caste. In the first place I found the sermons to be educative and directed mostly at the children. The pandit would normally say, "I chose to speak on this or that topic today because the kids need to know." Sermons were also directed to adult members whose knowledge of the Hindu tradition was inadequate because of their historical situation. Sermons were therefore generally educational but one also

discerns in most sermons, a justification of the temple's stance on certain issues. The caste system was one of these issues. As the caste system was a point at which the Guyanese version of Hinduism departed from East Indian Hinduism, it was a mark of the temple's unique identity. For the Guyanese Hindus who had lost track of their caste backgrounds during the indentureship, the message of the sermon on caste was a comforting one and perhaps self-justifying for the priest himself, whose Brahmanical status may be thought of as unclear.

The influence of North American ideas is sometimes reflected in the sermons. For example, on Mothers' Day, a day set aside to commemorate the role of mothers in the family in North America, the visiting pandit from New York turned to the maternal and wifely qualities expressed in Hindu myths on goddesses to preach about the virtues of womanhood and motherhood. At the end of the sermon, he encouraged husbands and children to give due respect to their wives and mothers. I came away that day intrigued and impressed by the recognition given to Mother's Day in the temple. Not only did I see it as a reversal of the traditional Hindu practice of placing women in the lowest echelon of Hindu society, but also as an appropriate contextualization of Guyanese Hinduism in Canada. This is another example of North American influence on the practice of Hinduism in this temple and a further analysis of that theme will be provided at a later stage of the thesis.

The attentiveness of the worshippers during sermon preaching is remarkable. The room is normally quiet and only broken by the cries of toddlers who seem oblivious to what is happening around them. Worshippers nod in approval when the priest makes a point with which they all seem to agree. Occasionally worshippers burst into laughter when the priest makes a joke in the process of illustrating a point.

Some sermons tend to be long and somewhat boring. This is especially the case during festivals and during such boring sermons I have seen worshippers doze off while sitting with their back inclined against the side walls of the temple. Others, especially those sitting far from the altar, sometimes begin to engage in conversation or crack jokes with their peers. One also notes a difference in the preaching style of the two priests. One of the priests tends to be quite ecstatic and in a frenzied state. While preaching he literally sings out the verses in a high pitched voice. He would often stop suddenly, jerk out and burst into a hymn which is immediately picked up especially by the women who normally sit nearer to the shrine. In the performance of the rituals, his steps are very brisk: He seems to be virtually springing from one side to the other. "He is smart, he is an expert in the rituals," exclaimed a worshipper apparently overtaken by the priest's performance. Judging, however, from the calm demeanour of this priest after worship I concluded that he deliberately puts up a show while officiating. In this way he appeals to the emotions of worshippers, especially the women, who do not

hesitate in picking up the hymns he spontaneously burst into while preaching. For this priest, the sermon offers ample opportunities for reinforcing his charisma as a pandit, an expert in the rituals. Such outward display of charisma seemed crucial to the priest's legitimacy as a pandit before the community.⁴

The other priest portrays a rather calm demeanour while preaching and presiding over the rituals. The themes of his sermons tend to be highly intellectual or philosophical. He encourages questions and directs members to books in the library. "If you want to know Hinduism you have to read, go to the library and take the books and read," he would say to the worshippers.

Worshippers have an impression of this priest as "learned"

and from a true Brahman family. "He is very learned he has two university degrees, he teaches us a lot." Apart from manifesting two different orientations, these priests complement one another. In their different approaches we see an overlapping of the community's orientation towards both popular as well as philosophical traditions.

The last stage of worship involves the continual ritual processes of Hawan and Arti.⁵ Hawan or the "fire ritual," the first of these rituals is basically a sacrificial rite. It normally lasts for about twenty minutes. The presiding pandit normally makes an announcement requesting members who wanted to take part in the Arti to be ready while he performs the Hawan. The drums beat, the bells, ring and the singing band starts singing once more. Moving briskly to one side of

the temple, in front of the altar, the presiding priest kindles a fire in a bowl with a flat surface placed on the floor. He invites a few members, normally three men and two women, to sit around the flame. As they cup their palms over the flame they chant special mantras, (ritual formulae or sacred verses) to Agni and other deities, while the priest pours oblations into the fire. This ritual is basically an invocation of the presence of Agni, the Vedic god who consumes sacrifices. "Agni must be present in order that the sacrifice proceeds and ends successfully," the priest explained to me. The fire, he explained, symbolised Agni himself and through Agni, the sacrifices went up into the heavens. Agni is thus perceived as a vehicle through which the sacrifices are transported to their intended destinations. The ash from the sacrificial rite is believed to be spiritually charged and is sometimes placed on members' forehead.

The Hawan is followed by the Arti. More worshippers participate in Arti. The Arti is more devotional in orientation and worshippers in this ritual express their sense of devotion to their deities and seek their blessings in return. Normally more women than men take part in the Arti, ritual. The worshippers line up in single file and pick up smaller bowls with candles placed in clay lamps called diya, on them. They light these candles from the main hawan, flame. Then they move slowly from one deity to the other from left to right holding the burning candles. In front of each deity they stop, transfix their gaze to the deity's eyes in a visionary process known as darshaan and wave the light three times in a circular motion

before each deity before handing the flame to the priest who passes it on to the next worshipper to have his or her turn. The singing heightens at this point, with the tempo of the drums and the songs rising. The entire atmosphere of the temple becomes electrified as the blowing of a horn joins the music. This is the climax of worship. It is as if a new spirit has entered the worshippers at this stage. When the last person has handed over his Arti lamp to the priest, all worshippers fall on their knees, bow their faces before the deities and chant the final mantra signalling the end of the rituals.

Announcements follow the Arti, ceremony. "Sita Ram," the announcer greets the worshippers as he begins. He normally thanks the members, especially newcomers for coming and encourages them to keep up their regular attendance. He announces the most recent donations made by individual members to the temple and thanks them. He also announces any planned cultural activities in other Hindu communities. He talks about the state of the temples finances and the state of the mortgage. At other times his announcements focus on planned activities by individual members in their homes and on behalf of planners, he extends invitations to other members. The communal meal follows the announcements. Food, normally rice with a kind of Guyanese Indian sauce, is brought in bowls and served to members in disposable plates. In addition to the rice, the fruits placed before the deities are cut into smaller pieces and distributed among worshippers. Worship is considered to have ended after the meal. The next thirty minutes

following the end of the pooja is normally for the purpose of socializing. The pandits go from person to person hugging and shaking hands with members, while whispering words into the ears of some. Occasionally a member would hold the pandit's hand and pull him to a section of the room to have a word with him. In what seemed to be words of advice, the pandit is seen gesticulating to his client while he or she reassuredly nods continually, often with a smile. Here and there one would see a cluster of people gathered for gossip and casual conversation: women, exchanging domestic news, and men discussing matters of business. One would often hear them ask each other, "what's new?" Such conversations constitute important informal means by which information is transmitted among members, and members especially women, seem to socialize in networks of "gossip" groups. In the narrow doorway leading into the temple, worshippers are seen reading notices from the notice board. Notices provide information about planned temple activities, newspaper clippings on job openings in and around Cambridge and activities in other Hindu temples in Ontario. Other members are seen straightening the room up, vacuuming the floor, drawing the curtains that conceal the deities, or rearranging the pictures and deity images. Outside the temple, members are heard bidding the usual "Happy weekend, see you next week" farewell.

Pooja, or worship, in conclusion is basically a Hindu ritual in the Radha Krishna temple. The singing of Hindi hymns, the chanting of mantras, the Arti and Hawan rituals, are basic Hindu worship practices. The organisational pattern of

pooja nevertheless reflects a creativity. First, the congregational pattern of worship with the sermon as one of its central highlights is untypical of a Hindu worship form and is to be seen as a deliberate innovation. One could look at this development either as an adaptation or an adoption. In the former sense, it could be seen as an attempt to accommodate worship to the patterns of worshippers' daily routines as migrant workers, in Canada a situation which leaves them with only little time except Sundays to worship publicly. In the latter sense it is an adoption of a Christian style of worship that owes much to the Christian backgrounds of the worshippers. Another testament of to the Christian flavour in the temple's Hindu worship tradition is the adoption of Christian terminologies such as "Church," "sermon," "choir" and "holy water." Undoubtedly these are relics of worshippers' immediate Christian past.

It is important to note, however, that worshippers place a traditional Hindu stamp on all these aspects of temple practice and the observation that certain practices are borrowed elements from the Christian traditions is only being made from an outsider's viewpoint. Thus, even though sermons are preached in a similar fashion as is practiced in the Christian tradition, this preaching is done under the label of "Katha," which is a traditional Hindu cultural form. Also, the rules regarding ritual purity, suggest worshippers seem to be simply evoking the symbolic force of a Hindu traditional rule in order to enforce a ban on the practice of entering the temple with footwear that would soil the carpet. In both instances,

the authority of the Hindu past has been drawn upon to legitimate worship practices in the temple. The "Hinduness" of these practices invokes a strong symbolism which reinforces in worshippers' a feeling of establishing continuity with the old tradition. Worship therefore can be described as a newer model of the old Hindu practice.

One striking element of worship in the temple is the pragmatic considerations that underlie the inventive process especially as found in the practice of the katha. When pandits deliver the katha, it is not only because it is traditional and consistent with traditional Hindu practice. Kathas as traditional means of imparting knowledge seem to be functional to the goals of the community's project of transmitting elements of the tradition to subsequent generations. This explains why the themes in the kathas are basic Hindu ideas or notions but which a generation of Guyanese Hindus raised in Canada have no opportunity of knowing unless they are communicated. The invented katha in this connection is thus to be seen to be performing its traditional Hindu function as a mode of teaching, but within a different cultural context.

Finally, while basically a religious ritual, pooja as I have described it provides a rendez-vous for worshippers to meet each other and interact. The worship is participatory and every worshipper seems to be involved in the activities. Hymn singing for instance, is embraced by the entire group although the band plays a central role. There do not seem to be any restrictions on womens'

roles in the temple. Especially in the deity feeding rituals, otherwise the preserve of the priests in typical Hindu temples, women play a very active role. The structure of the pooja is designed to facilitate wholesale involvement and unrestricted participation and interaction among worshippers. While this element of the worship tradition reinforces the zeal of worshippers in the community's activities, it also evokes the sense of solidarity that is required for the creation of a strong sense of communal identity.

