Dimensions of International Migration
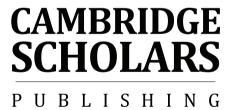
Dimensions of International Migration

Edited by

Päivi Hoikkala and Dorothy D. Wills

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DEDICATION

To our parents, who migrated or stayed put
because they wanted the best for us.

Annikki and Veikko Hoikkala
Dorothy P. and Joseph B. Wills

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Introduction:
The Human Face of Migration

Päivi Hoikkala
Dorothy D. Wills

On a Sunday afternoon in September, 2010, officers of the Los Angeles Police Department shot to death a 37-year-old indigenous Guatemalan day laborer, Manuel Jamines. The LAPD claimed that Jamines had been drunk and wielding a knife when they asked him to surrender his weapon, in English and in Spanish. When Jamines, who some say only spoke his indigenous language and understood very little English, failed to do so, the police shot him in the head. According to eye-witness accounts of the shooting, Jamines, while drunk, posed no immediate threat, perhaps even had no weapon in his hand. The death sparked several nights of vigils and protests and, once again, turned public attention to the complexities of migrant labor and immigration (Bermudez 2010).

The Pico-Union district of Westlake, where the shooting occurred, is a densely populated, mostly Hispanic neighborhood with large numbers of Central American immigrants. Only a five-minute drive from downtown Los Angeles, it is also one of the most impoverished areas in the city. Many residents are undocumented and rely on temporary employment, contributing to the high incidence of poverty. Furthermore, the recession has forced many residents out of work and into earning their living as peddlers, selling fruit and flowers at highway entrances. It is here that Jamines had lived since his arrival in Los Angeles in 2003 (Bermudez 2010; Tobar 2010).

Jamines grew up in the small Mayan community of Xexac, Guatemala. The community knew very little about the outside world until ten years ago when the first male resident followed his wife's relatives and moved to Westlake. In the years that followed, 60 to 70 men left the village to join brothers and cousins as day laborers in Westlake. To pay for the trip, guided by smugglers, they had to borrow money from private lenders and agree to pay 10-20% interest on the loans each month, once they got to Los Angeles. Those who were successful in making enough money soon paid back their loans and

began to construct new homes for their families in Xexac. Jamines decided to try his luck when he realized that the $15 a week he made working on a coffee plantation was not enough to provide a decent living for his wife and three children. They borrowed $5,000 in two loans, one at 15% and one at 20%. The family's small plot of land served as collateral (Bermudez 2010).

In Los Angeles Jamines found not fortune but the life of a migrant laborer. He shared a studio apartment with ten other men and spent his days at the parking lot of a nearby Home Depot in hopes of getting work. With no steady employment, his debt skyrocketed to $20,000—and on the weekends he became a *bolo*, Guatemalan slang for a public alcoholic. "He was trying to make some money for his family so that he could educate his children," another Guatemalan day laborer told a *Los Angeles Times* reporter. "All of us *guatemaltecos* here have hurt in our hearts. Who doesn't want to go home? If we had something to take back— $3,000, $4,000—we'd return." In the end, Jamines did return to his home village, but in a coffin (Tobar 2010).

Jamines' life in Los Angeles and his death put a human face on the issue of undocumented immigration that has come to define the American debate over immigration in recent years. His story also sheds light on the conditions in which so many make the decision to leave their home countries and move to foreign lands, whether permanently or as temporary workers. His experience in Los Angeles further illustrates the realities of the experience for many, one that frustrates their hope of finding better lives. While migration is a constant in human history, globalization has significantly accelerated the transnational movement of peoples. Many make the decision and follow legal channels while others, like Jamines, have little choice but to enter the host country as undocumented immigrants. Legal or not, all immigrants share the experience of leaving home and encountering new cultures and circumstances. Migration thus presents a challenge to the migrants while also impacting both the sending and receiving nations. The essays in this volume provide a glimpse into these universals of migration, both historically and in the modern context.

