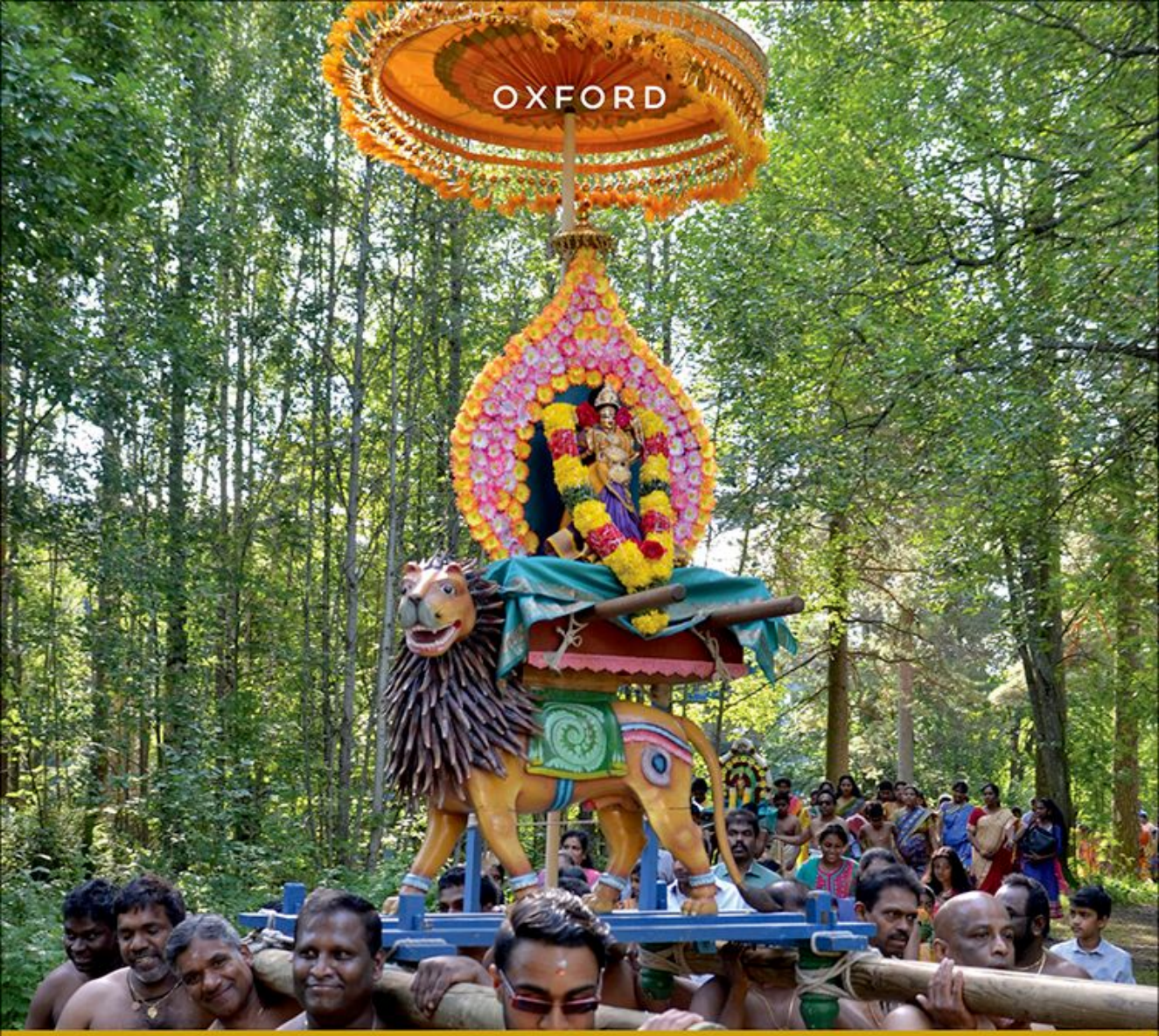

HINDU DIASPORAS

EDITED BY

Knut A. Jacobsen

THE OXFORD HISTORY OF HINDUISM

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General Editor

GAVIN FLOOD

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of
Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2023942194

ISBN 978–0–19–886769–2

DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198867692.001.0001

Printed and bound in the UK by
Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank all the authors of the chapters in this volume for their contributions. Thanks also to Gavin Flood who invited me to edit a volume on Hindu diasporas for *The Oxford History of Hinduism* series. I want to thank the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies for inviting me to present some of my work on the global Hindu diasporas when they were hosting me as a Shivdasani Visiting Fellow for the Hilary Term 2022. And finally, I also want to thank Vasudha Narayanan and Purushottama Bilimoria for their many helpful suggestions.

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II. GLOBAL THEMES

Note on Diacritics

In this book diacritics are used in names of gods and goddesses, festivals, titles of texts, and terms from South Asian languages. Diacritics are mostly not used in names of modern figures and organizations (after ca. 1850). Diacritics are also not used in modern place names such as modern *tīrtha*s. Names of temple organizations follow mostly local spellings. River Gaṅgā is a goddess and spelled with diacritics, while Ganga Talao is a modern pilgrimage place and spelled without diacritics, and it is the Veṅkaṭeśvara temple, that is, a temple devoted to Veṅkaṭeśvara, but the Sri Venkateswara Temple in Penn Hill, the Svāmināràyaṇa temple, but the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London, a Gaṇeśa temple, but the Ganesha Temple in Flushing, New York. A large number of South Asian and other languages are used in the Hindu diasporas and this has led to many different local spellings. Accommodations to local languages have furthermore produced additional linguistic variations. In many of the Hindu diasporas there is no single standardized orthography for terms from South Asian languages and religions. The volume has tried to avoid too many different spellings by using mostly Sanskrit, Hindi, or Tamil spellings. For example, the title of the text *Bhagavadgītā* is spelled differently in Fiji, Suriname, Malaysia, and the United States and so on, but in this volume only the spelling *Bhagavadgītā* is used. For many terms and names of gods and goddesses the volume has allowed for the use of a limited variety in spellings such as *saṃskāra* and *saṃskār*, and Gaṇeś, Gaṇeśa, Vināyakar, and Vināyakaṉ to avoid excessive Sanskritization. Kṛṣṇa is sometimes spelled Krishna such as in quotations and in the names of modern organisations. With some other words also different spellings are allowed such as *swami* and svāmi, Vellalar and Veḷḷāḷar, *yajña* and *yagna*, depending on context.

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List of Contributors

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Introduction

Hinduism and Migration

Knut A. Jacobsen

Religions throughout history have, for the large part, spread by means of the geographic movement of people, that is, by migration and then through migrants' children. This is the case also with many of those religious traditions considered Hindu and included in the term 'Hinduism'. It is mainly the migration of Hindus from South Asia that has given the Hindu traditions a worldwide presence. The term 'Hindu diasporas', which is the title of this volume, refers to that part of the worldwide presence of Hindus and the Hindu traditions that have resulted from this movement of Hindus out of South Asia. The term 'diaspora' is currently widely used in academic and popular discourses to refer to any migrant group with a common origin living outside of its ancestral homeland and which maintains some sort of relationship to this ancestral place or home country. The term 'diasporas' should be understood in this simple meaning of geographical dispersions of people and, in addition, that this connection to another place than where they reside constitutes part of their identity. Significant populations of Hindus live, not only in India and the rest of South Asia, but also in Mauritius, South Africa, Réunion, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, East Asia, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, North America, Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, Britain, France, Germany, and many other countries.