It is thus clear from this description that worship in the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple is the product of a conscious effort by Guyanese Hindu immigrants in Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo to create a religious symbol system in order reinforce among members a clear sense of oneness as Guyanese Hindus. In the next two chapters we discuss in more detail these two elements of the temples' tradition: its status as consciously created and its function as a symbolic focus of ethnic identity.

Notes

1. Puja" in Hinduism means worship. The term "Pooja" is therefore a corruption of the traditional Hindu term by this Guyanese Hindu community. Throughout the study I have retained the term as it is used by the community.

2. A praise hymn supposed to be in Hindi and commonly sang to extol the glories of Ganesh, one of the temple deities is as follows:

Jai Ganesh Jai Ganesh Jai Ganesh Deva,
Maata jakay Parvati pita Maha Deva. Jai Ganesh Deva.
Ladhuva ke bhoga lage santa kare sayva, Jai Ganesh
Deva...

The English translation reads:
Glory to the Lord Ganesh
controller of our intellect,
whose mother is Parvati and Siva is his father.
The saints pay homage by making offerings of sweets.
Glory to thee O Ganesh (Pandit Jairam 1993:128)

3. For a more elaborate discussion of this Hindu belief see Michell (1977:61-66). See also the introductory pages of Younger's work, The Home Of Dancing Sivan: The Traditions of the Hindu Temple in Citamparam (1995) Forthcoming.

4. See my discussion of the nature of the Guyanese Hindu office of the pandit in Chapter Three.

5. These two rituals are traditionally Hindu religious rituals. The Hawan originates from the ancient Vedic fire sacrificial ritual (yajna) intended for Agni, the Vedic sacrificial god and the intermediary divine and human realms. Hawan is performed for the purpose of sustaining cosmic order. The fire itself is described as an embodiment of Agni who then becomes the vehicle for transporting the sacrifices to other divine beings in the celestial world. Arti is a devotional ritual meant to glorify the temple deities. While its roots cannot be easily traced in the sacred texts, a number of verses in the upanisads and the purana make allusions to this ritual. It might well be a later development (Knott 1987:167-168; Kinsley 1993:112-116). While Hawan is more ritualistic in

orientation, arti tends to be more devotional, expressing the worshippers sense of dependence on the deities (Knott 1987:167-168). The pandits' explanation of the rationale behind these two rituals falls within the traditional Hindu framework. However, they explained that what is performed in the temple are abridged versions of the original and are in accordance with versions developed by East Indian immigrants in Canada.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION 1

THE WORSHIP TRADITION AS "INVENTED"

In an article entitled Mass Producing Traditions, Hobsbawm (1983), clearly sums up his views on the postmodern global phenomenon of the proliferation of invented traditions:

Quite new, or old but dramatically transformed, social groups, environments and social contexts called for new devices to ensure or express social cohesion and identity and to structure social relations (Hobsbawm 1983:263).

In these words Hobsbawm identifies a correlation between group cohesion or the cultivation of a sense of identity and the inventive process. He notes also that social change, destabilises communal bases of life, creating the conditions which trigger off the process of inventing traditions.

In a similar vein, James Clifford, commenting in his introduction to The Predicament Of Cultures (1988) on the changes occurring in categories of meanings in postmodern times writes:

Twentieth-century identities no longer presuppose continuous cultures or traditions. Everywhere individuals and groups improvise local performances from (re) collected pasts, drawing on foreign media, symbols and languages (Clifford 1988:14).

Clifford in this way underscores the fact that such cultural categories as "identity" and "tradition" no longer assume immutable essences. They are susceptible to shifting interpretations and more so as they are also subject to the general and broad changes characteristic of postmodern times. Communities invent new identities from shattered pasts drawing on existing as well as past symbolic cultural forms (Clifford 1988:16).

Following Hobsbawm and Clifford, scholars such as Ranger (1983) Cannadine (1983) and Keesing (1989) have tried to demonstrate how these processes are unfolding in various cultural and social contexts. Keesing (1989), for instance, has in a study of Pacific societies tried to demonstrate cogently how natives are "evoking" images of the "past" in a nationalistic fervour as symbols of resistance against colonial domination (1989:19-37). While the real "pasts" being re-claimed by these communities may not exactly match the recreated versions of symbols or images, they afford the inventors an ideological connection with the 'good old' pre-colonial times (Keesing 1989:19-37).

While the foci of these scholars have mainly been confined to the socio-political domains of life, their discussions provide the overall ideological framework underlying the developments in the Radha Krishna Hindu temple. In keeping with the postmodern phenomena described by the scholars, the worshippers of the Radha Krishna temple are reworking the fragments of their

"pasts" and weaving these together into the structure of a Hindu tradition as a symbolic expression of their sense of collective identity in Canada.

The challenge of this thesis has been to demonstrate how this process is unfolding in the Hindu religious tradition of the Radha Krishna Temple in Cambridge Ontario. The preceding chapters have so far tried to show that the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple tradition is the product of a "deliberate" reworking or rejuvenating of a dying Hindu tradition to serve as the religious symbol of a distinct Guyanese-Hindu ethnic identity in Canada. In other words as an invention, the Temple's Hindu tradition reinforces in the Guyanese Hindu immigrants a sense of "Hinduness," or a connection with their Hindu past.

In describing the pattern of worship in the temple in the previous chapter, I tried to point out the ways in which different cultural elements have been blended together in this inventive process to create a "Hindu" worship tradition. The discussion of the tradition as an "invented" tradition follows in this chapter as a further elaboration of this point.

In analyzing the tradition from the perspective of "invented tradition," two related questions will engage our reflection: In what context is this worship form being developed, and what elements of this worship form suggest an inventive process? In addressing these issues, I will use the ideas of Hobsbawm, Clifford and other proponents of the concept of invented

traditions as a model. In this connection, I will argue that the social and cultural context in which the Hindu tradition is developing among the Guyanese Hindus in Canada and the function it is intended to play, as well as the features of the worship tradition practised in the Radha Krishna Temple, suggest a creative process. I will show also that as the process of inventing a new Hindu religious tradition is unfolding in a North American socio-cultural context, elements of North American culture become grafted into the Hindu religious tradition of the temple.

Considered retrospectively, Guyanese Hinduism is in its essence an invention. As noted in earlier discussions, Indian indentured immigrants to Guyana did not constitute a homogenous unit during the indentureship. They were a mixture of individuals from different caste, ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds in the Indian subcontinent. It was not until after the indentureship that the immigrants, faced with the common threat of Creole hostility, "invented" a general Hindu culture and tradition as an identity symbol.

The elements of this invented Hindu tradition have already been discussed in previous chapters of this study. I have discussed the Pandit, the Brahman institutions as well as Kali worship in Guyana as products of this inventive process. I have also pointed out how subsequent generations of East Indians in Guyana who inherited the invented Hindu tradition later on became highly acculturated as they integrated into the larger Guyanese society and took

on Creole as well as Western values and norms. Belonging to this generation of post-indentured Hindus, the Guyanese Hindu immigrants of Cambridge arrived in Canada with what could be described as a legacy of an ambiguous sense of Hindu identity or "Hinduness." Considered from the postmodern anthropological viewpoint it could be said that the Hindus of Guyana had undergone periods of redefining their ethnicity prior to their arrival in Canada (see Fischer 1986: 195-196). As noted previously in Chapter Three, several of these individuals had become highly Creolized over the years and many had converted to Christianity and continued to worship as Christians in the early years of their stay in Canada. Ramcharam's description of Guyanese Hindus as "hybridized" is therefore an apt description (Ramcharan 1983:52).

Earlier discussions in Chapter Four have also shown that individual Guyanese Hindu immigrants who remained steadfast in their practice of Hinduism, albeit in its invented and acculturated form, were largely constrained in their practice by the absence of Guyanese Hindu temples in Canada during the earlier phases of their stay in Canada. Among Guyanese Hindus of the Cambridge generation therefore, it could be suggested that the Hindu religious tradition was suffering a considerable setback in its development. As a cultural unit, their "Indianness," was on the brink of total extinction. Their sense of an Indian identity was becoming more and more ambiguous.

Soon, however, a realization of their social and cultural situations in Canada as immigrants necessitated the renegotiation of a distinct Guyanese Hindu ethnic identity. The only recourse for the immigrants in attempting to develop that identity was to revamp and clearly re-define the gradually fading Hindu tradition as a symbol of the community as well as to ensure its continuity.

The Hindu tradition in the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple therefore represents a secondary inventive process in the history of Hinduism as far as the Guyanese Hindus are concerned. At the core of this creative process lies the fact that Guyanese Hindus as a cultural unit are involved in a secondary process of relocation. It is especially this situation which calls for a renegotiation of their identity as a unit in Canada. The invented tradition is therefore a symbolic focus of a renegotiated sense of ethnic identity.

In order to understand why this renegotiation was found to be necessary in Canada, two related factors regarding the status of Guyanese Hindus must be considered. In the first place, their status as immigrants exposes them to a dramatically new "environment" or "social context," which called on them to develop a coping mechanism. The result is the community they have created. In the second place, their status as a group relocating for the second time in their history in multiethnic Canada where there is a large community of East Indian immigrants directly from India necessitated a redefinition of their specific Hindu identity in Canada. In the absence of a clearly

defined traditional identity, an invention of their various pasts was inevitable. It is my contention that the context in which a cultural process unfolds is crucial to the definition we attach to it. To define the temple tradition as invented therefore, it becomes crucial for us to examine it within the context of these two interrelated or overlapping situations of the Guyanese Hindu immigrants.

We might begin by discussing the first point with the following question: Were the Guyanese Hindu immigrants confronted with a situation of social change, or "transformation," in the Hobsbawmian sense, or a situation having a similar psychological impact of a process of social change in Canada which necessitated the invention of a tradition?

The concept of social change has been used broadly to define transformations or shifts in social environments of sub-communities or even whole societies (Allahar 1991:542). Such changes are normally "broad" and they affect physical as well as psychosomatic domains of aspects of the lives of people concerned (Allahar 1991:542). In the usual situation of social change, individuals and communities are confronted with social situations hitherto unknown, unprecedented or even novel to them and sometimes threatening to the basis of their identity as a community (Hobsbawm 1983).