Industrialization in the nineteenth century revolutionized life and work for millions of people in Europe and across North America, resulting in large-scale internal migrations from rural to urban areas. Another result was the mass international migration of peoples across vast distances to the Americas and Australia. In an effort to explain these migration patterns, British geographer Ernest Ravenstein outlined a series of "laws of migration" (1885). Using

census data, Ravenstein concluded that migration was governed by a "push-pull" process: unfavorable conditions (poverty, overpopulation, oppression, etc.) in one place "push" people out while favorable conditions (employment opportunity, religious tolerance, etc.) in an external location "pull" them out. The dominant theories in migration scholarship are more or less variations of his conclusions, adding variables such as social class, educational status, family ties, knowledge of the receiving population, and the like to the list of factors that either facilitate or impede migration.

Migration implies not only the movement of peoples from one location to another but their experience once they reach their destination, or their incorporation in the host society. There are two main models that have dominated academic as well as policy approaches to immigration. The settler model posits permanent settlement and the gradual integration of the migrant in the economic and social relations of the host society. Assimilation, though it may take several generations, is the ultimate result. According to the temporary migration model, the migrant stays in the host country for a limited period while maintaining his/her affiliation to the country of origin. The assumption is that the migrant will eventually return home (Castels 2002).

These theories of migration governed the immigration policies of the Western countries throughout much the twentieth century. Yet, as Castels argues, they rely on faulty assumptions and preconceptions. The major problem is their reliance on national models and the primacy of the nation-state as the key factor in 'controlling' immigration; migration has thus been seen as something to be turned on and off at the border, according to national need and interest. Furthermore, these theories and theorists have not paid enough attention to human agency (Castels 2002: 1145-46). Migration is a collective process. As in the case of Manuel Jamines, entire families and communities participate in the decision to move. The barriers that the nation-state erects to immigration are not necessarily seen as absolute, only as impediments to the process.

Globalization is increasingly forcing us to rethink migration and immigration. In addition to creating transnational economic and communications networks, it implies the transnational, multidirectional flow of peoples, ideas and cultural symbols. In this context, the settler and migrant worker models no longer suffice to explain migration and integration. While they still are relevant, we also need to add to the list all those men and women who 'commute' between countries for work; the 'educational' migrants who

study abroad and return home, serving as significant agents of change; people who move to another country for retirement; or the undocumented workers who move back and forth across borders and send remittances home. What results is a new form of identity under the conditions of globalization. Transnational communities bear no allegiance to a single nation but see themselves as members of a larger entity, presenting a challenge to traditional ideas of belonging.

At the core of the traditional nation-state in the Western world has been the effort to 'manage' national identity through border control and cultural homogenization. Globalization has significantly weakened national sovereignty and autonomy and, as a result, the tools of enforcing national identity. Official policies of multiculturalism are an attempt to come to terms with the changing conditions, and myths about national uniqueness and homogeneity have been undermined. Yet, anxieties abound, and debates about immigrant assimilability, or non-assimilability, continue. The events of 9-11 and the terrorist attacks in London and Madrid only exacerbated these anxieties of immigrants among us.

A cross-disciplinary, international examination of issues related to human migration reveals an array of different perspectives, reflecting a common reality: it is as basic for people to move as for them to stay put. Beyond this unifying proposition, the motives behind migration, its demographic and geographic details, and the socio-cultural, economic and political impacts on migrants and hosts present a mosaic of variation. Globalization, conflict, and environmental deterioration are the major causes of modern population shifts; none are new, except in their scale and severity. Thus, we can learn from the example of pre-World War II European composers' emigration or that of contemporary Asian "parachute kids" in the United States. Every corner of the world experiences at least one of the main forms of migration: rural-urban out-migration, migrant labor in-country and cross-border, "the brain drain," population displacement (conflict, environmental degradation, and 'development' refugees), forced migration (as in, for instance, Nazi Germany or in human trafficking), marriage migration, education migration, and, of course, movement in trickles or in floods of people from economically depressed countries to countries less so.

Our book is not meant to cover every aspect of migration. No book could. It is a selection of some fresh, new scholarship on various dimensions of the topic. We have avoided polemical and partisan expressions, though the

arguments are frequently passionate. We have not limited our scope to the present day, though most of the essays are contemporary in focus.