This volume concentrates on the religious dimensions of the Hindu diasporas. In the diasporas, religion has often been an important resource for the preservation and maintenance of a relationship to the ancestral home country. Religion can also function to re-actualize or rebuild such a relationship. In the Hindu diasporas, South Asian languages such as Sanskrit and Tamil have remained important ritual languages, and South Asian languages dominate in many religious settings. The sacred calendars and spaces of South Asia have remained normative. For many Hindus in the diasporas, South Asia has remained a place of religious authority and authenticity, with priests, temple musicians, and temple builders being recruited from South Asia, on long- or short-term contracts. In all large temples outside of South Asia it is important that the *mūrti*s (embodied forms of the gods and goddesses worshipped in temples) should come from India. The *mūrti*s are treated as living embodiments of the divinities and are the most

Knut A. Jacobsen, *Introduction: Hinduism and Migration* In: *Hindu Diasporas*. Edited by: Knut A. Jacobsen, Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198867692.003.0001

sacred objects in the temples. The temple *mūrti*s imported from India are thought of as representing the divine in Hindu religion in an accurate and truthful way and guarantee that the powers of the gods and goddesses are available to the devotees. India continues to be the country of origin of Hindu gods and goddesses. Other material objects such as books, posters of gods, *mālā*s (prayer beads, garlands), incense, and other items used in rituals are exported from India to Hindus all over the world. A temple that has not been built from the ground up in Indian architectural temple style is looked upon as a temporary temple only, to be replaced by a 'real' temple sometime in the future. That the rituals in religious festivals in the diaspora are performed in the same way as in the South Asian country of origin is looked upon as a sign of authenticity and is a source of happiness. However, the diaspora is typically also characterized by innovations and adaptations such as moving the celebration of Hindu festivals to the nearest weekend or including more cultural events in the temple locations. Indian dance has become important in the diasporas for religious identity formation and celebration of religious traditions. Transfer of Hindu religious traditions can be a very demanding task and involves hard work, and it is more important to some than others. Much religious work is invested in transferring the diasporic consciousness of the first generation to the later generations, but the Hindu religion may also be rediscovered and actualized in new ways. Hindu traditions have become global, with Hindu Brahman priests from India and Sri Lanka serving in temples all over the world. This volume on the Hindu diasporas presents and analyses some of the geographies, migration histories, religious traditions and developments, rituals, places, institutions, and representations, and focuses on Hindus with a South Asian ancestral background living outside of South Asia.

Concepts

The term 'Hindu' refers to persons identifying with or being identified with those religious traditions and practices which together are referred to as the Hindu traditions or Hinduism. The term 'Hinduism', although ending with the suffix -ism, does not refer to an ideology, a philosophy, or to a religious doctrine. Hinduism refers to a large plurality of religious traditions, perhaps best understood as a mosaic of traditions, and their development is an 'open-ended process' (Barua 2015: 27). The term is used interchangeably with the plural term 'Hindu traditions'. There is a large body of critical literature about problematic aspects of the term 'Hinduism' and the term's origin and history, especially in the 1990s and 2000s when the term was eagerly debated (see Hawley and Narayanan 2006, Llewellin 2005, Lorenzen 1999, Pennington 2005, Sweetman 2003). In this book the term is used critically, that is, with a critical awareness of the academic debates about the origin and history of the term. The modern concept of Hinduism

developed as part of globalization when India was ruled by European colonial powers. A discussion of the term is found in several of the chapters of this volume. Martin Ramstedt in Chapter 2, notes that in South East Asia, colonialism and colonial knowledge production produced the conditions for the Hindu religious ideology and practices, and Prea Persaud, in Chapter 4, writing on Hinduism in the Caribbean, notes that the concept of Hinduism was unknown to the migrants who arrived in the nineteenth century. The struggle of Indian nationalism to create the independent nation state of India and the attempt to construct the Hindu traditions as a unified tradition contributed to the concept, and this also influenced the religious developments in the Hindu diasporas. In the Hindu diasporas, as a minority, or as a majority as in the case of Mauritius, there were also benefits from regarding Hinduism as a unified religion and Hindu as a common identity. Thus, the diaspora situation has in some cases, especially in the old diasporas, encouraged the idea of Hinduism as single religion.

In the study of Hinduism, the focus on the diasporas can contribute to bringing attention to such issues as the global presence of Hindus and Hinduism, the way Hindu traditions expand geographically, how Hindus abroad relate to South Asia, transnational developments and relations, global temple expansions, festival religion, generational transfer, caste, the new ritual roles of women in the diasporas, the diasporas and Hindutva and Hindu nationalism, and the relationship between Hindu diasporas and the new followers of Hindu traditions such as yoga and Hindu devotional groups.

Hindu diaspora is sometimes used in the singular, but since Hindu diasporas are not only Indian, but also Sri Lankan, Nepalese, and Balinese, and in addition Hindus in 'second diasporas' such as Hindus from Suriname in the Netherlands, Hindus from East Africa in Britain, Hindus from Fiji in Australia and New Zealand, and so on, the plural term 'Hindu diasporas' is a better way to conceptualize the phenomenon of Hinduism and migration. South Asia is also comprised of many nations (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and the Maldives) and Hindus from South Asia thus belong to several different national diasporas. In addition, the Indian diaspora is a multi-ethnic diaspora. India is divided into many regions, with separate languages, histories, and ethnic identities, and is a federal constitutional republic. The separate states in the Indian republic (29 states and eight union territories) mirror some of this diversity.[1] Consequently, the Indian Hindu diaspora is likewise a plural phenomenon, with different Indian regional traditions establishing separate temples, institutions,

[1] High spatial mobility and circulation of people within India characterizes Indian history (Markovits, Pouchepadass, and Subrahmanyam 2006, Tumbe 2018) and sometimes the concept 'diaspora' is used also to describe this phenomenon. Studies of the role of Hindu religion in diasporas caused by internal migration within India are valid and interesting, and the role of Hindu traditions in these diasporas is understudied, but the topic is beyond the scope of this volume. In this volume, Hindu diasporas refer to Hindus outside of South Asia.

organizations, and identities. Also, Hinduism is a very diverse tradition. Svāminārāyaṇa Hindus from Gujarat and Īḻam Tamil Hindus from Sri Lanka obviously represent different diasporas.

The term 'diaspora' has in the past had connotations of forced displacement and suffering.[2] The early Hindu diasporas that were dominated by indentured labour were not forced displacements, although poverty as well as trickery played important roles in the recruitment. During the first decades of the indentured labour system, the treatment of the plantation workers was probably no different from the treatment of the slaves they replaced (Tinker 1974, but see also Allen 2012). The distinction in the study of the Hindu diasporas between the old Hindu diasporas that were mostly created by the indentured labour system and the new Hindu diasporas created by post-independence migrations is important because of the great difference in conditions and experiences. As Vasudha Narayanan notes in her chapter on the United States in this volume, of the approximately 2.5 million Hindus in the United States, a diaspora currently dominated by first and second generations, almost half have completed a graduate degree and, as a population, have one of the highest levels of household income. The contrast with the first and second generations of indentured labourers in the nineteenth century in, for example, Trinidad, Mauritius, or Fiji, is enormous. The small shrines to a protector goddess symbolized by a red-coloured stone situated at the plantations contrast with the monumental temples that the Hindu diaspora in the United States were quick to envision, the first of which were constructed as early as in the 1970s. The current use of the term 'diaspora' in Hindu studies reflects this shift from the suffering of the indentured labourers to the successful immigration history of the Hindus in the United States, Europe, and Australia, and the improved conditions for Hindus in some old diasporas. This shift in understanding of diaspora is generally also the case in diaspora studies. A valuable study of uses of the term 'diaspora' has noted the importance of understanding its use as a contemporary term 'relieved of its heavy burden of misery, persecution, and punishment' (Dufoix 2008: 106).