While such social transformations might occur within communities' own physical or social domains, for the purpose of this discussion I argue that

individuals who migrate to new environments experience similar effects of change. Thus, while the process of migrating from one region to the other cannot in technical terms be examined as a process of social change, immigrants confront similar conditions to those experienced in a situation of social change. Migration exposes people to conditions and experiences hitherto unknown.¹

Having migrated from strong kin-based and closely knit Guyanese Hindu villages in the countryside into the suburban communities of Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo, Guyanese Hindu immigrants of the temple community face a totally new social context. While they are overwhelmed by this dramatic change in their new environments a sense of rootlessness plagues them as they have at the same time become uprooted from their traditional societies.

Worshippers in the temple community do not often go into much detail in describing the nature of their village communities except to mention their names and to explain, for instance, that "oh it's a small village," in Demerara, Essequibo or some other bigger region of the country. I therefore rely on Henry's (1994) and Rauf's (1974) descriptions to provide a general picture of the village pattern of life from which these worshippers emerged to buttress my argument that the immigrants are confronted with a wholly new environment.

In a rather general description of a typical village pattern of life in Caribbean societies, Henry (1994) stresses the communal feeling that characterises village relationships (Henry 1994: 167-169). Village life in the Caribbean is oriented towards communal interaction among members, a condition reinforced by the small size of the village communities (Henry 1994:167). Members of village communities live as a collectivity in keeping with the extended family system which defines the family in terms of an extended but closely knit network of kin relations often found living together in big compound homes (Henry 1994:167). This factor is important in reinforcing a feeling of oneness among migrants from the Caribbean region (Henry 1994:168).

In describing the unrestricted nature of interaction that characterises the village pattern of life, Henry notes:

... concepts of friendship and neighbourliness are also extremely important features of Caribbean social life. People come together as a result of dropping by or just passing... In fact being invited (other than for a more formal party) or event rarely occurs (Henry 1994:168).

Henry's description underscores the highly communally oriented pattern of living to which migrants from the Caribbean are accustomed. While Henry's description tends to be quite general, Rauf's study of Crabwood, a Guyanese Hindu village which reveals a similar pattern of social life among the members of the village, provides a specific instance of the backgrounds of

the worshippers at the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple (Rauf 1974:42-57).

According to Rauf, the pattern of life in Crabwood, like in other Hindu villages, is group oriented. Crabwood is a homogenous unit, composed exclusively of East Indian immigrant families. Emphasising this highly communal pattern, Rauf writes:

the people live in the same kind of houses, have the same festivals and celebrations, go to the same places of worship, and have the same type of elementary schools (1974:48).

A typical feature of evening life in this village, according to Rauf, is the scene of individual members of the extended family unit gathered outside the home and engaging in casual conversation in a relaxed manner (Rauf 1974:49). Such feelings of commonality often find expression in the tendency of individual members to identify with the same political parties (Rauf 1974:49). The point of citing these instances of life in the Caribbean village setting is to demonstrate the contrast between the backgrounds of the worshippers and their present social conditions in Canada. The sophistication of Canadian life or "abroad life," to use worshippers' own terms, the highly individualistic orientation of Western culture, reflected strongly in worshippers' present settlement patterns, offers a sharp contrast to the patterns of their former lives in Guyana. I argue that together with worshippers' initial experiences of shock, intimidation or racism (which they nevertheless down play at present), the effect of this new situation

is akin to what Hobsbawm would describe as a radical or "rapid transformation" of the context of the Guyanese Hindus (Hobsbawm 1983:4, 263). Answers to my casual question, "so, how was life like when you came here, or how has Canada treated you so far?," revealed a variety of allusions to the theme of the change or new social conditions that confronted worshippers. An elderly woman contrasted "life at home," to life in Canada:

In the village everybody knew each other... even if your neighbour wanted common salt, he/she simply walked up and knocked... but life abroad! It is a whole different thing. Look at us here. Here we are, all over on our own in the neighbourhoods or in the apartments. Sometimes, you know no one close by. Sometimes your next door is a total stranger... I mean you know him/her by the face alright but you don't really know him enough... and here (Canada) you can't just trust anyone.

This rather casual comment must be understood in terms of a radical contrast between a highly individualistic, orientation to life and the communal pattern of life that pertained in a Guyanese Hindu village, where individuals in a community are understood as a network of kin. In such an environment the community in itself is a network of mutual support where individuals relate to each other informally. The individual in question was, therefore, by her comment underscoring a fundamental change in her social situation in Canada. She was shocked that such informal personal networks, typical of village life in Guyana were absent in Canada.

For worshippers who explained that they chose to remain in Cambridge as a permanent base because it was "small and quiet," in comparison with a city such as Toronto, their decision reflected a conscious effort to settle in a community similar to their small rural villages, which would minimize the effect of the change on them. They felt more at home in smaller cities such as Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo. In the same vein, a lady linked the temple with the issue of change when she explained that because her children in Canada were growing up in a predominantly Western environment where they picked up Western values, it is good they attended "church" in order to learn their traditions which might otherwise become lost again in the next generation. As I noted in Chapter Four, a recurring theme especially among elderly worshippers was their concern over the possibility that subsequent generations born in Canada would loose touch with traditional Guyanese values.

The reality of individual Guyanese Hindus, who migrated from closed village communities, having to live in isolation from each other, of having to raise their children in a predominantly Western environment where they acquire Western lifestyles, norms and practices, must be perceived in terms of conditions of change in the social circumstances of the Guyanese immigrants. Members of the Temple community perceive these new conditions as threatening the traditional and communal basis of their Guyanese Hindu ethnic

identity. The creation of a Temple community must therefore be understood in terms of a communal effort to create a homelike situation in Canada: a model of existence that replicates the traditional communal pattern of life in the Guyanese homeland. While worshippers obviously considered such pragmatic benefits of networking as mutual support in deciding to form a temple community, it could be said that their endeavours underscored a fundamental longing for the pattern of communal life that existed in their villages. For them, this communal sense of feeling lay at the core of their identity as Guyanese Hindus and where existing conditions threatened this feeling, a conscious effort had to be made to re-establish it.

In that the Temple community is made up of individual immigrants from separate Guyanese Hindu villages, it could be argued that the community itself is an invention. It is a miniature model of their Guyanese past. In a sense the inventive process far more than simply a religious one, must be understood as the invention of a new ethnicity.

Considering the post-Christian religious backgrounds of the majority of the worshippers, it would have been more logical if the Guyanese Hindu immigrants had formed a Christian "church," as a way of continuing with their immediate past. A second issue which arises therefore is, why the Guyanese Hindu immigrants in spite of their Christian backgrounds recreated a "Hindu" tradition.

The fact that the community sought to institute a Hindu religious practice is very significant. It underscores a fundamental feeling of the need among members of the community to reassert a specific Hindu cultural identity. This brings us to the second aspect of the novelty of the Canadian cultural context as the Guyanese Hindu immigrants saw it.

I contend that in the Canadian multi-ethnic cultural environment, the presence of a larger community of East Indian Hindu immigrants directly from India served as a particular catalyst to the "creation," of a Hindu tradition in the Guyanese community. The point here is that, this situation exposed the Guyanese Hindu immigrants to a new cultural situation and generated a strong urge in them to revive their dying Hindu tradition in order to define where exactly they fit as Hindus in Canada.

In Guyana, they had lived as one cultural unit, normally in small countryside villages. They were identified as Hindus, East Indians or by the cultural stereotype "coolies," but not as Guyanese Hindus, even though their Hindu identity simultaneously combined Caribbean cultural elements assimilated over the years and survivals of East Indian elements. In this connection the Guyanese Hindu identity as I have argued is a rather ambiguous one in that it can neither be regarded as East Indian nor Caribbean nor Western.

It is to be much doubted, however, whether the vagueness of this Indian cultural identity or its unclear Hindu status was an issue for the

Guyanese Hindus when they lived in their Guyanese Hindu villages. Of course, members of the older Hindu generation in Guyana would frown on what they might perceive as a "loss" of old or genuine Hindu culture among members of the present generation (Rauf 1974:111). Nevertheless, in the absence of what might be considered to be a different East Indian cultural unit in Guyana, the legitimacy of the Guyanese Hindu cultural identity no matter how much adulterated it has become as a Hindu identity was not in question. Hindus in Guyana are referred to simply as "East Indians" and where the issue of identity arose at all it centred around the question of defining an East Indian identity as against the Creole identity (Bassier 1987; Nath 1970; Rauf 1974:53; Smith 1962).

The term, "Guyanese Hindu," or "Guyanese Hinduism" the most common way of referring to East Indians from Guyana, I argue, is a Canadian invention and especially an invention by non-Guyanese Hindus even though Guyanese Hindus themselves use the term when they want to stress their uniqueness as Hindu identity in Canada. The significance of the term "Guyanese Hindu" is that it reflects the Hindu ethnic situation as it exists in Canada. It underscores the existence of more than one Hindu community in Canada. It defines a distinctive, Guyanese Hindu identity as against a large East Indian community which has immigrated directly from the East Indian subcontinent. Furthermore it polarizes Guyanese Hindus and East Indian

Hindus. This polar situation poses a serious threat to the Guyanese Hindu immigrant's sense of security as a "Hindu" in Canada. In the face of this new cultural situation of the encounter with East Indians immigrating directly from India, the Guyanese Hindu immigrant becomes increasingly aware of the vagueness of his "hybrid," Hindu identity and becomes less secure as a "Hindu".

The reality of existing with an identity which has an unclear status in the Canadian multi-ethnic cultural or pluralistic environment is in itself awkward. The idea of pluralism assumes the co-existence of different cultural units and it tries to foster the maintenance of different ethnic cultures or traditions (Walker 1984:17). For the Guyanese Hindu immigrants in particular, this new situation creates a dilemma. They face the issue of whether to affiliate with the East Indian Hindus or with the Caribbean immigrants (black Guyanese). The dilemma could be expressed in terms of the following question: Given that he is of East Indian ancestry but has been raised in Guyana and acquired Guyanese ways, does the Guyanese Hindu immigrant identify with the East Indian Hindu community, or does he identify with the Caribbean community in Canadian multi- ethnic society?