Unit I, The Cultural Politics of Migration, introduces some of the philosophical debate in different scholarly arenas. The concepts of transnationalism and the new imperialism are explored as the latest transformations of old themes in human affairs. Anjana Narayan studies the process of changing relationship to the home country, in the case of Hindu students abroad. An essay by Anita Jain tackles the tension between different generations of diasporan Indians and between Indians in the diaspora and Indians back 'home'. Suzanne Scheld's case study of Chinese migrants in Senegal provides a close look at a set of cultural politics unfamiliar to most Americans. The fundamental point of view of this body of scholarship is that politicization of migration serves to elevate national and ethnic over international and human interest.

Cultural Change among Migrant Groups, Unit II, surveys some of the linguistic, social, and cultural changes experienced by specific migrant populations. These are attributable to assimilation and the globalization of mainly Western cultural values. Guo Tao tackles the thorny problem of English language hegemony and its relation to the disappearance of indigenous languages, providing a broad overview of the dramatic shifts in language choice and use around the globe. The adoption of Western values by Asians, in some cases, has led to their perception as "model minorities" and indeed to their out-competition of natives. But some Asians get to the U.S. in unusual ways, and their comportment while here is anything but 'model', as revealed in Ying Wang's essay. Another paper by Elizabeth Breshears focuses on the legal and cultural issue of how values spread and change, with or without the company of actual migrants.

Unit III, Lessons of History, invites a comparative analysis of three very different periods and issues: post-Civil War Southerners in the era of expansive Mexican colonization by Todd Wahlstrom, religious persecution during the *Kulturkampf* in the supposedly secular 1870s by Kevin Ostoyich, and the impact of Communist and Nazi/Fascist policy on artists in the period of 1933-1945 by Sandra Yang. These unusual and little-explored movements underscore the complexity of motivations propelling migration. Americans' ignorance of such history clearly handicaps policy makers faced with angry demonstrators.

Unit IV, Case Studies in International Migration, is comprised of three

case studies that focus on specific relationships in the story of migration in specific locales. The first case studies the special situation of Filipina American wives' place in the military diaspora. Jocelyn Pacleb explores the limits of the "push-pull" theory in this setting. The second essay, by Irma Ramirez, analyzes an experiment in architecture and community development conducted in a Mexican border community, with great implications for migration studies and pedagogy in a variety of fields. Michèle Langford describes aspects of Maghreb immigration and identity in France, and addresses the problematic of cultural continuity.

Unit V, Migration in Literature and Language, engages the imagery and discourse of migration in the press, fiction (including the 'minor literature' of non-mainstream writers), and language itself. The subjects are North Africans in Europe (Michèle Vialet's study of Leila Sebbar's autobiographical writing), Vietnamese overseas narratives (Lise-Hélène Smith), and the semantic field of European languages that captures immigrants (Elena Ruzickova). The voices of the migrants themselves depict both their situations of origin and their experiences in their new environment.

Each unit has a brief overview identifying what the editors believe are the salient points made by the authors. Each essay is followed by a few questions for discussion, intended to encourage further exploration and learning. Our goal is not to problematize immigration, but to contextualize it, not to propose policy or other solutions, but to expose to the student or general reader some of the factors we must take into account before proposing them. We believe that only the kind of integrative, inter-disciplinary scholarship represented here can move the discussion of these topics beyond the blaming, strife, and lamentation that dominate it at the moment.

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PART I

THE CULTURAL POLITICS
OF MIGRATION

Humans have always migrated; else, we would not have peopled the earth so completely in the course of the past 50,000 years. Until the last five thousand years or so, most of these human movements occurred within territories unpopulated by other humans. Contact between two or more human groups, however, creates a different dynamic. Territorial as we are, it is hard to imagine the most innocent contact between hunter-gatherer groups as devoid of politics. Where there is inter-marriage or trade relations, mutual interest often triumphs over mutual suspicion. Where there is an imbalance of power or benefits, conflict and domination frequently result.

Two of the articles in this unit deal with issues relating to the migration of South Asian Indians to the United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. Their different experiences in these new situations have to do with class and educational background, as well as national origin, perceptions of their race by host country citizens, and their own efforts to define their identities and ethnicities. Narayan takes on the concept of transnationalism through the examination of the international communications among Indians, led by student groups. This generation of educated, professional Indians has used their Hindu affiliation as a means of dissociation from other Asians, especially Muslims, and a rallying point for their own diverse people. Hence, they have become an important player in the Hindu Nationalist movement. Narayan highlights the role of new media in the development of this ethnic/religious identity.