The Indian government has in the last decades been active in the promotion of Indian diasporic identities. The use of the term 'diaspora' for 'overseas Indians' or 'the Indian global nation' (Abraham 2014: 106) represents a recent shift in understanding, due not only to the increased popularity of the term 'diaspora' in research, popular media, and politics, but also to a shift in India's relationship to the communities now included in the diaspora. The postcolonial Indian political elite dismissed the category of overseas Indians. Itty Abraham has noted that while the early meaning of diaspora meant a people without a

[2] The term 'diaspora' has associations to many other terms, such as 'exile', 'migration', 'transnationalism', 'cosmopolitanism', 'hybridity', and more (for a good presentation of these terms in a diaspora perspective, see Knott and MacLoughlin 2010).

homeland, after 1919 and the creation of the new international norm of national self-determination, the idea of diaspora took on new meanings: '[D]iaspora now also meant a people living outside the borders of a defined national homeland' (Abraham 2014: 74). Abraham argues that the Indians who at that time were living around the globe and especially within the borders of the British Empire were not a diaspora in the modern sense. Only with Indian independence, could a globally dispersed nation be differentiated into citizens of the Indian state and an overseas diaspora. When India became a nation state, the diaspora was excluded from the Indian nation state, and this exclusion of the Indian diaspora defined Indian foreign policy up to 1990. When India gained independence in 1947, Indians living abroad because of their long stay overseas were not considered Indians. The views at the time of India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, are representative. He considered Indians in South Africa 'not Indian nationals' and Hill Country Tamil Indians in Sri Lanka[3] 'not our nationals' (quoted in Abraham 2014: 97), and in 1947 the new Indian government claimed that the Indian populations in South East Asia had no formal connections to India and had no right to return. Even in the 1970s Indians overseas do not seem to have been considered Indians by the Indian government. When the Indians in Uganda were expelled in 1972 due to the Africanization policies, the Indian government 'proclaimed that these displaced overseas Indians had no right of return' (Abraham 2014: 75). The Indian view of them was that they were racially prejudiced against Africans and that they should have assimilated into the local society. A shift started in the late 1970s with the growth in financial remittances by overseas Indians. In the 1980s, the population of middle-class and upper-caste Indians living abroad had become significant in countries such as the United States, Canada, Britain, Australia, and Singapore. By the 1990s the view had changed, and India now hoped that overseas Indians would contribute their skills and resources to 'their country of origin'. Abraham explains the change in the 1990s as a need to respond to the demands of neoliberal globalization and the changes in the caste and class constitution of the diaspora. In 1947 India was territorialized against the overseas Indians who were perceived to be low caste and low class, and in the 1990s India was redefined in nonterritorial terms because of the new diasporas, especially in the United States, that were upper caste and middle class, which Abraham claims represented the 'normative Indian citizen' (Abraham 2014: 78). The overseas Indians that had been an excluded social group were now invited to become diaspora Indians. At the time of independence,

[3] The Hill Country Tamils (also known as Up-country Tamils) in Sri Lanka are Tamils of Indian origin that were brought to Sri Lanka from India by the British to work on plantations there. However, Sri Lanka also has an ancient Hindu Tamil population in the northern and eastern parts, the Īḻam Tamils or Sri Lankan Tamils. From 1983 to 2009, the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) and the Sri Lankan state fought several wars over an independent Īḻam, which caused a large global diaspora of Īḻam Tamils.

Abraham explains, 'India could not afford to have a global diaspora making claims on its nationality when it was one of the first postcolonial states seeking recognition as a new nation state' (Abraham 2014: 99). In the 2001 Indian government diaspora report,[4] double citizenship was recommended to Non-Resident Indians (NRIs). Non-Resident Indians had emigrated after India's independence and 'were invited to return to the Indian state as the exemplary representatives of a new globally prominent and internationally recognized Indian nation' (Abraham 2014: 102). Abraham argues that Hindu nationalism also played a role in this creation of the NRI and the imagination of an Indian diaspora, and certainly, the diasporas, especially parts of the wealthy Indian community in the United States, have been active in their economic support of Hindutva political parties in India (see Chapter 15 by Long in this volume).[5] Abraham argues that Hinduism had come under attack for its normalization of a historically unjust and unequal social hierarchy, especially in the agitation around the implementation of the affirmative action regulations recommended by the Mandal Commission in 1990, and that the success of the Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) could be used to argue that the hierarchy of the Hindu system 'was based on an internal logic that was universally applicable' (Abraham 2014: 105). The Indian Ministry of External Affairs reported in 2018 that there were 30.9 million Overseas Indians, that is, Indians residing outside of India.[6] Many of the 30.9 million Overseas Indians are first generation migrants, but the category Overseas Indians recognizes migrations that have taken place during the last two hundred years. While it is important to be aware of political developments in the history of the idea of an Indian diaspora, the term 'Hindu diasporas' in this volume is not used as a category for analysing the politics of the Indian state, but for analysing an aspect of the worldwide Hindu religious traditions, that is, their spread outside of South Asia through migration and Hinduism as practised outside South Asia by people who are from, or whose ancestors are from, South Asia. The concept of an Indian diaspora is also different from the concept of a Hindu diaspora in several ways. Most importantly, Hindu diaspora is a category defined by religion, and secondly, as already stated, Hindus originate from several nation states beyond the Indian diaspora.

It should also be emphasized that 'diaspora' does not have to refer to a situation of living in a minority situation. Hindus make up the majority in Mauritius,

[4] High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, *Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora*. New Delhi: Indian Council of World Affairs, 2001.

[5] Connecting Hindu religious institutions in the diasporas closely to India has a political dimension as Hindu nationalist organizations have been promoting Hindu India and Hinduism globally and attempting to build connections to the diasporas. Hindu nationalism has promoted diasporic Hinduism as an extension of India, and has taken an active role in promoting diaspora Hindus as Indians. As a Hindu nationalist agenda, this has also led to polarizations and conflicts.

[6] Overseas Indians include Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Christians, Buddhists, and others, but the large majority are Hindus. Raj and Reeves (2009) have suggested that the worldwide Indian diaspora is between 30 and 40 million people.

currently the only country outside of South Asia with a Hindu majority, but Hindus in Mauritius are nevertheless part of the global Hindu diasporas. The Indian origin of the Hindus in Mauritius is an important part of their Hindu identity. The connection to India can be illustrated by how Hindus in Mauritius have established a sacred lake, Ganga Talao, as a major pilgrimage site. The water of the lake is identified with the water of the River Gaṅgā, and along its banks is a *jyotirliṅga* claimed to be the thirteenth *jyotirliṅga* (a symbol of the Hindu god Śiva) and the only one outside of India.[7] The transfer of Gaṅgā water and expansion of the *jyotirliṅga* system beyond India can be understood as attempts to connect Mauritius intimately with the sacred geography of India and not only to actualize their Indian ancestral origins but also to expand the idea of the sacred geography of Hinduism making Hindu sacred space apply to anywhere in the world. When I visited Ganga Talao in May 2022, an enormous Indian flag was flapping in the wind next to the flag of Mauritius, signifying the connection between Hindu sacred geography in India and Mauritius.