As worshippers of the temple indicated, their earlier years in Canada were characterised by the practice of attending an array of Christian churches. This development is very significant as it provides a clue to the inner

struggle with the question of identity that confronted the earlier arrivals to Canada. That worshippers moved easily from church to church indicates that they did not feel accepted in these predominantly Western congregations. It is equally significant to note that the choices of their churches were largely determined by the number of Guyanese Hindus who already attended these churches. For instance the Nazarene Church in Cambridge was mentioned by most members as their main place of worship before the community created a religious group. This underscores the fact that ethnic feelings played an important role even in their choices of Christian denominations in Canada. The fact that they would see "Guyanese faces," in these churches seemed to be an important consideration underlying attendance at specific churches. The tendency to move from church to church was a symptom of the identity problem the immigrants faced in the earlier phases of their stay in Canada. While Guyanese Hindu immigrants did not feel at home among a predominantly Western church congregation, the general feeling of worshippers that they constitute a different Hindu ethnic unit has been a barrier to their interaction with East Indian Hindus in Canada. As I mentioned in Chapter Five, worshippers expressed a sense of psychological detachment from India which was extended to their relations with the East Indian community in Canada. Others expressed a sense of insecurity issuing from a feeling that they lack elements that made them different from the East Indian community. This

situation reflects strongly the historical predicament of the Guyanese Hindu immigrants as a twice displaced group. Their immediate Guyanese past and remote Indian heritage puts them in a distinct ethnic category as partially Hindu and partially Guyanese, a situation I describe as being in a cultural "limbo." This rather ambiguous state was the driving force behind the Guyanese Hindu immigrants' endeavour to define, nurture and sustain a distinct Caribbean-Hindu tradition. In other words the Guyanese Hindu immigrants saw a need to define a niche for themselves within the framework of Canadian multi-ethnic society. Considering the ambiguity of their "hybrid" cultural status, the only recourse for these immigrants was to "invent" a tradition out of their multiple cultural resources. Thus, I contend that by migrating to Canada, the Guyanese Hindus faced a new context or a "transformed" situation in which defining "who they really were," and their "own" tradition has become crucial to their existence as a group. As a result it became necessary to rework their traditions which were seen as gradually dying out. The sense of a connection with a Hindu past reinforces their sense of peoplehood as Hindus but with a common Guyanese historical heritage.

In sum, the need to adapt to the novelty of the Canadian social conditions, the difficulty of affiliating with an East Indian community in Canada and the need to define a place in Canada as an ethnic unit all interacted in the

inventive process that culminated in the birth of the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple tradition.

Having identified the social and cultural contexts of the developments in the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple as a basis for defining the tradition as "invented," I proceed to examine the features of this tradition.

CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP

Identities of individuals, groups and the traditions of which they are bearers, are not static but are continually transformed through a continuous process of negotiation and renegotiation (Clifford 1988:15-16, 338). In the process of negotiating newer identities however, former identities are not lost but still prevail and often predominate in the creation and shaping of new ones (Clifford 1988:336-345). Because of the post-Christian religious backgrounds of Guyanese Hindu immigrants in Canada, a strong Christian influence has been predominant in shaping the creation of their Hindu tradition. Vestiges of the Christian worship forms and Christian religious language therefore are prevalent in the Radha Krishna temple. As I have mentioned earlier, members refer to the temple or the devotional sessions as "church," a term which seems to have become adopted and used interchangeably with "Mandir" the Hindu term for temple. Another Christian term used by members of the temple is "sermon." This term refers to the forty-five minute to one hour preaching that occurs every

Sunday and it is used interchangeably with "Katha" which on the one hand means "story" but in a different sense refers to a traditional Hindu ritual of story telling. It is obvious that most of these terms are reflections of the Christian flavour of the version of Hinduism that is practised in the Radha Krishna temple. These terms are relics of the Christian discourse that members have internalised over the years while they worshipped as Christians.

The really interesting thing about this development is, however, not the usage of Christian language in the temple but the way in which the Christian form of worship is blended into traditional Hindu forms to create a wholly new worship tradition. A striking example of this is the community's highly congregational pattern of worship. This pattern of worship is typically non-traditional, yet it is practised under the label of "Hinduism" in the temple.

One distinguishing character of the Hindu religious tradition is its highly non congregational form of worship. Hindu temple worship is normally non congregational except during the celebration of festivals in honour of the central deity of the temple or during other forms of occasional public performances (Michell 1977:65).

On such festive occasions the central deity is brought out from the "inner chamber" and led in a procession through the principle streets of the village (Michell 1977:65; Younger 1982:327-328). In a typical Hindu temple, worship is organised on a daily basis and a number of priests take turns to

preside over the performances of the daily rituals. Furthermore, ritual enactments are performed by the priests throughout the entire day at specific periods (Michell 1977:63) Individual worshippers visit the temple to participate in these rites and go as they will (Younger 1995). For this style of worship to be possible, priests must necessarily be full time.

In the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple, a new form of Hindu worship pattern has evolved. The traditional pattern of Hindu worship has been modified to accommodate the daily routines of worshippers' lives as immigrant workers in Canada. Worshippers, including the temple priests are predominantly working class people. As many of them explained, they report for work by 9 am. and end in the late afternoon during the week. The majority of worshippers also take on additional jobs or work for extra hours after the regular working day. The working conditions of the worshippers do not therefore make room for the practice of worship on a daily basis. Sundays, days on which most members do not report for work, are thus the most suitable for worship. In adopting this highly congregational pattern of weekly Hindu worship, members of the temple have adapted their Hindu tradition to fit in with their work schedules as immigrants in Canada.

SERMON PREACHING

Another example of creativity in the form of Hinduism practised in the temple is the modification of the Hindu traditional practice of Katha and its adoption as sermons. "Katha" as an institutionalised practice in the Radha Krishna temple tradition assumes newer dimensions with respect to its traditional Hindu meaning. Katha also plays a function that is consistent with the goals of the communal project- the development of a sense of Hindu identity among members of the worshipping community.

In her ethnography on the role of "folk narratives" as a way of teaching in the Hindu religious tradition, Narayan (1989:42-49) provides some good insights into the nature and meaning of Katha and its use as a narrative discourse in Hinduism. Katha may be understood in two senses. In one sense it is the name for a form of Hindu literary tradition or genre (Narayan 1989:45). These are a loose corpus of Jain and Hindu stories, originating from the fourth century B.C. or slightly before. Often these stories have parallel versions or "motifs" and are drawn on for moral as well as religious insights in the sphere of secular life (Narayan 1989:45). Kathas are also ritual events involving the narration of religious stories (Majumdar 1958:277; Narayan 1989:45). The telling of these stories is organised at certain auspicious times and on such occasions, the stories are normally drawn from the scriptural texts and are either read directly from these texts or narrated from the memories of the

narrators, normally, pandits, especially of Brahman lineage or specially trained story tellers (Narayan 1989:46). Ascetics or members of the community who are considered to be sacred, and lay members could also preside over Katha ceremonies (Narayan 1989:46).

Kathas occur in village settings, as well as bigger towns, or cities as public or domestic events. Organisers could be lay members of communities, the entire community or rulers (Narayan 1989:46). It is important to note that even though temples provide ideal settings for a katha ritual, kathas are neither routine nor formalized temple practices. Neither are they traditionally aspects of Hindu temple worship rituals. A Katha is simply a traditional Hindu narrative model of religious story telling (Narayan 1989).

Katha as it is understood and practised in the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple is an invented Hindu practice. Understood by the worshippers as "sermons," katha has become a "formalized" and routine feature of the worship tradition. Just as sermon preaching in Christian churches is a regular feature of worship, katha is preached in the Radha Krishna Temple on every Sunday. In the katha practice, one sees a blending of the traditional Hindu practice of story-telling and the Christian practice of sermon preaching into one form.

As I described it in Chapter 7, the presiding pandits adopt the traditional Hindu style of singing out Sanskritic verses, while preaching the sermons. The entire style or format of the katha as I examine it from the

perspective of a Christian religious background, however, is reminiscent of the Christian practice of regular sermon preaching in churches. The presiding pandit, sits in the pulpit or stands while he places his text on a reading platform. He begins, "our Katha today is on..." (he mentions a specific topic). He then reads a verse or a number of verses from a scriptural text, and continues to elaborate on it relating it to the topic. In reading these verses however, the pandit reverts to the traditional Sanskritic style of literally singing out these verses. On certain occasions and especially, with the founder, the pandit would suddenly burst into a hymn in the middle of a sermon and the congregation and the band would immediately join in. Considering its regular practice in the temple and this format, the practice of Katha is fraught with a certain degree of ambiguity, for the line between the traditional Hindu practice of Katha and the Christian type of sermon preaching seems very blurred.

In explaining the importance of the Katha ritual, one of the priests of the temple indicated that it was a an important means of educating worshippers. He explained that because worshippers still needed to learn about aspects of "their" religion in order to know their "tradition," the regular practice of Katha in the temple served an important purpose, "But Katha itself is a Hindu practice", the pandit maintained. "It's just like the Christian sermon" he said. The pandit's stress on the "Hinduness" of the Katha ritual is very significant for

it underscores a general feeling of comfort or satisfaction among members of the community that temple practices were traditionally "Hindu."

We might interpret the invention of the Katha at two levels. Katha imbues what seems to be a replication of a typical Christian sermon practice in the temple with a sense of Hindu identity and helps to legitimate the practice of temple preaching as "Hindu". The function of the Hindu label "Katha" is in this sense symbolic in the sense that it places a Hindu traditional stamp on sermon preaching in the temple. In the practice of Katha we see the invention of a Hindu traditional narrative model along the lines of the Christian sermon.

In that it is a means of teaching, the Katha serves a pragmatic purpose in the temple. The priests have in this connection drawn on its traditional function as a Hindu mode of teaching to educate a highly acculturated and Christianized Hindu congregation on aspects of their ancestral traditions. The temple therefore draws on the old tradition of Katha for its symbolic as well as pragmatic value. While the Katha as a Hindu practice is not an invention, its adoption as a regular element of temple worship and its format in the Radha Khrishna Temple are inventions in that they denote an attempt on the part of the Guyanese Hindus to incorporate a Christian element (regular preaching) into the Hindu worship tradition to meet demands of their present social conditions, and to legitimate the practice as a Hindu practice. More importantly, the Katha provides members with a sense of continuity with their

past Hindu tradition. Katha in the Temple's tradition is therefore a novel form of a traditional Hindu practice.