Jain's essay examines Indian women in the diaspora through the lens of economic policies of the homeland seen as a major vehicle for the reproduction of cultural identity. She places this specific issue in the larger context of gender, sexuality, race, religion, family form, and class, which are juxtaposed to the distribution of resources and political power. The major theoretical contribution of the essay lies in the clarification of the role that immigrant communities play in the strengthening of the modern nation-state. This role

is further shown to be related to the way disparate indigenous groups were managed by colonial states. Jain's approach is a departure from the current consensus on this relationship. Her concept of "differently modern" brings with it a new look at the construction and re-construction of social identity.

Globalization and neo-liberalism are the broad topics of Scheld's essay. She details their mainly pernicious and unanticipated consequences in Senegal through the experiences of Chinese migrants who have overwhelmed the informal sector of the economy in the past decade or so. Conflicts among street vendors, "free-market" traders, consumer groups, and different ethnic groups were exacerbated by the success of these Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs. State policy, having opened the gates of the international market, appears to have little prospect for controlling the results.

Chapter One

New Platforms for Organizing Ethnic Identities

Anjana Narayan

In her 1998 book *Religion in the Service of Nationalism*, Madhu Kishwar argued that religion is often invoked to build nationalist identities. Similar arguments have been by scholars such as Ashish Nandy (1994), arguing that such religio-nationalist identities are often an outcome of modern states: minority groups use religion to create identities that empower them. In this essay I focus on the ethno-religious identities that are projected by Hindu student groups in the United Kingdom and the United States to demonstrate that these groups use their religious identities to counter their non-white status.

Since the 1950s, with the opening up of new opportunities, Hindu migrants have headed to both the U.S. and UK. While their numbers have continued to grow since the 1950s in the UK and the 1960s in the U.S., Indians overall, and Hindus—the predominant group of migrants from India—make up less than two percent of the population (UK Census 2001; U.S. Immigration Statistics). Despite this similarity of numbers, the demographic profile of Hindu immigrants varies considerably in the two countries, largely due to social policies and immigration laws. In the United States, for example, the majority of the Hindu population comprises migrants who came to the country to meet the demand for skilled professionals and subsequently brought their families across. While the U.S. Census does not collect information on religious affiliation, data indicates that the Indian segment—the majority of which is made up of Hindus—has higher educational qualifications and a higher-than-average income than the indigenous population (U.S. Immigration Statistics). The United Kingdom Censuses indicate a lower aggregate statistic for education and income when compared to the United States (U.S. Census Bureau).

There are also significant differences between the residential patterns

of these immigrant groups. While those in the U.S. have lived in white residential suburbs, those in the UK have largely grown up in boroughs where there is a significant immigrant population, such as Harrow, Hounslow, Brent and Redbridge (Purkayastha 2005; Joshi 2006). Consequently, their children have grown up with mostly white peers in the U.S. or with immigrant peers in the UK. During their college years, these students interact with a large group of individuals from similar backgrounds who they can identify with, leading to the kind of peer bonding where they can establish their collective identities. Moreover, college gives them a secular platform to assert their independence and forge their cultural and social identities without direct parental influence. These college students have, over the last two decades, established and managed Hindu student groups (HSGs), which get wide publicity through their websites, also giving them access to a large global audience.

History of Indian immigration to the U.S. and the UK

Indian migration to the United Kingdom and the United States began as early as the 1830s, but large-scale migration occurred only after World War II. The early immigrants to the UK were still largely influenced by the centuries of British colonialism. Like immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean, they worked at low-paying, semi-skilled jobs. Although these racial groups did retain their ethnic distinctions, they shared enough of a social and cultural link, along with limited social mobility, to form coalitions (Rajagopal 2001). This situation changed in the 1970s with the arrival of Indian immigrants from East Africa, a group that was more upwardly mobile and better educated. By the 1980s, the demographic profile of Indian immigrants was markedly different: hardly any of them were employed in manual jobs; instead, most were educated professionals employed in skilled jobs and were outpacing the white population economically. This trend continued into the twenty-first century, and British Indians today are affluent and influential, a distinction they emphasize to set themselves apart from other South Asian and African-Caribbean immigrants (Shukla 2003).