Hinduism and Migration

There is significant research literature on Hinduism and migration in a global perspective. However, most studies deal with single locations and only a few books deal with Hindu diasporas in more than one continent (Jacobsen et. al. 2013: 189–356, Rukmani 1999, Vertovec 2000, Younger 2009). A recent book publication studies Hindu diasporas in all the countries in one continent (Jacobsen and Sardella 2020), and a number of important single-country studies have been published (Belle 2017, Bilimoria, Bapat, and Hughes 2015, Burghart 1987, Chazan-Gillig and Ramhota 2023a and 2023b, Collins 1997, Eisenlohr 2006, Jackson and Nesbitt 1993, Kelly 1991, Kumar 2000, Kurien 2007, Lang 2021, Long 2020). The edited volume by Baumann, Luchesi, and Wilke (2003) examines Tamil religion in the German- and Scandinavian-speaking regions of Europe, and Clothey (2006) studies the religious traditions of the Tamil diasporas in Asia and the United States. A few edited volumes have also been published that discuss the plurality of religions in the South Asian diasporas, with important articles on Hindu diasporas (Coward, Hinnels, and Williams 2000, Gallo 2014, Jacobsen and Kumar 2004). Sinha (2011) deals with material religion and commodification in the Hindu diasporas. Articles on Hindu diasporas that focus on religion have often dealt with various themes such as local migration histories, temples, rituals,

[7] The well-known system of twelve *jyotirliṅga*s in India includes the following *liṅga*s: Somanātha and Nāgeśvara in Gujarat, Mallikārjuna in Andhra Pradesh, Mahākāleśvara and Oṅkāreśvara in Madhya Pradesh, Kedārnātha in Uttarakhand, Kāśī Viśvanāth in Uttar Pradesh, Bhīmāśaṅkara, Tryambakeśvara, and Ghṛṣṇeśvara in Maharashtra, Vaidyanātha in Jharkhand, and Rāmeśvara in Tamil Nadu.

festivals, gods and goddesses, iconography, materiality, narratives, organizations, home, caste, Brahmans, ethnicity, hybridity, generational transfer, public representation, the Internet, Hindutva, and more, and they are too numerous to mention here. An early monograph on the global Hindu diasporas was by Steven Vertovec (2000). The book studied Hindus in the Caribbean and Britain. In this book, Vertovec argued, surprisingly, that Hinduism was a diaspora religion like Judaism. Cohen, in an important publication, had stated that religions normally do not constitute diasporas, because religions are usually constituted by many different ethnic groups that do not generally seek a return to a remote 'homeland' (Cohen 1997). Vertovec argued, however, that Hinduism is one of the exceptions and is a diaspora religion like Judaism for the following reasons: first, Hinduism's special connection to India; second, the caste system that, according to him, makes conversion to Hinduism impossible; and third, the fact that so many of the sacred sites of Hinduism are located in India. Vertovec's three arguments for Hinduism being a diaspora religion are probably all invalid. Firstly, as already mentioned, Hindus are not only Indians, but also Nepalese, Sri Lankans, and Balinese. Hindus living in South Asia outside of India are not considered part of the Hindu diaspora, with the exception of the Hill Country Tamils in Sri Lanka. It is therefore a mistake to identify all Hindus with Indian ancestry. Secondly, historically, the spread of the Brahmanical tradition from the north-west corner of India to the rest of South Asia (Bronkhorst 2020) and further to South East Asia in the first millennium of the Common Era points to an eagerness of Brahmans to attract and include new ritual clients. In addition, modern Hindu traditions are not exclusively ethnic traditions, but many of them increasingly attract converts and many Hindu gurus and traditions are eager to gain new followers, also Western ones, and some with a significant international success (see chapters by Lucia and Valpey, 16 and 17, in this volume). Thirdly, the practice in the Hindu diasporas of establishing Hindu sacred sites outside of India and South Asia, which also become sites of pilgrimage travel and festivals, shows that Hindu sacred space is not limited to India or South Asia, but that Hindus establish sacred sites wherever they live (see Chapter 14 by Jacobsen in this volume). Sacralization of sites is a way to relate to the environment. The Hindu gods have moved globally together with the Hindu migrants. Hinduism is therefore better understood not as a diaspora religion in the above sense. Instead, Hindu diasporas refer to the way Hinduism is practised and developed by Hindus living outside of South Asia.

The Hindu diasporas of the modern world are broadly divided into 'old Hindu diasporas' and 'new Hindu diasporas', that is, those that developed before and after the second half of the twentieth century. However, the large presence of Hindu traditions in South East Asia in the first millennium of the Common Era, documented by archaeological and epigraphical material, with some of the largest temples in the world such as Angkor Wat in Cambodia, has raised the question about a possible presence of a pre-modern Hindu diaspora in South East Asia

(see Chapter 1 by Narayanan). The concept 'Greater India' was popular in the early twentieth century and later 'Indianized countries of Southeast Asia' (Coedès 1968) was used to make sense of this historical presence of Hindu culture in South East Asia. To what degree the presence of Hindu religious traditions in ancient Cambodia and Indonesia was a result of migration has been much discussed, but current research considers the circulation of traders and Brahman priests to be the most likely source and not large-scale migration. Indians were seafarers and traders travelling west to the Middle East and Africa and east as far as to Indonesia. Some of these traders might have settled for a long time, but the purpose was probably not migration but trade. However, the size and nature of the settlement of traders are unclear. Those in the Middle East and Africa seem less permanent than those in South East Asia. Some Brahmans travelled with these traders and they probably provided rulers with ideological teachings of social organization. As mentioned, historically, the spread of the Brahmanical tradition from the north-west corner of India to the rest of South Asia and further to South East Asia in the first millennium of the Common Era points to an eagerness of Brahmans to attract and include new ritual clients, and this perhaps explains some of this expansion of the Brahmanical tradition to South East Asia. Most likely, the spread of Sanskritic Hindu traditions to South East Asia was not very different from the spread of these traditions in India (Pollock 2006: 536).

The 'old Hindu diasporas' of the colonial period were related especially to the plantation economies of the European colonial powers, especially British, French, and Dutch. Prohibition of slavery in 1833 by Britain (Slavery Abolition Act 1833 in the parliament of the United Kingdom, with some exceptions eliminated in 1843), in 1848 by France (Proclamation of the Abolition of Slavery in the French Colonies), and in 1863 by the Dutch (in Suriname) created a need for cheap labour to replace slaves in the plantation economies and this was the 'indentured labour system' which attempted to solve this. The transportation of Indians as indentured labour to colonies worldwide followed. Indentured labourers were recruited on five- and ten-year contracts with the possibility to return to India afterwards, but the majority chose to stay after the contracts had ended. Some additional migration also took place. The indentured labour system created a significant Indian diaspora. Mauritius was the first country to receive a significant number of Indians, more than 25,000 by around 1840, but Indians had already been living in Mauritius for a hundred years as domestic workers, craftsmen, and traders. By the time the British took over Mauritius in 1810 some Tamil traders had joined the French elite and were owners of several of the grandest of the early estates (Younger 2013). The Indian diaspora was from the beginning far from a uniform phenomenon. About 1.5 million indentured labourers left India between 1834 and 1917, when the system ended. The *kangani* system which dominated migration to Burma, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka included around four million people and

continued to 1938 (Jain 1989: 162).[8] The largest number of indentured labourers went to Mauritius, British Guyana, Natal in South Africa, and Trinidad (Brown 2006: 30), but many also to Suriname (around 34,000), Fiji (60,000) and also to East Africa but the majoriity here were free migrants. Traders, accountants, managers, and professionals travelled to places Indians had settled. The 'new Hindu diasporas' were caused by the next large-scale migration of Indians/South Asians and its beginning is often dated to 1965 with new immigration laws in the United States. However, 'new Hindu diasporas' refers to diasporas in all Western countries, in Australia and New Zealand, and in the Middle East. There was a change in the scale of migration of Hindus to these parts of the world from the 1960s onwards. Immigration to Britain by Hindus increased in the 1960s with the first public temple opening in 1967. As of 2022 probably more than one million Hindus live in Britain.[9] From 1970 onwards a large number of South Asians have worked in the Middle East and among them not an insignificant number of Hindus. In the United States there are currently probably around 2.5 million Hindus, and in Europe outside of Britain around 1 million. Approximately 70 million Hindus live outside of India, but many of these live in the other countries of South Asia, especially Nepal and Bangladesh, and there are also significant Hindu populations in Sri Lanka (Hill Country Tamils and Īḻam Tamils)[10] and Pakistan. Countries outside of South Asia with the largest Hindu populations in percentage are Mauritius, Fiji, Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago; countries outside of South Asia with more than half a million Hindus are the United States, Indonesia, Britain, Canada, Mauritius, Malaysia, and South Africa.[11]