The theoretical implication of the practice of Katha is that in the process of inventing traditions in contexts of intercultural encounters, foreign elements come to be adopted as traditional. In the practice of regular Katha, we see a Hindu adoption of a Christian practice and its legitimation as Hindu by placing a Hindu cultural imprint on it. This development owes much to the Hindu encounter with the Christian tradition in Guyana, the need for members to connect symbolically with their past and to learn about their traditions which they feel are endangered.

THE RHETORICAL USE OF "HINDU TRADITION"

Keesing (1989) describes the use of the "rhetoric" of "tradition," or "custom" by indigenous communities in Pacific societies to demonstrate their sense of collective identity and to express in symbolic ways, opposition to colonial domination (1989:19-22). Drawing examples from nationalist strategies employed by native resistance groups in Vanuatu, New Zealand, Hawaii, and other Pacific societies, Keesing argues that symbols of the 'old ways' are rhetorically "invoked," to foster an ideological connection with the communities' lost pre-colonial past in order to rally support for concerted political action (Keesing 1989: 20-27). What is interesting to note about Keesing's study is that

these indigenous communities have had their traditions or old ways transformed considerably by the value systems of their colonisers. Yet, by making such verbal claims to be salvaging their "past", indigenous groups are able to create an impression that they are reasserting an unadulterated or pristine traditional way. In these ways, these nationalist movements infuse into their communities a sense of their unique identity.

Following Keesing's analysis I argue that worshippers at the Radha Krishna Temple in a similar manner invoke Hindu cultural symbols expressively to create a general impression that their worship tradition is Hindu. In this way, they endow Temple practices with the authority of Hindu tradition and in that connection establish the Hindu identity of their tradition. An illustration of this practice in the temple is the way traditional Hindu beliefs are used by members to support some rules in the temple. The most classic example of this practise is the rule regarding ritual purity and pollution.

I argue that the community's invocation of the ritual practice of pollution and purity is largely decorative and is essentially intended to furnish the worship tradition with a Hindu essence. My proposition issues from the community's stance on the notion of caste. The community's orientation towards "castlessness" logically presupposes an indifference in their attitudes towards the idea of ritual purity.

According to Dumont, the Hindu traditional categorical distinction between "purity" and "impurity," lies at the core of the principle underlying the Hindu caste system (Dumont 1970). Dumont argues that the rationale behind the caste system is the maintenance of this categorical distinction which underlies Hindu social structure (Dumont 1970). Thus the Brahman/Sudra dichotomy is a mere reflection the pure/impure distinction in Hindu tradition (1970 46-47). In other words the risk of ritual contamination is what underlies the rigid Hindu caste distinctions.

While hygienic explanations are summoned to rationalise these categories of the "pure" and the "impure", they derive largely from religious ideas endorsed by scripture and sacred legal codes (Dumont 1970:47). One of such notions relevant to this discussion is the idea that death is an important source of impurity (Dumont 1970:50). The death of an individual is a source of pollution for close relatives and in order to be cleansed of such ritual contamination, bereaved individuals undergo ritual ablutions (Dumont 1970:50, 51)

This notion explains why leather is considered impure even though a by-product of the most sacred and revered animal in Hindu tradition, the cow. The impurity of leather essentially derives from the fact that the cow becomes impure on its death. Because leather is a product of a dead cow it becomes impure (Dumont 1970:54). Thus when shoes or other leather products are

prohibited from Hindu temples the rationale behind this rule is purely ritualistic. It is in fact consistent with Hindu notions of the impurity of dead objects which disqualify them from contact with the sacred space of the temple, and has nothing to do with hygiene.

My argument that the invocation of this rule is simply decorative is backed by three observations. First, Radha Krishna Hindu Mandir does not subscribe to the notion of caste and this stance of the Temple on "castlessness," is given outward expression in a number of ways in Temple life. One expression of this attitude is the manner in which the priests who in strictly Hindu terms are sacred and pure persons, freely mingle with other members of the temple. The priest shakes hands, hugs, and eats freely with all members. In strict Hindu terms, a priest who must necessarily come from the Brahmin caste, is to keep aloof from ordinary Hindus. Contact with them contaminates his person and makes him impure. That, the members are not alarmed by this constant interaction is suggestive of their indifference towards matters of ritual purity or impurity.

Secondly the fact that leather handbags are permitted into the temple is equally significant for this contravenes traditional Hindu ritualistic practices. It is therefore paradoxical that rules of ritual purity and impurity are evoked when it comes to the issue of entering the temple wearing one's shoes. In this connection it seems reasonable to suggest that when worshippers of

cultures there are parallel or equivalent notions. In the contexts of intercultural encounters, people try to understand their notions or interpret them in the light of similar notions in the other alien culture (Burghart 1987:242). According to Burghart, this process facilitates inter- cultural borrowing of ideas, notions and practices (Burghart 1987: 242).

Mother's Day is a North American cultural practice. It is a day set aside for commemorating virtues of motherhood. Marked by the showering of presents on mothers, this event in a symbolic sense expresses the North American positive recognition of motherhood.

While there is no such institution as Mother's Day in Hindu culture, motherhood is celebrated in Hindu myths and symbolisms concerning goddesses. Goddesses are identified in scriptural texts as "ambiku" meaning mother or a woman with virtuous qualities (Nicholas 1980:192). Also, myths about goddesses are pervaded with images of motherly qualities of care, mediation, sustenance, and redemption (Johnson 1982; Kinsley 1993, 1986).

The Hindu celebration of motherhood also finds expression in the idea of "mother India" which portrays the land in the image of a mother who nurtures and protects her children. This portrait in itself is a Hindu tribute to motherhood. A similar positive image of mothers is expressed in the idea of "mother Ganges (Kinsley 1986:191-194). Thus while no specific day is set aside in the Hindu conceptual scheme for the celebration of motherhood,

recognition is given to the virtues of motherhood. This North American cultural practice therefore has a parallel basis in the Hindu religious tradition and in adopting Mother's day, the temple community is not grafting an alien practice into its tradition.

What is interesting, however, is the way the Radha Krishna Temple community draws on Hindu symbols of motherhood on in their celebration Mother's day in Canada. As I demonstrated in my discussion on worship the pandit from New York drew from motherly images of the Hindu goddesses. While appropriating a predominantly North American cultural practice, the community draws on parallel notions in their own tradition to express their recognition of motherhood. In this way, a North American cultural norm seems to be finding its way into a Hindu religious tradition. Drawing on their own traditional symbols, members of the Temple give expression to a North American cultural practice- creating a Guyanese Hindu expression of the North American practice of Mother's Day.

In conclusion the context of the developments in the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple as well as the features of the worship tradition show signs of inventiveness. Confronted with the challenge of existing as a unit without a clearly defined sense of an ethnic identity, and having lost their Hindu traditions over the centuries, members of the Radha Krishna Hindu temple community are drawing on past symbols in order to demonstrate their sense of peoplehood in

Canada. While this process can be interpreted as the solution to a problem, it must as well be seen as symptomatic of the deep-seated struggle of Guyanese Hindus with difficulties posed by a lost past and the pressure of identifying themselves as one of the ethnic groups in multi- ethnic Canadian society.

Notes

1. It is interesting to note that one of the features of the postmodern developments described by Clifford as prompting the invention of traditions and occasioning the paradigmatic shifts in the meaning of traditional concepts is the unprecedented and increasing rate of the interaction of cultures through the process of immigration (Clifford 1988:13-15). Conversely, there seem to have been no serious studies done on how the inventive process is unfolding in immigrant communities. The case of the Guyanese Hindus of Cambridge therefore offers a classic example of the process of resuscitating old traditions as identity symbols in an immigrant community.

CHAPTER NINE
DISCUSSION 2
THE RADHA KRISHNA HINDU TEMPLE AS A FOCUS
OF GUYANESE HINDU IDENTITY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the second theme that informs this study: the role of an invented Hindu tradition in fostering a sense of ethnic identity in the Guyanese Hindu community in Cambridge. In the chapter on the origins of the temple, I argued that the underlying motive behind the temple's origin was the felt need of Guyanese Hindu immigrants to come together in order to "keep the tradition alive" and to create a support network. In other words, the goal of the community project was the development of a sense of Guyanese Hindu ethnic identity.

The formation of a temple community, I argued was thus a religious response to a social need and the pandit in the characteristic Guyanese Hindu tradition was the figure around which the community building activities crystallized. In the previous chapter, I attempted to discuss the main features of the product of the community project - the "invented Hindu tradition." As a

follow up to the previous discussions, the aim of this chapter is to show how the temple functions as a religious symbol of the community's identity.

On my last visit to the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple Asha, a female worshipper in her mid thirties offered to give me a ride to the bus terminal at Galt in Cambridge. In the same car were Grandma and her husband Grandpa, who were being driven home by Asha. On the way a conversation ensued between Grandma and Asha. Asha asked Grandma what plans she had for the rest of the day. "I'll go get something to eat and come back to the mandir." Grandma replied. "What for?" I interrupted. I was surprised by Grandma's reply because I knew the worship had ended. "That's Grandma. That's where she'll stay all day... even if she is not feeling well," Asha explained. "Grandma, what is it that you still do in the temple... What's about the temple that keeps you there always?" I managed to ask after some moments. She replied:

Me?... that mandir is home... that's my second home... that's where you meet the whole family... for all these years that I have been here I am not yet used to all these white man life... Can't stay put at home doing nothing all day... so the least time I get I'm in the temple... You will always find some one there to talk to.

In the conversation that followed, Grandma went over her life history. She explained how weak she was becoming with age and how boring life could be when one had little to do. She explained that she found more joy in going to

stay all day in the temple. There was a brief moment of silence before Grandpa began an account of a flood that occurred in Guyana two years before he moved to join his daughter in Canada, but before his story ended, we arrived at the bus terminal. I left the car, thanked Asha and bade them farewell.

While recollecting the day's activities Grandma's comments re-echoed in my mind. She had mentioned that individuals were always in the Temple - "There was always some one there." That was not the first time I had heard cliches such as "this is like a home," or "We are a family," or "It's the group, everybody is nice here" and "we learn about the tradition... the pandits teach us so many things," from members. These themes frequently recurred in worshippers conversations, but on this day, Grandma had summarised these views so powerfully for me.