Indian immigration into the U.S. followed a different pattern. Large-scale Indian immigration began only after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, which liberalized immigration policies and laws. This period brought the first wave of Indian graduate students and highly educated professionals who found ready employment in managerial positions, followed

by the highly-skilled guest workers, H1-B visa holders, in the 1980s. As this period coincided with increasing openness towards multiculturalism in America, Hindu Indian migrants were able to claim some space for practicing their religion, such as building temples and organized sects practicing their own version of Hinduism, but these outward signs of religious presence have been hard won. Indians continue to face racial discrimination in public spaces, based on reactions to observable characteristics and the perception of their religions as 'foreign.' In the twenty-first century, the Indian migrant population is among those with the highest education and with the highest median household income of all groups (U.S. Census Bureau).

Indian immigrants in the UK, while residing in poor working-class communities, attempt to maintain ethnic communities to be upwardly mobile within their social peer group. Since the youth are well integrated into the ethnic community, they are expected to be cultural ambassadors of sorts, speaking for the whole community. The youth in the U.S., on the other hand, despite their integration in terms of residence and education, experience racialization that leads them to negotiate ethnic and national group identities.

Accommodation and Adjustment

While immigrants in both contexts have been subject to a range of discriminatory practices as well as immigration and local laws, Indian migrations to the U.S. and the UK have been demographically very different and, given the nature of Hindu diversity, have promoted variegated practices. In general, the groups in both countries seek to accommodate to their minority status within a complex social structure where different racial groups coexist in mutual respect and tolerance, yet are divided into two polarized racial groups: whites and blacks. Generic Indian organizations have focused on building temples and forming cultural organizations to seek a religio-cultural definition of their identity. Yet, these initiatives are carried out within the boundaries of multiculturalism and explicit attacks by organized Christian groups. Thus, this is a population that experiences discrimination but chooses to articulate it as 'asserting culture.' This is especially true of post-immigrant generations whose class and cultural back-ground make their dark-skinned status in the West problematic. For this generation, the Hindu religion becomes a marker of their cultural or racial distinction. Hindu nationalism offers them a way of asserting culture through its ideology of cultural rejuvena-

tion and national distinction.

First-generation Asian immigrants in the UK termed themselves 'Asians' not only because they had been grouped under that category or felt obligated to describe themselves as such, but also because the word 'Asian' culturally assembled them into a community with a collective racial interest. This collective experience enabled them to appease national divisions from 'back home' and set themselves culturally apart from Afro-Caribbean and African populations by emphasizing their 'continental' difference. At the same time, many of these first-generation immigrants had settled in the country that had recently ruled them; they needed to establish a sense of camaraderie with similarly marginalized races whose non-white status excluded them from the category of 'Britishness.' The collective Asian identity served this purpose (Raj 2000; Shukla 2003). Subsequent generations, however, were better employed and more affluent than other South Asian and African immigrants, and sought to establish their identity as 'Indian' or 'Hindu' to distinguish themselves from the collective 'Asian' or 'black' immigrant population.

Vinay Lal notes (Lal 1999) that there was a vital distinction between the Indians who immigrated to the U.S. in the early 1900s and those who arrived after 1965. The former were working-class migrants who sought agricultural and other manual work; the latter were middle-class professionals, marking a shift in social and professional migrant status. While the colonial era of labeling all Indians 'Hindu' was long past, the common nomenclature 'Indians' was unacceptable, because at the time it also denoted Native Americans. The name 'Asian American' was also not distinctive enough; apart from not being familiar to most, it mainly referred to migrants from the Far East or Southeast Asia. As Lal (1999) also points out, Indian migrants to Britain did not seem to mind being grouped with African and Caribbean migrants under the common sobriquet 'black'. However, this was unacceptable to Indians who migrated to the U.S. in the post-1965 era and considered that being called 'black' would slot them as members of an inferior social group. Indian migrants in the U.S. campaigned to preserve their minority status and yet retain their distinctive identity—an effort that bore fruit when the term 'Asian Indian' was approved by the U.S. Census Bureau in 1976.