The Hindu diasporas are made up of different religious traditions such as Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, and Śākta, of regional diasporas such as Tamil, Gujarati, Punjabi, and Bengali and so on, of different national diasporas such as Indian, Nepali, Sri Lankan, or Indonesian (Balinese), and Hindus have also developed separate and new national identities in the various countries they have settled. Quite a few Hindus are also twice migrants. This book tries to capture some of this

[8] The *kangani* system recruited workers mostly from Tamil Nadu and used Indian recruiters who mobilized their own family, village, or caste for workers. The *kangani*s were middle men who recruited and supervised workers at the plantation.

[9] The British Census table 'Religion by country and region, England and Wales, 2019', released 16 December 2021, estimates the number of Hindus in England and Wales to be 983,700. See https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/datasets/populationestimatesbyreligionenglandandwales/.

[10] Hindus living in South Asia outside of India are mostly not considered part of the diaspora. One exception is the Hill Country Tamils living in Sri Lanka who are Tamils of Indian origin and were recruited under the *kangani* system for work on tea plantations. The other Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Īḻam Tamils, are descendants of the ancient Tamil Hindu population on Sri Lanka and are considered diasporic only when settled outside of Sri Lanka.

[11] The strong growth in the number of Hindus in the last hundred years is mainly due to rapid population growth in South Asia and not to conversions. India's population of 1.4 billion (2022; of which around 80 per cent are counted as Hindus) constitutes approximately 20 per cent of the world population. There are around 1.2 billion Hindus in the world.

great plurality. The book does not aim at completeness in an encyclopaedic sense but to treat some of the important geographies and themes. The book also includes analyses of some aspects of the relationship between Hindu diasporas and new followers of Hinduism or 'new Hindus'. The function of Hindu religion is often quite different for these two categories of Hindus, and the interaction, or lack of interaction, between these various forms of Hinduism contributes to an understanding of the Hindu diasporas. The first part of the book concentrates on the major regions in the world in which Hindu diasporas have settled. The second part focuses on specific central themes such as Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, and Śākta traditions in diasporas, the Hindu temple, traditions of sacred sites outside of South Asia, and Hindutva organizations and the diaspora, as well as relations between Hindu diasporas and new followers of Hindu traditions.

Geographies and Major Themes

The first part contains chapters focusing on Hindu diasporas in specific geographical areas. Chapter 1 by Vasudha Narayanan discusses the spread of Hindu traditions from South Asia to areas in South East Asia, especially Cambodia, from the early first millennium of the Common Era. Was this spread of Hindu traditions due to migration, and if so by whom, or was it due to other causes? Researchers on the Hindu traditions in Cambodia have debated this since the late nineteenth century. In her chapter, Narayanan asks: 'Were the strikingly Hindu temples, the Sanskrit inscriptions, and the Indian names adopted because of the power wielded by a Hindu diaspora or were these adopted and adapted by Khmer royalty in consultation with an occasional priest, learned Brahman, or even a wealthy trading population coming from India?' (p. 25). In ancient Cambodia, some people took on Indian names, and Indian systems of writing, Hindu deities, rituals, and temple codes were also adopted and there was extensive trade between South Asia and Cambodia, but who else other than traders went to Cambodia? And did they settle there? Narayanan notes that recent scholarship has emphasized Khmer agency and innovative skills and argues that rather than there being a Hindu diaspora, it was more likely that local people from many levels of society selectively adopted and adapted features of Hindu cultures that enhanced their own quality of life in various ways.

Chapter 2 by Martin Ramstedt looks at identities, migrations, and political mobilization in the colonial and postcolonial periods in South East Asia. He agrees with Vasudha Narayanan in that sizeable Hindu diasporas in South East Asia have been found only since the beginning of British colonial expansion into Asia at large. His chapter shows that the situation of Hindu citizens of contemporary South East Asian states has been shaped to a large extent by colonialism and colonial knowledge production. Colonialism and colonial knowledge

production generated the conditions for the Hindu religious ideology and practices, the impediments to their socio-economic and socio-political status, as well as the personal life trajectories that make up the family histories and identities. Interestingly, Ramstedt notes that only in the Dutch East Indies and its successor state, postcolonial Indonesia, have Indian Hindu diasporas succeeded in engaging in a deeper cultural encounter with members of the autochthonous population, sharing not only a common citizenship but also a common cultural and religious orientation. Ramstedt also warns that the current situation which is characterized by solidification of ethnic and religious identities in India as well as in South East Asia, causes cosmopolitan spaces to shrink drastically. In this regard, he considers the tenuous relationship between Hindus and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia but also in India, because developments in India continue to influence the situation for Hindus in the diasporas.

In the next chapter, on Hindu diasporas in East Asia, Ka-Kin Cheuk investigates inter-Asian diasporic flows, connections, circulations, and convergences related to East Asia. He notes that East Asia has received less attention from scholars in comparative and transregional studies of Hinduism and Hindu diasporas. The Hindu population has continued to increase in East Asia, and particularly in the context of contemporary globalization and transnationalism, there is a need for better understanding of its broader analytical significance. The chapter addresses this knowledge gap by centring the studies of Hinduism and Hindu diasporas in East Asia in an inter-Asian research paradigm. The chapter focuses on locating the diasporic 'nodes' in and of East Asia. He argues that East Asian diasporic nodes, in which he includes Hong Kong and south-east China in East Asia, and Kolkata and Kalimpong in South Asia, are the key sites for a deeper understanding of 'inter-Asian Hinduism', in particular its material meanings.

In Chapter 4, Prea Persaud investigates Hinduism in the Caribbean. The Caribbean was one of the principal areas for the arrival of Indian indentured labour. Over half a million Indians were brought between 1838 and 1920 to the Caribbean, which included Guyana, Trinidad, Jamaica, St. Croix, Guadeloupe, Martinique, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and Grenada. Hinduism in the Caribbean accordingly must be understood in the context of indentured labour and its aftermath. Prea Persaud analyses how the system of indentured labour shaped the religious traditions and society of the Hindu diasporas in the Caribbean. She considers gender, caste, the figure of the *paṇḍit*, and the particulars of the religious traditions and practices such as the 'firepass' or firewalking ceremony, Kālī or Śakti worship, the preponderance of '*jhaṇḍī* flags', and the central religious texts, organizations, worship, and festivals. She shows that Hindus in the Caribbean have managed not only to preserve the traditions of their ancestors but also to make new religious traditions and festivals that sacralize the local landscape and contain particularities due to the Caribbean context.