A "home" is normally a place where one lives with ones immediate family. In my Ghanaian village, a typical home has a big compound house with an entire extended network of relatives making up three generations and including uncles and aunts and their wives or husbands. This constitutes a family in my native setting. The home is normally the place where values or norms deemed to be acceptable to the family are imparted to the individual members. "Home" is also used metaphorically to refer to one's native land or the place where one was born. The word "home" is imbued with a sense of warmth, familiarity, informality, solace, and contentment. It is a place where

individuals feel wanted and accepted. The adjective "home-like" connotes a sense of deep satisfaction or security and a nurturing atmosphere.

Hindu temples are often described using the imagery of the home (See Michell 1977:61-62; Younger 1995:3). Not only are temples in this sense perceived as temporary residences of the deities, but worship is also conceived of as a form of caring for and entertaining deities. The temple replicates in the divine realm what normally happens on the plane of humans in a home. Thus through the ritual enactments, the deities are awakened, greeted, bathed, fed, and paid homage to by the devotees and entertained just as important guests are treated in human homes (Fuller 1992:69). The Hindu temple is thus a home in this sense.

However, when Grandma made the statements about the Temple as her home, she was not only referring to this Hindu metaphor of the temple as a home. I doubt if she even had that in mind at all. Her sense of "home" reflected the homelessness Guyanese Hindus' feel as immigrants in Canada and the fact that the temple provides some sort of "home" in their lives. By "home" she meant that the Temple symbolised for her a place of solace, of warmth and a nurturing atmosphere. It was a venue where she could meet and talk to individuals she knew on a regular basis. For Grandma and other Guyanese Hindus the Temple represents a miniature Guyana in Canada, a kind of surrogate family.

In our further discussion of Radha Krishna Temple as a symbol of Guyanese Hindu ethnicity we shall approach the issue in a commentary of Grandma's remarks about the homely feeling that the Temple provides. My discussion of the Temple's function as a symbol of Guyanese ethnic identity will be placed under a number of related themes. First I will discuss the symbolic implications of the Temple's geographical location and name as these reflect on its functions. Secondly, I examine the role of the Temple in the transmission of the values of Guyanese Hindu identity to the worshippers. I demonstrate the function of sermons as the major means of teaching in the Temple. I then look at the Temple as a venue for social interaction among members of the community and the community itself as a support group

GEOGRAPHY AND THE TEMPLE'S FUNCTION

First, we shall examine the significance of the geographical location of the Temple and the symbolic function ascribed to that location as a focus of the Guyanese Hindu identity. There is a crucial connection between the geographical location of the Radha Krishna Hindu temple in Cambridge and its function as a symbol of Guyanese Hindu identity. The Temple is situated at the focal point of the three cities of Waterloo, Kitchener, and Cambridge. Located in the Blair community of Cambridge, the Temple is 10 kilometres away from Waterloo and 6 kilometres from Kitchener. For one thing, this location is

strategic in that it makes the Temple accessible to members of the worshipping community in all three cities. Thus, like a home, the Temple is located where it can be easily reached by members of the three communities. We might, however, also read some symbolic meaning into this central geographical location of the Temple as geographical settings are often imbued with more significance than we notice at first.

Symbols are emblems representing or embodying notions, institutions, or abstract concepts. According to Geertz (1973:91) the function of symbols is to convey the hidden essences or meanings of the elements they embody. Symbols therefore are vehicles. In that the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple is a structure in which members of the Guyanese Hindu community meet to reassert and redefine their identity, it is a symbol. It represents and embodies that sense of peoplehood which is fostered within it. Its location at the "centre" of the three communities is, however equally symbolic in that it reinforces the idea that the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple is the "heart" or the "live wire" of that feeling of unity which it fosters among the Guyanese Hindu immigrants. In this sense, the temple's geographical location is symbolic of its role as a focus of Guyanese Hindu identity in Canada. As the life force of the group, it is located in the "heart" of the three communities.

In a similar vein, the name of the Temple is equally informative. There is often something in a name that reveals on nature of its bearer. In a

sense, a name is also symbolic. At the main entrance of the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple's precincts one sees a sign which reads "The Radha Krishna Hindu Temple, Cambridge Hindu Society." These same words, inscribed in red, strike a visitor immediately on entering the temple. In the group's constitution it is written "The name of the corporation shall be THE CAMBRIDGE HINDU SOCIETY also known as THE RADHA KRISHNA MANDIR (The constitution of the Cambridge Hindu Society 1992:1). The dual function of the Temple as a place of religious worship and as a base of an ethnic social group are thus clearly spelled out in the official name of the Temple. The terms are symbolic of the function.

THE TEMPLE AS A VENUE FOR SOCIALISING AND A SUPPORT NETWORK

The Temple with its beautifully carpeted floor, and brightly coloured pictures on the walls presents worshippers with a very cosy and inviting atmosphere in which to worship and interact. The well-lit platform with its array of richly adorned and garlanded deity images and pictures of deities strikes one as a breathtaking spectacle. Assuming the appearance of a "divine realm," the stage is a scenic attraction in itself. When I first visited the temple, I could not help but to fix my gaze on this stage. The benches at the back that lure members to relax, coupled with the lulling effect of Guyanese Hindu music,

make the Temple atmosphere seem like a real home to worshippers. It does not seem strange that Grandma remains there much of the time. The Temple's very home-like appearance reinforces its function as a venue for interacting. The beauty of the interior is a source of attraction to worshippers and reinforces a feeling of homelike- comfort during worship and at other times. As an institution the temple is for worshippers the only place which provides continuity between their former lives in Guyana and their new lives in Canada.

Even the strictly religious sessions are more or less social gatherings where one may meet fellow Guyanese countrymen, and speak to them in a language they understand. Considering the spatial distance between individual worshippers' residences, their rather heavy individual work routines, and the lack of other opportunities for meeting, the function of the weekly poojas, must be seen as crucial in sustaining the Guyanese Hindu immigrants as a group. Sundays indeed are days that members, especially the women, look forward to. As a lady worshipper who claims to be a housewife and works "only when some job comes her way" explained, the only event she cannot wait for is the Sunday "church" session. "We talk to each other on the telephone always" she explains... it is not like we don't get to know of what is happening in the community at all... but meeting and talking face to face is different... There are things you can discuss here but can't say on the telephone," she explained. "I enjoy the small talks," says Pamela, the financial secretary,

apparently referring to the normal after-service conversations. "If you miss one pooja you know you have a lot to catch up on otherwise you are behind the group... You must be abreast with information around" she explained. From the point of view of most male members, the temple provides a venue for the discussion of matters relating to their working places. Eric, who is 31, is not a regular attender even though he brings his girl friend and picks up her every week when worship is over. He, however, explained that "once in a while I come to see what is happening and what's the latest around". Eric then went on to explain that the Temple was the best place to learn about developments in the community. The fact that at the end of every week there is a venue where one meets familiar faces to exchange "news" is reassuring for members. Peers meet each other, boys and girls meet their friends, and so do lovers. Prospective suitors meet their would be spouses. Here, through the announcements, the notice board and the members' gossip, members learn about what is happening around them.

Of greater importance is the support network that the group provides for the worshippers. Though the community has no formally instituted programme of support, for members, the group strength itself is a source of a feeling of security and mutual support. In moments of stress, such group support and solace become crucial for members. One Sunday I witnessed such show of support for a distressed family who had lost their ten-year-old daughter.

After the pandit had ordered a special service for the bereaved family, and special prayers for the dead child, individual members requested songs for them from the choir in a show of support and concern. When worship had ended, I saw worshippers sit in a circle around the bereaved couple offering consolatory words to them as they sobbed silently. When it was time for the bereaved family to leave for their homes, individual members elected to accompany them. The death of an individual as close and dear as a daughter is a painful loss. In an immigrant situation where one is virtually a stranger, the pain of losing one to death could be worsened in the absence of a network of friends who provide the soothing and comforting words that a bereaved person requires to endure the pain of death.

The community also offers for newly arrived members a cushion against difficulties entailed in integrating into Canadian society, not only by providing a substitute for the extended families they had left in Guyana but by providing vital information on how and where to get jobs, cheap accommodation, and other such information which facilitates an easy settlement in Canada. It is interesting to note that newcomers are encouraged to publicly introduce themselves on their first day of attendance at the pooja. In this way, they avail themselves of the help that older members can offer. The Radha Krishna Temple is therefore for members of the community, a "home away from

home" - an embodiment of familiarity, security, and comfort apart from its significance as a place of worship.

TRANSMISSION OF VALUES

The worshippers of the Radha Krishna Hindu temple considered as a cultural unit are a twice-displaced group in that they are descendants of East Indians who migrated to the Caribbean in the nineteenth century. In technical terms they are involved in a "double lap" migratory process (Henry 1994). This situation has serious implications for the cultural basis of their ethnicity. Having been partially assimilated into Caribbean culture and confronted by East Indian Hindu culture in Canada which alienates them as an impure breed of Indians, Guyanese Hindu immigrants are confronted with a situation in which they have no other choice than to redefine a distinct Hindu ethnic identity in order to exist as a cultural unit.

In this connection, the role of Hinduism is to transmit to the present day worshippers and subsequent generations the values of this ethnic identity in order to ensure the group's continuity. The Temple is therefore a venue in which the values of Guyanese Hindu ethnic identity are defined, inculcated, and transmitted to younger generations. One way in which this is achieved is through the practice of worship and participation of young members in Hindu temple rituals.

Hinduism as a religious tradition is an embodiment of Hindu cultural values and norms and by participating in worship, members imbibe these values and norms. This theme of transmitting values of the tradition recurred throughout the study not only through the statements of worshippers but also through the activities in the temple. As the accounts of how the temple originated reveal, one of the key motivations was the desire to "keep the tradition alive." What is to be noted here is that the tradition that is to be kept alive is not strictly speaking the East Indian Hindu tradition. It is a Guyanese Hindu tradition. Although its basic foundation is Hindu, it departs from the mainstream Hindu tradition in a number of directions because of the history of the Guyanese Hindus. One of the most significant distinctions between Indian Hinduism, and Guyanese Hinduism, for instance has to do with the absence of caste in the Guyanese version (Smith 1962:120). The temple community of Cambridge does not subscribe to the notion of caste and in this the community's stance is a heritage of the Guyanese Hindu tradition. As I have argued, caste observance became a natural casualty of the conditions of the Hindus during the indentureship. Because post indentured generations of Indians in Guyana failed to reproduce the caste system in the course of inventing a Hindu tradition, the idea of caste has almost disappeared among Guyanese Hindus. It is not clear whether the caste ideology still persists strongly among East Indians who have immigrated directly to Canada.