The events that followed 9/11 in New York City in 2001 and the 7/7 London bombings in 2005 provided Hindu groups in both the nations with abundant reasons to further disparage the 'Asian/South Asian' label (Kurien 2005). The growing wariness of Muslims, or 'Islamophobia,' fueled this de-

nunciation and justified the Hindu-Muslim divide that had been emphasized by Hindu nationalist organizations in India.

There was yet another factor that fueled Hindu organizations within the Indian diaspora. Although among all immigrants the majority of the immigrant population of skilled professionals with high incomes was Indian, large numbers were employed in working-class businesses. There was growing fear that this section could well be the target of racialism or cultural discrimination, as had been the case in the late 1980s (Lal 1999; Rajagopal 2001). Asian Indian professionals faced employment discrimination and racialization in the workplace; there were also specific instances of cultural and racial discrimination, such as when a street gang calling themselves the Dotbusters attacked and intimidated Asian Indians in New Jersey. Affirming a national cultural identity became a popular and effective way to address this fear, because it demanded respect for a unique and superior cultural heritage and a distinct Hindu identity.

Globalization and liberalization have largely contributed to the spread of Hindu organizations in Asia, Africa, the U.S. and the UK. The Virat Hindu Sammelan (Great Hindu Assembly), held on 28 and 29 August 1989 at Milton-Keynes Bowl on the outskirts of London, is a case in point. More than half a million Hindus representing 350 organizations attended this gathering to make a vociferous proclamation of a thriving, and unified form of Hinduism that transcended barriers of ritualistic modes, region, or language. According to Chetan Bhatt (2000), more significantly, the festival was a forum for the Hindu Nationalist organizations to publicize their demands for the construction of a Hindu temple on the grounds of the Babri Mosque in India, allegedly built on the birthplace of the Hindu god Ram, as a symbol of a Hindu renaissance. The demolition of the Babri Mosque in 1993 was closely followed by Global Vision 2000, an international conference organized by the World Hindu Council in Washington D.C. This event was purported to be a cultural event, celebrating the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's historic address to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Instead, the widely attended gathering turned into a public forum for Hindus in the U.S. to declaim on the supremacy and solidarity of Hinduism, highlighting the alarming connection between 'extremism and expatriates' (Tharoor 1993).

However, as Rajagopal (2000) rightly argues, Hindu nationalism in the diaspora diverges from its counterpart in India in the sense that it seeks to accommodate itself to its minority status in pluralistic but racially polarized

societies. The experiences of racism and marginalization have pushed Indian immigrants toward religion and religious institutions since, for racial minorities, emphasizing a religious identity can be one way to avoid identification on the basis of race (Kurien 2005; Busto 1996; Rajagopal 1995). Pan–Indian umbrella organizations, both secular and religious, that present the face of Indians abroad have assumed the task of codifying Indian ethnicity and communicating what Indian culture and Indian religion stand for, particularly to the second generation of immigrants. This is evident in the emergence of transnational Hindu nationalist organizations, specifically student organizations in the South Asian diaspora in the U.S. and the UK. At present, there are hundreds of Hindu student organizations in these two countries that are asserting 'a' Hindu identity.

Hindu Student Groups

Both the U.S. HSG, established in May 1990, and the UK HSG, established in 1992, are run by students and have thousands of members across college campuses. They have a formidable internet presence, with a main national web portal and websites for each university chapter. The U.S. HSG's two-fold aim, stated in an introductory pamphlet, is "...to promote among Hindu students an understanding of Hindu culture and philosophy and secondly a sense of identity...community spirit and a feeling of an extended Hindu family…" (U.S. HSG national web portal). The UK HSG's vision statement seeks "…to build foundations for a strong and vibrant Hindu community by establishing a youth oriented proactive agenda. Through its activities it aims to promote Hindu unity and to propagate the eternal relevance of the Hindu way of life. " (UK HSG, national web portal)

Toward meeting the stated objectives of the U.S. and UK HSGs, the predominant theme highlighted and publicized through HSG websites is the overall superiority of Hinduism and Hindu culture. The "eternal relevance" of Hinduism is achieved by repositioning Hinduism as a world religion with Hindus as true cosmopolitan citizens of the world, contributing to society in key industrial positions; by ordaining Hinduism to be one of the world's leading religions; and by rewriting history to dwell on Hinduism's glorious past, when the pursuit of scientific and artistic disciplines were complemented by the high status accorded to women.