In Chapter 5, Stuart Earle Strange writes about Hinduism in Suriname. The first indentured Hindustanis disembarked in Suriname in June 1873. By the time indenture was abolished in 1916, 34,304 South Asian migrants had arrived. Strange notes that Surinamese Hinduism must be understood against the backdrop of colonial Caribbean racial slavery, and that race and religion replaced caste as the defining social distinctions in Surinamese Hindu life. At the same time, he argues, Hinduism has also become an ethno-racial religion and an emblem of what collectively distinguishes Hindus from other Asians, Afro-Surinamese, and Amerindians. Because Hindus in Suriname became separated from local Hindu traditions, their Hinduism mirrors wider trends in the Hindu diasporas and has become, argues Strange, a universalist ethnic religion and a notional unity. Strange notes that the deities are identically accessible everywhere through Brahmanical rituals and that each river has become a version of the River Gaṅgā, used as a *tīrtha*. This accessibility, argues Strange, has led Surinamese Hindus to a turn towards the home and the family as the focus of Hindu ritual life.

In his chapter on Hindu diasporas in Africa, Pratap Kumar Penumala discusses the history, characteristics, and developments of Hinduism in Mauritius and Réunion, East Africa, Southern Africa, and West Africa. The basis of Hinduism in Africa is also due, to a large degree, to indentured labour. Penumala notes that the Hindu religious traditions that continue to flourish in Africa vary from region to region. Mauritian Hinduism is 'creole' in nature, West African Hinduism is mostly syncretistic and is driven by the local interests and beliefs of indigenous African people, while East African Hinduism is largely of Vaiṣṇava orientation due to the predominance of the Gujarati merchants, and South African Hinduism is a mixture of strong non-Brahmanical rituals and Brahmanical temples as well as the continuously emerging Vedānta-based new Hindu organizations.

In Chapter 7, on Hindus in Oceania, Purushottama Bilimoria, Jayant Bhalchandra Bapat, Alison Booth, Philip Hughes, and Rajendra Prasad analyse the historiography of the Hindu diasporas in Fiji, Australia, and New Zealand. Fiji was the last country to receive Indian indentured labourers (60,000 arrived from 1879 to 1916). Prasad analyses the importance of the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative and the *Rāmcaritmānas* and Rāmlīlā celebrations for the early migrants in Fiji, the rise of religious groups and temples, and the tragic political developments that led to the migration of many Fijian Hindus to Australia and New Zealand. Fiji was before the coup in 1987 the second country outside of South Asia with a majority Hindu population. Bilimoria, Bapat, and Hughes document and analyse the immigration of Hindus to Australia, their temples and festivals, Hindu organizations, and women's rituals and conclude that Hindus are contributing significantly to the religious pluralism in Australia. Booth, writing on New Zealand, informs us that Hindus were few until the 1980s. Booth analyses the diversity of Hindus' organizations and gatherings, and distinguishes between three waves of expansion of Hinduism in New Zealand, starting with the Wellington Indian Association, its

growth and variations, and the presence of global Hindu organizations that now support a variety of Hindu religious practices in New Zealand.

In Chapter 8, Vasudha Narayanan presents Hindu diasporas in the United States. With a Hindu population of 2.5 million it is one of the largest outside of South Asia, perhaps only the island of Bali in Indonesia has a larger Hindu population (*c.*4.5 million). The Hindu population in the United States has probably the highest level of household income of any Hindus in the world. Narayanan presents their immigration history, with an emphasis on early-twentieth-century Hindu immigration and especially memories of early female immigrant experiences, and reflects on temple and community building and performing arts after 1965. Temple building in the United States was unique, with the opening of many monumental temples built from the ground up in Indian classical temple architecture from the 1970s onwards, and indeed temple spaces became the main area for religious activities, which reduced the importance of homes and public spaces. Narayanan notes the great diversity of temples from neighbourhood shrines to the large prestige temples. Interestingly, Narayanan notes that the most significant aspect in looking at the temple and community activities is the extraordinary focus on the performing arts, and the mostly marginal importance of yoga and meditation. The most popular activities in temples are the 'cultural programmes', and Narayanan elaborates on the importance of *bharatanāṭyam* dance, which she argues has emerged as the prime carrier of transgenerational and transnational culture in the diaspora. Finally, Narayanan discusses some political controversies.

In the next chapter, Knut A. Jacobsen analyses important features of the Hindu diasporas in Europe. Around two million Hindus with South Asian ancestry live in Europe, mainly in the countries of western Europe. The chapter starts by describing some of the diversity of these Hindu diasporas and the research literature. Jacobsen notes that of any of the continents other than Asia, Europe has the most complex relationship with India and Hinduism, and the chapter reviews some of these encounters. The chapter thereafter analyses migration histories and the history of the institutionalization of Hinduism in Europe and, finally, notes four characteristics of Hinduism in Europe: diversity, centrality of temples, sacralization of sites, and the predominance in many countries of the Hindu traditions of the Īḻam Tamils.

Chapters 10 and 11 deal with two of the largest Hindu global diasporas, the Tamil Hindu and the Gujarati Hindu diasporas. Both groups have a significant global presence and one or the other of them constitutes the majority Hindu population in a number of countries. The dominance of the Gujaratis in several countries and places even misled some researchers to think of the Gujarati Hindu diaspora as representing the global Hindu diaspora as such (Geaves 2007).[12]

[12] I experienced this myself when presenting a paper focusing on the Tamil Hindu diaspora at an international conference, and the respondent to my paper, to my surprise, used his whole response to argue that the Hindu diaspora was in reality just a Gujarati diaspora.

The Tamils have been, and continue to be, the main Hindu temple builders in many of the countries they have settled in, and the preservation of the Tamil language and culture is a main feature in the transference of their religion in the diaspora. Pierre-Yves Trouillet notes that the Tamil Hindus are present in all continents but that they constitute a diverse population in terms of regional origin, castes, and classes, and migratory history. In view of this diversity, Pierre-Yves Trouillet discusses whether it is at all relevant to speak of a 'global Hindu Tamil diaspora'. Trouillet notes that despite the diversity, the use of the term 'global Tamil diaspora' is 'becoming more and more performative' (p. 251). He argues that the one thing shared among the Tamil Hindus in the world is their religiosity. Tamil Hinduism adds 'a concrete and ritual tone to this sense of belonging for Tamils all over the world' (p. 252) and it relies on a few cultural specificities, which leads to a socio-religious ethnicization. Tamil Hindu temples with their transnational network of priests from India and Sri Lanka have become a significant, and to some degree dominant, element in many Hindu diasporas.

The Gujarati Hindu diasporas are, like the Tamils, spread around the whole world. Like the Tamils, the overseas travel of Gujarati traders has a history stretching back to long before the colonial era. Gujarati seafarers were among the pioneers of travel to the western parts of the Indian Ocean. However, the early migrations of Gujarati traders to East Asia, East Africa, and Central Asia were circular and temporary. Settlements abroad were mainly during the nineteenth century and after. Some Gujaratis worked as indentured labourers, but mostly they did not work on plantations but as free labourers and engineers, and mainly they set up businesses. The decolonization process in Africa forced an exodus of Hindus, and the majority of those were Gujaratis. Most of them settled in Britain, Canada, and the United States, and some also in Portugal. This migration was characterized by families and family networks. Inês Lourenço, in Chapter 11 on the global Gujarati Hindu diasporas, focuses on the reproduction of religious and cultural practices of these communities. They are mostly Vaiṣṇavas and have joined movements with regional roots associated with Gujarat, the most emblematic being the Svāminārāyaṇa, but Inês Lourenço notes how researchers on the Gujarati diasporas have emphasized ecumenical, rationalized Vaiṣṇava *bhakti*, and mistakenly relegated vernacular Hinduism to a secondary role. Inês Lourenço argues that both are part of the religious everyday practices of Gujarati Hindus in the diasporas. In her chapter she further discusses the role of miraculous events, everyday concerns with the evil eye (*najar*) and ghosts (*bhūt*s), new ways of practising religion, and new social and gender concepts.