While some writers maintain that caste barriers have been greatly reduced in Canada (Ajit 1993:66), personal encounters with East Indians in Canada reveals that this view is by no means a consensus among the East Indian community. For these individuals, the caste ideology is too deeply rooted in Indian culture and the individual East Indian's psyche to be lost through Western assimilation. One Canadian born Indian student at McMaster University put forward the issue in this way: "Canadian Indians are always interested in knowing which caste another belongs to when they meet somewhere. Another student maintains that, even though it is often argued that there is no caste observed in the behaviour of East Indians in Canada, East Indian parents make sure of the caste backgrounds of their daughters' East Indian suitors. Not wanting them to marry men from other ethnic groups, some parents prefer to send their daughters home to be married to men from the proper caste in India. An individual well-versed in Indian studies once commented "Who is an Indian who cannot identify or who does not know his caste... it is considered abominable not to know your caste." In spite of the difficulties of replicating the caste system in a Western environment such as Canada, the ideology seems still to influence the thinking of East Indian immigrants in Canada.

The Radha Krishna Temple community's stance on caste therefore marks them out as having a different kind of Indian ethnic identity from the East

Indian immigrants who have come directly from India. Caste is the point at which the Guyanese break away from the East Indian community.

As the absence of caste is a central element that distinguishes the Guyanese Hindu immigrants from the East Indian immigrants this idea is strongly emphasized in the Temple community's teachings and is reiterated in the comments and behaviour of worshippers. "We do not believe in caste here. We believe in the equality of every member," explained one of the pandits when I introduced the topic of caste. This theme also recurs in the sermons which are clearly an important means of inculcating values among the members. In the chapter on worship, I demonstrated how the sermon on caste reflected the community's stance. During that sermon, the pandit began:

Today, our sermon will be on the caste system. I have chosen this theme because I feel many of us do not understand what really caste means. Many people feel, because they do not belong to a caste they are not Hindu... but this is a serious mistake people make...

The pandit then went on to explain what caste meant and how the caste ideology which was originally intended to maintain social order has come to be abused and made into an inhuman institution. In conclusion he emphasized that there was no need for such institutions. "A good God cannot condemn his creatures to a state of perpetual servitude. That is why we here do not believe in caste".

One interesting observation about this pandit is his claims to be a true Brahman. Apart from the fact that this claim is questionable, considering the nature of the Caribbean institution, where there were many self proclaimed Brahmans, it seemed to me quite paradoxical that his sermon was a direct antithesis of his own claim. I wondered if he reflected on the antithesis as I did and concluded that the ideational attributes of caste must have been retained even when the professed teaching is opposed to caste. On this occasion one can see the pandit through the sermon transmitting ideas and institutions to the worshipping community, and in particular, defining the uniqueness of their Hindu identity and reasserting it. In this context it is important that worshippers become reassured of their identity as "Hindu" in spite of the absence of caste, and subsequent generations learn that they can be Hindu without a caste.

The uniqueness of Guyanese Hinduism lies in its stance on the issue of caste. By emphasizing this in his sermons the priest was reinforcing the distinctiveness of Guyanese Hindu identity from the East Indian Hindu identity, even though it does not mean that he does not recognize caste heritage. Considered within the context of the insecurity that some members of the temple community feel in the face of an East Indian community quite concerned about issues of caste, the priest in his sermon was infusing a feeling of confidence into the worshippers. In a sense he seemed to be saying that the absence of caste among them was neither a weakness nor a mark of their

illegitimacy as Hindus. Rather, the absence of caste practices contributed to the uniqueness of their identity and underlay their distinctiveness as a group. In this sense the absence of caste was turned into a strength and a vital tool in the construction of a distinctive Hindu identity.

In a way, the temple's stance on caste also reinforces a principle of equality which in turn fosters unrestricted interaction among members of the community. One way in which this is seen is in how the worshippers participate in the communal meal after worship. The food is prepared by the women in the Temple. Individual men, women and sometimes children are chosen at random to fetch the bowls containing the food from the kitchen. Others distribute the disposable plates and cutlery. While one person carries the bowl, another serves the worshippers. The age, sex, or caste status of any of those who prepare or serve the food does not seem to matter to worshippers. In the course of the meals, members sit in knots while they eat, and it is common to see worshippers, apparently friends, playfully picking morsels from each others plate as they eat. I did not realize myself, the implications of this practice until an East Indian seemed shocked when I described. "I keep wondering if your temple is really Hindu," exclaimed my Sikh friend. He explained that it was inconceivable to find East Indian priests and worshippers eating together in the manner in which I had described, them because of the traditional Hindu beliefs about purity and food.

Hindu beliefs in ritual purity and pollution pervade all dimensions of their life. According to Dumont, the basis of Hindu social relationship, the principle of hierarchy, is designed to give social meaning to the distinction between purity and impurity (Dumont 1970). A member of a higher caste is considered ritually purer than a lower caste member and the interaction between a higher caste member and a lower caste person contaminates the former and renders him ritually impure (Dumont 1970; Fuller 1992:15; Kinsley 1993:153). Consistent with this thinking, food or water is thought to take on the qualities of those who handle it (Dumont 1970:138). While individuals will accept water and cooked food from another person who possesses, identical qualities or from higher caste persons they will not accept food from persons of lower status because the absorbed qualities of the lower caste person will pollute them (Dumont 1970: 138-139). Thus as my friend said, it was inconceivable for Hindus to eat together.

Nevertheless in keeping with the community's stance on caste, worshippers in the Radha Krishna Temple are not alarmed to eat freely together. Furthermore worshippers, including the priests who are supposed to be "pure" freely interact with each other hugging and shaking each other's hands after worship without any fear of contamination from ritually inferior bodies. In this connection, it could be said that the idea of "castelessness" seems to serve both as a "model of" and a "model for" behaviour among

worshippers (See Geertz 1973:93-94). In the former sense as a "model of" the idea is an embodiment of how in the Guyanese Hindu worldview, human relationships ought to be based on a principle of equality a theme reflected in the community's stance on gender equality and also in the Temple's name, "Radha-Krishna." In the latter sense as a "model for," this stance informs the ideological sense of equality, within which worshippers freely relate and interact with one another. What is important to note however, is that the informal spirit that pervades the worshippers' interaction with each other in the absence of caste restrictions reinforces their sense of solidarity and oneness as a group of equals.

One observation made about sermons in the temple is the central educational role. If hymns are the medium through which members pour out their feelings towards the deities, sermons are the main means by which Hindu values are imparted to worshippers. My initial scepticism about the idea of "sermons" in a Hindu temple later gave way to an appreciation of their pragmatic value as a means of transmitting Hindu values to the worshippers.

The themes of the sermons are very basic Hindu norms and ideas, but it is understandable that a congregation composed of individuals who for the much of their lives have been Christians would need to be informed about basic Hindu values. The pandits therefore preach on themes such as the meaning of deities' symbolic gestures, Hindu myths and the values expressed

by them and the symbolism and significance of festivals. One is reminded at this point about the sermon preached by the visiting pandit from New York on Mothers' Day, in which he stressed the positive qualities of women while encouraging husbands and children to give the due respect.

The library in the temple also serves as an important resource for the transmission of Hindu values to members. Worshippers are encouraged to read about the Hindu religious tradition from the library collections. The library is opened to worshippers three days a week and worshippers are permitted to borrow some of the books. In their sermons the priests constantly encourage worshippers to "read more" by referring them to specific texts from the library collections. "Read these things for yourselves They are written in the books," the priests would say as they recommend specific texts to worshippers. That such deliberate efforts are made to enrich the members' knowledge of the Hindu tradition underscores the fundamental goals of the community's project to keep the "tradition alive." In this connection the temple serves as a formal institution of learning for Guyanese Hindu immigrants in their bid to regain their lost Hindu heritage and reassert their Hindu identities.

As sustenance of ethnic identity is conditional on the maintenance of the continuity of tradition, traditions, including those that are invented, must be transmitted to subsequent generations. Transmission is successful when younger generations are socialised to cherish traditional values and inculcate

them. It is in this connection that the Guyanese Hindu community from my point of view faces a problem. This problem issues from their present geographical as well as cultural context.

After the initial immigrants to Canada subsequent generations born and raised in a Canadian environment tend to have fewer ties and a weaker sense of attachment to their parent's homeland. As they are socialised in a western environment they imbibe Western values and become more vulnerable than their parents to cultural assimilation. While it was not possible for me to have great deal of contact with all the children of members, the few I encountered did not seem to share the same degree of enthusiasm exhibited by their parents. A typical example is the daughter of one of the pandits. While an active member of the youth wing, and very instrumental in the organisation of cultural activities, she explained that she was not a regular attender. She would rather attend a Catholic church in Cambridge with her Canadian peers. In a manner which expressed her sense of detachment from the group she described it as "my dad's Church" and herself as "Canadian," having been born in Canada. Her attitude is typical of the few members of the younger generation whom I encountered. Many of them seemed to derive a sense of pride in saying that they are now Canadian and as I indicated in the chapter on worship, they display a great deal of indifference, using the worship period to engage in conversation with their peers. In this connection, I suggest that the

Guyanese Hindu tradition still faces the risk of becoming assimilated into mainstream Western culture as the younger generation of worshippers display such indifference and a deeper sense of attachment to their current Canadian environment.

One way in which the community seeks to come to terms with this problem is by trying to actively involve the youth in the Temple's programmes. The creation of a youth wing is in keeping with this goal of integrating them into the community and its activities. In the organization of cultural programmes, the youth wings role is seen as very crucial. The young people are the hub around which these cultural activities revolve. To give just one instance, in the celebration of "Diwali," one of the community's festivals, the youth re-enact through plays and poetry the episodes of the Ramayana epic that serve as the basis of the festival's celebration. During the 1994 celebration of this festival, such activities were organised by the young people at a venue in Kitchener. In this way the young people do not only inculcate a sense of involvement in the community, they imbibe some of the values that are embodied in the epics that they re-enact. Encouraging active involvement of the youth in the temple's activities is seen as way of transmitting Hindu values to them. Younger children are especially encouraged to participate in these cultural programmes in the hope that through participation, they will imbibe the values that the festivals embody. This is a way of educating the children through practice and

experience. Certificates of achievement are handed out to the children who participate in these programmes as a way of encouraging them. The Temple community thus seeks to educate Guyanese Hindu children in what it is to be a Hindu.