Notably, these themes have been carefully selected to align closely

with the current politically correct Western rhetoric. Interestingly, the principal themes that allegedly characterize Hinduism present a strong argument for its superiority and its suitability as a World Religion. Hinduism, they maintain, is based on ancient and enduring traditions and is *santana dharma* (eternal tradition) that is best aligned to our times. Four arguments support this claim.

First, the diverse rituals and practices of Hinduism indicate harmony and tolerance; following Hindu traditions therefore aligns with the environment of liberal secularism in today's world. Besides, HSG websites emphasize the age-old *guru-shishya parampara* (the living and learning relationship between teacher and disciple) as particularly relevant in the present times, when materialism and consumerism leave little room for spiritual development, particularly in Western cultures. Second, the Western concept of Hinduism as primitive or barbaric is dismissed as false; instead, Hinduism is portrayed as an age-old, ingenious, sophisticated, and scientific treatise on universal truths and the nature of the cosmos, and thus superior to latter-day cultures and faiths. Third, the concept of *seva* (service) is actively promoted as a principal doctrine of Hinduism for every Hindu, corresponding to the Christian concept of community service for personal salvation. Finally, the HSGs emphasize that Hinduism is the only religion that empowers women, a characteristic that distinguishes Hindus not only from other South Asians but also from other leading religions. Hindu women represent vibrancy and strength, as clearly demonstrated by the goddesses in the Hindu pantheon who personify strength. Through this rhetoric, HSGs assume the role and responsibility of spreading the influence of Hinduism across the world to benefit all of mankind, while emphasizing its "natural" alignment with Western cultures.

Overall, these themes indicate an energetic attempt to reshape the very fabric of the essentially diverse Hinduism to fit the static, unified form based on the ancient Vedas. In their attempt to draw clear parallels between Hinduism and Christianity, the HSGs present the Vedas as the Bible, and India as the holy shrine, much like the Vatican. HSG websites explain Hinduism in terms of the Ten Commandments or describe the basics of Hinduism through corresponding fundamental Christian tenets. In the attempt to analogize Hinduism with Christianity, the websites merely acknowledge the pantheon of a myriad Hindu gods and goddesses, but claim that Hinduism is fundamentally henotheistic. Notably, the HGSs discount the innumerable changes since Ve-

dic times that have influenced and shaped Hinduism and its diverse traditions and practices, making it the polygamous, vibrant, and ever-evolving religion it is today.

Thus, despite the references to diversity within Hinduism, a careful reading of the websites reveals that the type of Hinduism presented by the HSGs closely reflects the form of the dominant religion in the US and UK: Christianity. Thus, there are holy books, sacred places, one religious history, male gurus/leaders of the religion, emphasis on faith-based practice centering on temples and the emphasis on proselytizing. And, like many fundamentalist Christian groups, there is a constant refrain distancing themselves from Muslims.

Growth of Hindu Student Groups

Several factors have contributed to the growth and popularity of HSGs in both the U.S. and the UK. The experiences of the second- and third-generation immigrants in these countries have to be seen in a different light from those of the first-generation migrants. The latter entered the workforce as adults, at a time when cultural differences were probably not discussed, or only tacitly understood, or were even unknown. In subsequent generations, the children of migrants as students and second- or third-generation British Indians or Asian Americans confront circumstances where they are required to become cultural ambassadors, representing a population constructed by cultural differences or to combat discrimination to voice a cultural identity.

In addition, these HSGs share the belief that the U.S. and the UK are Christian nations, founded on Christian values. As non-Christians, they feel marginalized and resent being perceived as potential beneficiaries of civilizing Christian influences instead of valuable contributors to positive secularization and progress (Purkayastha 2005; Joshi 2006). In this context, HSGs leverage Hindu nationalism to protect and propagate their Hindu heritage from 'defiling' influences. The UK HSG, for example, has been an active supporter of the Hindu human rights, vociferously protesting against Western designers derogating their deities, particularly Hindu goddesses, by using them as motifs on 'demeaning' articles like lingerie, toilet seats, and the like. Similar protests were sparked by a Christmas issue of a Royal Mail stamp, portraying a couple with distinct Hindu characteristics worshipping the Infant Jesus.