While Chapter 10 examined a dominant Śaiva tradition and Chapter 11 a mainly Vaiṣṇava tradition, Chapter 12 analyses Śākta traditions in the global Hindu diasporas. The Hindu goddesses have moved with the migrating Hindus and they now have a worldwide presence in Hindu homes and temples. Tracy Pintchman examines the numerous ways that Hindu Śākta traditions have

been transported, modified, and adapted to new homelands in contemporary times. Pintchman notes that female devotees in Hindu goddess temples in a variety of countries and regions outside of South Asia often have more important ritual roles than in Śākta temples in India, and notes that some goddesses become more important in the diaspora. The chapter further examines the many different rituals associated with Śākta traditions in the global diaspora and shows how they both reproduce traditions and reinterpret and reconstitute them in light of the diaspora situation.

In Chapter 13, Martin Baumann and Annette Wilke analyse the central public religious institution in many of the Hindu diasporas, the Hindu temple. The authors note the variety of Hindu temples in the diaspora, which is as astonishing as it is in South Asia. The in-depth chapter argues that diasporic Hindu temple cultures strike a balance between strategies of religious authenticity and maintenance on the one hand and change and innovation on the other. The chapter gives many examples from all over the world and analyses the ritual, cultural, social, communal, and representational functions of the Hindu temples in the diaspora.

Chapter 14 analyses Hindu sites of pilgrimage (*tīrthas*) in the Hindu diasporas. The sacred geography of Hinduism is no longer limited to an Indian or South and South East Asian sacred geography but encompasses the whole world. As Hindus from South Asia have migrated to the rest of the world, they have sacralized the landscapes where they settle. Every river can become a River Gaṅgā. The seven hills of the Veṅkaṭeśvara temple in Tirumala can be discovered, in theory, anywhere in the world, or the hills may even be constructed next to a newly built Veṅkaṭeśvara temple. Hindu divinities communicate with devotees wherever they live and are present all over the world, and not only in South Asia. Just as all rivers may become the Gaṅgā, the deities are accessible everywhere. In this chapter, Knut A. Jacobsen suggests that making Hindu sacred sites is one of the ways religious traditions now identified as Hindu have been expanding historically in South Asia and now expand worldwide with the diasporas. The chapter suggests a typology of Hindu pilgrimage sites in the Hindu diaspora: places that have become pilgrimage sites because of special natural features such as a *svayambhū* phenomenon; because of the temples at the sites; because they are connected to gurus or other sacred persons; and Marian pilgrimage shrines that have become objects of Hindu pilgrimage travel.

In Chapter 15, Jeffery Long examines the Hindutva movement in the Hindu diasporas, with a focus on the United States. He starts out by discussing four possible definitions of Hindutva but discards all four definitions, arguing that they are essentialist and unfalsifiable and therefore incapable of serving as useful analytical tools for understanding the movement that goes by the name 'Hindutva'. Instead, he suggests a definition of Hindutva as the ideology of Hindu nationalism and the claim that India is an inherently Hindu nation, or a *Hindu Rāṣṭra*. Hindu nationalism is a political ideology and is not identical with

Hinduism, whose adherents have a wide range of political views, and in the Hindu diasporas there are organizations which support Hindu nationalism and organizations which strongly oppose it. The idea of a global Hindu community has come to problematize a simple identification of Hindu nationalism with a parochial movement for Hindu supremacy in India, writes Long, but Hindutva has nevertheless increasingly emerged as a global movement. Long answers the question about how Hindutva relates to this global context by examining some of the Hindu religious organizations in the diaspora in the Unites States, and concludes that the Hindu diasporas are as polarized and politically divided as the Hindu community in India.

In Europe and America, the Hindu proselytizing gurus had arrived before the large number of migrants who constitute the Hindu diasporas. The followers of gurus and the diaspora Hindus have represented two quite different versions or aspects of Hinduism. In Chapter 16, Amanda Lucia takes up the issue of Hindu guru movements and race. She is interested in the relationship between the Hindu guru movements in the West and the Hindu diasporas, in particular the 'Indian' versus 'Western' division found in many of the guru movements. She argues that the first Hindu gurus in the United States operated within Orientalist divisions between India and the West and they mobilized Orientalist cultural stereotypes to justify their proselytizing missions. She thereafter shows that those divisions have continued to influence global guru movements in the present. To do so, she uses the archives of print media sources to access the ways in which the proselytizing gurus were perceived and received by Western audiences. Lucia examines published devotee accounts to understand the detailed descriptions of the daily operations of the devotional community and how guru communities operated. She concludes that the divisions of 'Indians' and 'Westerners' can be understood as a mutually performed xenophobia—on the one side based on race and on the other side based on caste.

ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness), or the Hare Krishna movement, has been the most successful among the Hindu guru movements in the West to attract mixed congregations of 'Indians' and 'Westerners'. This is partly due to their success among South Asian Hindus living in the diasporas. But this success has created a tension between Hinduism as heritage and identity and the missionizing foundation of ISKCON. In the final chapter of the book, Kenneth Valpey discusses the interactional contours between the Hindu diaspora and ISKCON. He argues that a shared atmosphere of culture has been created by ISKCON that has come to be occupied by both Hindu diasporas and non-Indians, and which has been able to accommodate the differing needs and expectations of these two groups, but that points of tension and contention have also emerged to varying degrees and in various locations. In particular, there is a tension between the comfortable religion of the Hindu diaspora shaped by the attitudes of the middle-class status quo and the ISKCON missionary edge of

critique against the multiple ills of a spiritually impoverished world. This critique was a major factor in attracting young Western followers to the movement. Valpey considers these to be points of *creative* tension and concludes that the strong presence of diaspora Hindus in many ISKCON communities makes the challenge of finding a balance particularly acute.

Together, the chapters in this book show some of the global presence of the Hindu diasporas and some of the dynamic developments in multiple geographical spaces. Analysing specific spaces and themes, the chapters of the book offer a foundation for understanding the Hindu traditions in some of their global diasporic contexts and the dynamic developments around the world.

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PART I

GEOGRAPHIES OF HINDU DIASPORAS

1

'Fortune, Success, Well-being, Victory!'

Connections between India and Cambodia in the First Millennium CE

Vasudha Narayanan

'Fortune, success, happiness, victory' (Śrī Siddhi Svasti Jaya); so begins K. 826, an inscription dated 877–878 CE in Hariharālaya, near Siem Reap, Cambodia. This classical Sanskrit invocation at the beginning of the inscription speaks of the familiarity that the patron had with Indian cultural, especially Hindu ritual vocabulary. Angkor Wat, when built in the twelfth century CE, was the largest Viṣṇu temple; indeed, it is also 'generally considered to be the largest such structure erected before the twentieth century AD' (Fletcher et al. 2015). A Buddhist temple now, its picture graces the national flag of Cambodia. The longest Sanskrit inscription in the world was composed under the watch of Rājendravarman (r. 944–968 CE) and situated in the Śiva temple in Pre Rup. Outside the Cambodian Embassy in Washington DC, we find a model of a signature sculpture depicting the story of the churning of the ocean of milk. This story, relatively minor in India, is seen in abundance in Hindu and some Buddhist temples all over Cambodia and in temples located in former Khmer territories. The churning story is also depicted on a panel on the east side of Angkor Wat and, measuring 49 metres, is said to be the largest bas-relief in the world.

How and why did all this come to be? It is obvious that there were strong connections between the Indian subcontinent and South East Asia, and that global trade was significant from several centuries BCE from Rome and Greece in the west to Indonesia in the east. The discussion of cultural exchanges is often contested territory; material evidences surface over centuries and our knowledge is, at any given point, incomplete. Asymmetries in power in the historical periods as well as in the production of knowledge then and now, along with nationalisms, and valorizing local cultures have led to a changing Venn diagram of ideas and perspectives on relationships between South East and South Asia.[1]

We do know that there was considerable interaction between the lands on both sides of the Bay of Bengal, including that of trade. South East Asia had a highly

[1] For a discussion on early globalization connected with South East Asia, see Stark (2017).