The introduction and emphasis, on Hindi is to be understood in a similar light. In explaining this emphasis worshippers offered a variety of reasons. Of course, some do not see the need for Hindi in Canada. Others explain that they need to understand the lyrics of the hymns in Hindi as these retain the original "Indian," meaning. A worshipper lamented that so much of the Hindu essence of the hymns are lost through the English translation and claimed that he would want to get to the heart of the hymns's meanings. For others, it is important to know Hindi because it is inconceivable for one to say he is Hindu when he cannot speak any of the Indian languages. The Hindi language which is considered as a strong symbol of Indianess is therefore taught in classes organised by the temple.

Language appears to carry a high value as a symbol, for ethnic identity. Herberg (1989) drawing on studies done by Sapir and Reitz, argues that language is an important symbolic cultural form which apart from being a medium of communication is basic to the creation of identity (1989: 100-101). Groups demonstrate their sense of who they are by retaining a traditional language (1989:100-101).It is therefore significant that the Radha Krishna Hindu

community, having lost all their Indian linguistic heritage are strongly emphasising the use of Hindi. They perceive this language as being a key to teaching their cultural heritage to younger generations. Furthermore they see the process of learning the language as the simplest practical way of imprinting a Hindu ethnic identity on the tradition they are inventing. Even though their ancestors may not have come from Hindi speaking villages in India, Hindi is an important cultural symbol which demonstrates their Hindu identity. This explains the determination of the leaders to keep the classes "going" in spite of the difficulties.

TEMPLE RITUALS REINFORCE COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

The act of participating together in the rituals reinforces a feeling of oneness not only among members but also between them and the deities. As a part of the community, the deities are regarded as the unseen guardians of the day-to-day affairs of worshippers. Though spirits, their visible images are represented by the "murtis." The murtis are not the "deities," explained a priest of the temple. "They are the seats on which they perch". Through the rituals we invoke their presence the murtis become infused with the spirit of the deities." Even though all the deities are worshipped and respected in their own capacities and as a collectivity, some worshippers have special guardian deities who are chosen to fulfil specific needs and for certain qualities they

possess. Hari, a young member, informed me that Kali was his personal deity. In a chat with Hari, he explained that Kali had been his deity since he was in Toronto. Living in such a big city he felt he needed protection, which he got from Kali. He has retained Kali, but because there is no Kali image in the temple, Hari has adopted Durga, another form of Kali. Grandma favoured Sita. "Every woman must be like Sita," she said. Sita is faithful to the husband. Mohan, the president of the Temple, favours Hanuman for what he describes as "his good character". "Laksmi gives you all the success you need," explained a female member whose personal deity is Laksmi. Members seek to establish a special and personal relationship with the deities. "If you have free time come here, the murtis, will bless you," Grandma advised me one day. "Sita blesses us and transfers her qualities to us." In most instances devotees seek to model their lives according to the qualities expressed by their deities.

Thus, Sita's wifely qualities are a model for Grandma which she feels should be emulated. In this sense the deities as well are the embodiments of some of the cherished values of the community. The murtis in themselves are a deification of the community's values. By meeting every Sunday to strengthen the bond between oneself and one's personal deity as well as the other Temple deities, members are at the same time strengthening the bonds between themselves and the community whose values the deities embody. In this way the rituals serve to establish group identity.

On another level, through the hugging, handshaking, and various ways of expressing solidarity after worship, all members seem to say to each other "We are one people because we have the same deities and the same beliefs". One sees a translation of the vertical relationship between members and their deities to the horizontal plane in the relationship among each other in the community. In this way the regular pooja reinforces the harmony that is expected to exist among them as a group.

Hymn singing also plays an important role in reinforcing the group feeling among members. Hymn singing is an important aspect of the worship in the temple, and every member is encouraged to participate in the singing. In fact, any visitor to the temple is greeted on entering its precincts by the sound of singing accompanied by drumming. Worship begins, proceeds and ends with singing.

The great significance attached by the community to singing is reflected in the practice of devoting Friday evenings to hymn rehearsals, in spite of worshippers' very tight daily schedules. The importance of singing is also reflected in the formation of a church choir. The care taken by the community in translating the Hindi hymns into English so that members are able to read and understand the songs they sing indicates that the hymns are intended for corporate use. Singing is therefore oriented towards active participation by all worshippers.

Hymns seem to have more significances than expressing worshipper's sentiments towards the deities. The continuous singing in the temple also facilitates the Temple's function as a symbol of the worshippers' collective identity.

Hymns, I argue, are a major means by which worshippers affirm or assert a sense of community identity. The fact that they all sing the same songs in the same language is significant. Through the singing, each member affirms his identity by joining his voice with the rest of the group. By singing in unison, members seem to be declaring: "We all participate, therefore we are." In this way the singing is central to the construction of a sense of identity as it generates a feeling of oneness or of belonging. We might draw insights from Durkheim's (1915) idea of effervescence in understanding this practice of hymn singing. By the use of this concept, basically I understand Durkheim to be referring to the group feeling that is generated in each individual as they act in concert in the performance of rituals. It is this same kind of feeling that is generated among worshippers as they sing in the Temple. The smiles that beam especially across the faces of the women as they sing in the Temple is a testimony first of all to the joy within them but more importantly to the joy of participating as one of a group of individuals with so much in common.

To conclude, immigrants are marginal people especially in the Canadian context. This impression does not only issue from my personal

perspective as a visa student in Canada but from the experiences of fellow immigrant friends. The Guyanese Hindus of Cambridge are no exception. After a week of life with all its vicissitudes in the larger Canadian society, the Temple offers for the members a refuge. Here, members enter into a different world: a world of familiar faces. To borrow Victor Turner's ideas, here they exist in "communitas" having emerged from the "structure" of larger Canadian society. In communitas (Turner 1969:129), they share an awareness of themselves as people with a common history, a common ancestral descent and common experiences in Canada. In such an environment, they feel free to gossip, to share jokes, to see their kids play around, to talk about events happening in Guyana, to sing and worship together, to partake in communal meals and mourn with each other in unhappy moments. For many of them, the extended family system that they had to abandon in their move to Canada has been replaced by the Temple community.

As a symbol of Guyanese Hindu identity, the Temple is also the place where the values that are embodied in Guyanese Hinduism are transmitted not only to the younger generation but also to those whose knowledge of the Hindu tradition is inadequate. The underlying quest of worshippers is to appear "Hindu," though of a distinct stock.

CONCLUSION

In keeping with conventions of postmodern ethnographic representation, I began this study with a brief autobiographical note before proceeding to discuss issues of methodology. I set the stage for the discussions in the study with a brief overview of developments in Hinduism as it is practised outside India. My overview reveals that the Hindu religious tradition is demonstrating remarkable versatility in its history and development. In spite of pressures and constraints under which it is practised in immigrant communities, Hinduism has survived. Nevertheless, Hinduism is assuming newer forms.

I have also showed that Hinduism as it is practised in the Indian diaspora is intertwined with the question of Hindu identity: a sense of identity which overlooks the traditional Indian sectarian, caste, and geographical divisions. Hindu immigrants are rallying together as a collective unit and are reworking and standardizing their Hindu religion as a symbolic focus for identity.

Having set the discussion within the framework of this modern development, I proceed to examine the history of Hinduism in Guyana, drawing insights from Hobsbawm's concept of "invented tradition" as an analytical tool to reconstruct the history of the religion in Guyana. Relying on historical evidence from Guyana and other Caribbean countries, I have argued that an almost extinct Hindu tradition became invented in Guyana as a symbolic focus of Hindu identity. In this connection developments in the Hindu religious tradition in Guyana demonstrate Hobsbawm's argument that identity creation and the

invention of traditions are interconnected. The effects of this process were nevertheless shortlived as the tradition succumbed once more to Creole and Western assimilation.

The second part of the thesis focuses on the transplantation of the Guyanese Hindu tradition in Canada through the process of immigration. In this part of the study I have shown how, once again the theme of the connection between the practice of Hinduism and the construction of an ethnic identity recurs in worshippers accounts of the origin and history of their Temple. Underlying these developments was the crucial factor of the history of the Guyanese Hindus as a twice displaced group. I demonstrate that the renegotiation of an ethnic identity by Guyanese Hindus in Canada, while in part a response to their social conditions as immigrant workers, was largely necessitated by the need for them to create a niche between the East Indian community and the Caribbean community in multiethnic Canada. Having lost their religious heritage, an important cultural symbol in Guyana, it became necessary for the Guyanese Hindu immigrants to "invent" a Hindu tradition once more as a symbol of this Hindu re-negotiated sense of ethnic identity.

I described the temple as an institution pointing to its strategic location in Cambridge, its numerical strength as well as its demographic composition. A brief discussion of the Temple's organisational framework

indicates some degree of ambiguity which I argue following Hobsbawm, is a sign of the inventive process.

A description of the worship tradition of the temple reveals that the tradition is itself a mosaic of different cultural and religious practices, all of which are bundled up under the label of "Hinduism," a label contrived to reinforce a sense of Hindu identity among Guyanese Hindu immigrants in Canada. In the last two sections of the thesis I have tried to present a condensed summary of the main themes. I claim that the developments in the Radha Krishna Hindu Temple are a part of a general post modern phenomenon which has attracted much attention in postmodern anthropological discourse.

As Clifford and Keesing among others have argued, a corollary of such postmodern developments has been the re -examination of conventional conceptual schemes. The interpretation of concepts such as tradition, and ethnicity must take due cognizance of these recent changes. Ethnicity has ceased to be static. New ethnic identities are invented daily in varying contexts. In this connection I examine the developments in the Temple as more than the simple invention of a religious tradition. They involve the recreation of a sense of ethnic identity. On this premise, I attempt in the final chapter to demonstrate how the temple functions as a symbol of this newly-created sense of Guyanese Hindu ethnic identity. Here I show that the temple is a venue for social interaction through worship, a venue for transmitting the values and symbols of

Guyanese Hinduism as well as a venue for demonstrating a sense of Guyanese Hindu ethnic solidarity in Canada.

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