Moreover, the internet has emerged as a crucial mechanism in the construction and negotiation of issues involving ethnicity and transnationalism (Lal 1999). Several studies of virtual ethnic communities analyze how internet technologies encourage the creation of 'communities of sentiment' or computer-mediated public spheres within the diaspora where people who are physically isolated from their notion of 'home' develop a rapport, linked by common languages, ideologies, cultural events and audiovisual symbols (Bell 2001; Castells 2001; Wellmen and Haythorthwaite 2002). The internet is an ideal channel for virtual social interaction and a sense of belonging to an elective community, particularly as it does not demand the permanence, personal visibility or commitment of other forms of communication. Online networks and forums allow diasporic and marginalized populations to express themselves without being curtailed by communal or cultural boundaries, or fears of retribution, or needing to provide justification of their views. Moreover, the internet is an anonymous platform, and therefore invites those who normally would not express opinions, or those who have been traditionally barred from the public sphere, to find their voice. Finally, for those in geographically dispersed sections of the diaspora, the internet is a fast and interactive form of communication that gives them unlimited access to a wide audience. Overall, the last decade has witnessed the emergence of virtual ethnic communities as a new arena through which identities are created and sustained and indeed, for the HSGs, this virtual community is the major medium.

There is yet another phenomenon that is consolidating the position of self-appointed spokespersons among the student bodies in these countries. Both the U.S. and the UK are witnessing a structural transition toward multiculturalism, creating an environment where the young are routinely expected to be knowledgeable about their social and cultural traditions, while lacking the authority to question the cultural framework (Kurien 2005). This is an unrealistic expectation in the case of Hinduism, which has such a staggering diversity in culture, practice, rites and rituals. Hinduism is distinct from other established religions in that it does not have a founder, an ecclesiastical structure of authority or a single scriptural text or commentary. The typical Hindu immigrant does not have the experience or knowledge to answer broad philosophical questions on the meaning or doctrines of Hinduism. This enables self-styled spokespersons of Hindu nationalism to fill the gap by imposing their own views on defining Hinduism, its history and how it should

be practiced (Kurien 2005).

Furthermore, upwardly mobile post-immigrant generations find that their class and cultural background makes their dark-skinned status in the West problematic. For this generation, the Hindu religion becomes a marker of their cultural or racial distinction. Hindutva offers them a way of asserting culture through its ideology of cultural rejuvenation and national distinction. At the same time, the size and the affluence of this community in these countries endows it with potential influence over their far less affluent fellow Indians back home, and Hindu nationalists have been at the forefront of attempts to tap this influence. Themselves largely immigrants or permanent residents, members of the Hindu nationalist organizations, for the most part, subdue their political rhetoric and concentrate on issues of cultural reproduction, presenting themselves as well-meaning guardians of Hindu values. This provides the perfect rationale for immigrants in the US and the UK to 'convert' Hinduism into a worldwide religion, as most clearly indicated by the HSGs in these countries.

Conclusion

In *New Media Campaigns and the Managed Citizen*, Philip Howard (2006) demonstrates how individuals whose core skill lies in clever management of marketing and information technology are the ones who heavily influence and mold emergent cultures. At group level, HSGs fit this demographic; using a blend of clever, appealing, and seemingly authenticated rhetoric and by harnessing the power of the internet, they cherry-pick fundamental, easily understood cultural symbols and disseminate them to a large consumer base in the form of a motivating discourse that defines their target audience's sense of self- and socio-religious identity. Developed in a globalized world where dispersed people can be easily reached, within social settings beset with new forms of racism and anxieties about 'security', the evoking of religious roots appear to provide anchors in complex worlds. Thus, HSG messages, because of their reach, are positioned to drown out the more nuanced, diverse, measured and historically grounded forms of religious practice that make up the Hindu world. The technological reach of such websites is creating new hierarchies of privilege—with groups in the U.S. and UK at the summit—as new media religious campaigns attempt to manage 'Hindu citizens' of the world.