Vasudha Narayanan, *'Fortune, Success, Well-being, Victory!': Connections between India and Cambodia in the First Millennium CE* In: *Hindu Diasporas*. Edited by: Knut A. Jacobsen, Oxford University Press.
DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198867692.003.0002

developed knowledge of shipbuilding (Manguin et al. 2011: xviii). India had that sweet spot in between Europe and Africa on the one hand and South East Asia on the other, and ports such as Musiri on the south-west coast of India and Arikamedu, Poompuhar, etc, on the east were very active in the first few centuries of the first millennium CE. Despite several obstacles that go along with sea travel, including pirates and inclement weather, trade flourished; the insatiable thirst for silks, spices, and exotica led to movement of people and ideas; and along with peacocks, other animals, and stories, philosophies and cultures travelled through the known world.

The interactions with South East Asia resulted in rulers and some states adopting and adapting what we would today call 'Hinduism' as their official religion, and this involved large investments of human and economic resources in the building of 'prestige' temples in South East Asia, mega-carvings of Hindu deities and narratives, and selective adaptation of stories from the Indian epics. Did this selective choice and adaptation of temple designs, texts of law, deities, etc., come about through Hindus moving from India and settling in South East Asia? Were there 'rogue' princes from India who worked with locals in seizing power, or did adventurers, traders, and skilled people going perhaps both ways? Or, did the ships carrying goods prized in different parts of the world bring traders who may have settled in South East Asia? This chapter offers some perspectives on these questions of whether there was a 'Hindu diaspora' or sustained interaction and perhaps intermarriages between people coming from South East and South Asia.

Before we discuss the efflorescence of cultural synergy that arises from cultures in cordial contact with each other, a few caveats are in order. The first is the anachronistic use of terms such as 'Hindu' and 'India' in this chapter. I will be using 'Hinduism' as including sectarian traditions such as Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva, and having an expansive, open, and pluralistic network of texts and practices of some well-known and many local deities. There is an affiliation to a textual corpus which includes but is not limited to the Vedas, epics, Purāṇas, and Dharmaśāstras, as well as a considerable amount of vernacular literature, and overlapping and similar practices like life-cycle rituals and public rituals like coronation, as well as a shared vocabulary of practices like identifying local places with sacred sites in India. While birth-groups are significant in South Asia, they are curiously transformed and possibly diluted in South East Asia.

Cambodia

Chinese texts used the names 'Funan' and 'Zhenla' (*c.* first century CE to *c.*802 CE) to refer to the earliest kingdoms in the land that eventually came to be called Cambodia; and 802 CE is the traditional date for the beginning of the Angkorian

period in Cambodian history. It is after 802 that the kingdom gets the name of Kambuja (born of Kambu), and at its height, included territories that extended to modern-day Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam, and Malaysia. Although there were several Buddhist kings, Cambodia or, specifically, the lands that were eventually included in the Khmer territories, from the beginning of the Common Era to about the fourteenth century CE, seem strikingly more Hindu in their expressive arts and inscriptions and have more Indian connections than the neighbouring kingdoms in the first millennium CE. The Khmer people, as did most of the people in South East Asia, encountered Buddhism and Hinduism, and the cultures of India and China, on their own terms in their own lands, and there has been, from about the beginning of the Common Era, an involvement with and agency in choosing Hindu names, texts, rituals, and art, temple building, ruling organizations, and writing from the Indian sub-continent. Coedès and other French scholars have called this process, 'Indianization'; other scholars have, as we will see soon, rejected this concept and given more weightage to local autonomy, and questioned the importance of other factors which led to strong connections with India.

Were the strikingly Hindu temples, the Sanskrit inscriptions, and the Indian names adopted because of the power wielded by a Hindu diaspora or were these adopted and adapted by Khmer royalty in consultation with an occasional priest, learned Brahman, or even a wealthy trading population coming from India? These contentious issues have been debated since the late nineteenth century and are central to our discussion in this chapter. In many of the chapters in this book we are looking at Hindus who came from, or whose ancestors came from, India. Sometimes, as in the case of the United States we see a movement of people and a movement of ideas from India and the two may be, at times, independent of each other. We can raise similar questions with Cambodia: was there ever a medium or large-scale migration from the sub-continent or was it largely a movement of texts, customs, and ideas which royalty and nobility picked and chose? If so, how or why did these ideas come to matter so much that a considerable amount of human resources and wealth from the exchequer was poured into them?

This chapter will briefly look at over a hundred years of scholarly discussions on these issues. In the second part of this chapter, we will see if the material culture in Cambodia can tell us anything about who was responsible for the creation of a Hindu ethos in the courts and in the temples. How did all this come to be? We will consider whether there were Indian Bauddha, Vaiṣṇava, and Śaiva migrants, religious specialists adept in tantra, a Hindu diaspora, or whether it was all done by a transient population engaged in commerce. Without any active Hindu proselytizing or military expeditions two thousand years ago that we know about, or Hindu religious personnel who had come with evangelical zeal to convert, it is quite striking how so many ideas, customs, and behaviour came to be adapted by the Khmer royalty and nobility.

Our answers can only be tentative given a lack of the proverbial 'smoking gun'. Manuscripts have been lost or destroyed; a lot of monuments, vandalized. There has, however, been considerable scholarship for over a hundred years, and current scholarship emerging from Cambodia and many universities around the world is vibrant; monuments have been restored, seafaring and trade routes mapped and interpreted, and LIDAR technology deployed to peel back the layers of material culture on the one hand and our ignorance on the other; in short, our understanding of the past is exponentially greater than it was in earlier decades.

Theories about Early Cambodian Encounters with India

Since the late nineteenth century, scholarship on South East Asia has passed through several distinct phases. Until the nineteenth century, European perspectives were dismissive; an unnamed professor of the College de France is reported to have said in 1861 that 'the Indian countries situated beyond the Ganges hardly deserve the attention of history' (quoted by Coedès and reported by Kulke 1990: 8). South East Asia was anything but marginal in world economy and in cultural transmission; as Kulke (1990: 15) remarks, '[D]iscoveries in North-Eastern Thailand prove that during the prehistoric period at least continental South-East Asia was a centre of cultural progress diffusion rather than a stagnant backwater.' In short, since the last part of the twentieth century, there has been a growing recognition of South East Asia's local cultures and technological achievements even prior to contact with the Indian subcontinent. This recognition comes after several decades in the mid-twentieth century when there was a strong consensus, primarily coming from French and Indian scholarship that Cambodia had been 'Indianized'. This term itself had a wide range of meanings and came from different socio-political contexts.

There were, of course, many obvious reasons for scholars to arrive at the Indianization theory, but I would like to highlight one issue that has not been discussed much: that the motivations for the French and Indian scholars to emphasize the idea of 'Indianization' were different. European scholarship came from a long tradition where South East Asia had been intentionally ignored and India was generally seen as the outpost for historical culture. Countries in South East Asia were not considered to be interesting culturally or politically when compared to the Indian subcontinent or China; hence, European scholars (and therefore, their colonies) did not research or write about them. Kulke writes that 'in regard to the estimation of South-East Asia by European scholars the Ptolemaic world view was still alive in mid-19th century' (1990: 9). One strategy to make studies in South East Asia acceptable seems to tag the area to the Indian subcontinent (Kulke 1990: 9), to give some credibility to the area studies.