NEW HOMELANDS

Hindu Communities in Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, South Africa, Fiji and East Africa

PAUL YOUNGER

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For Cathy, Miriam, and Nathan,
who traveled with me
to all these wonderful places

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Contents

Introduction, 3

Story One Mauritius: A Parallel Society, 19

Story Two Guyana: Invented Traditions, 55

Story Three Trinidad: Ethnic Religion, 95

Story Four South Africa: Reform Religion, 125

Story Five Fiji: A Segregated Society, 167

Story Six East Africa: Caste Religion, 199

Conclusion, 231

Notes, 249

References, 271

Index, 282

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Introduction

When the colonial slave trade, and then slavery itself, were abolished early in the nineteenth century, the British Empire brazenly set up a new system of trade using Indian rather than African laborers. The new system of "indentured" labor was supposed to be different from slavery, because the "indenture" or contract was written for an initial period of five years and involved fixed wages and some specified conditions of work. From the workers' point of view, the one redeeming feature of the system was that many of their workmates spoke their language and came from the same area of India. Because this allowed them to develop some sense of community, by the end of the initial five years, most of the Indian laborers chose to stay in the land to which they had been taken. In time that land became the place in which the Indian laborers joined with others to build a new homeland.

The places to which the indentured workers were taken were corners of the British Empire that had been acquired almost accidentally and for which there were no clear plans. Some were tropical enclaves, and the capitalist assumption of the day was that if they could get cheap labor, these were good places for growing sugarcane. In East Africa, the need for labor was different, as there the indentured laborers were used to build a railway deep into the interior. At the beginning of the period of indentureship, the British scheme was that they would recruit individual workers from the heavily populated agricultural areas of North and South India, and

send them by ship from the ports of Calcutta and Madras respectively. For the somewhat different need in East Africa, they decided to recruit from among the experienced railway workers of the Punjab. This indentured labor scheme was really a form of quasi-slavery, which has been thoroughly studied (Tinker 1974; Lal 1983, 2000; Desai and Vahed 2007). Our interest is not in the indentureship itself, but in the communities the workers were able to develop in these new locations.

In these situations, most of the workers arrived without any family, and the building of community had to start from that base. The workers were understood to have signed a binding contract for five years, and were assigned by the colonial authorities to a plantation or, in the case of East Africa, to a railway gang. The arrangements on the plantations were adapted from the era of slavery wherein crowded barracks were provided as housing and workers were not free to change their masters. The capitalist nature of the new arrangement was, however, different in that the owners of the plantations generally kept their distance, and the workers developed their social life as they saw fit. Some of the workers had been able to form lasting friendships (called nostalgically *jahaji bhai* or "ship brother") during the long sea voyage, and most quickly formed simple forms of community with those who spoke the same language during their years in the workers' quarters. By the time they became free citizens at the end of five years, they were in a position to engage with others in the society, and the challenge of community building began in earnest.

The Others in the Society

The indentureship story begins in the middle of the nineteenth century during the latter part of the colonial era, and it continues into the present with the descendants of the original workers now living in a mixed society as citizens of new nation states. British colonial representatives were important in how that story took shape at the beginning, but they had almost disappeared from the story by the time the new nations were formed in the 1960s and 1970s. The non-British people living in each location when the Indian workers arrived were a bit like the Indians in that they were still trying to discern their new identity under British rule, but today it is primarily the non-British people and the Indians that work together to define the postcolonial society they share.

In these settings, the British colonial figures were not the aggressive imperialists found in India with their overeager armies, pompous administrators, and orientalizing cultural arguments about the inferiority of Indian culture. The colonial authorities who ended up in these relatively distant

corners of the Empire were those who had not made it to the major centers of power. In these locations, the government officials, capitalists or planters, and missionaries joined together to uphold what they could of the Empire, but the colonialism found in these locations was of a derivative form and did not include the clear cultural agendas found in places such as India. Most of the missionaries were opposed to the indenture system and the brutality it introduced into the lives of these people, and the government officials, while willing to serve the capitalist interests of the planters, showed little interest in introducing the whole population to British styles of education or to British forms of government. In these settings, the prevailing British attitude toward the Indians seemed to be that these people had suffered a lot, and it was a relief to see that they were showing some cultural creativity and were busy getting their festivals and other religious activities organized. As independence approached in each location, and the well-organized Indian community began to take a variety of initiatives, the British wondered if they had underestimated these people and should do something to prevent them from taking a leadership role. In the end, such thoughts were too late, and the agents of colonialism left these locations with many issues unresolved.

The other non-British population in these settings was different in each situation, but they were all people who had once been slaves or were deeply dislocated by colonial rule. The makeup of other groups in each situation will be described later, but I want to note here that their relationship with the Indians depended to some extent on the relative numbers of the two groups, and whether or not the non-Indian group was still in its traditional geographical location. In the case of Mauritius, the Indian numbers would end up much larger than those of all the other communities combined, and in the cases of South Africa and East Africa, the Indian numbers would be much smaller than those of the Africans. In Guyana, Trinidad, and Fiji, the numbers of the Indians and the non-Indians were very similar. In Mauritius, Guyana, and Trinidad, almost all the population was new to the area, whereas in South Africa, East Africa, and Fiji, the native population was in its traditional home and looked on the Indians as recent arrivals. While it is important to recognize these differences as we examine the relationship between these two communities in these culturally pluralistic societies, it is also important to remember that during the colonial period, both the Indian and non-Indian communities were dislocated and searching for identities. In these settings, both the Indians and the non-Indians now consider themselves part of a postcolonial society that has undertaken to find its new identity.

The ways in which the social interaction of the colonial and postcolonial eras worked appear at first glance to be opposites of one another. It would

appear that during the colonial era the Indians were interacting primarily with the British and are now interacting almost exclusively with the other group in their pluralistic social setting. A better way to understand the situation, however, is to recognize that during the colonial era the different groups may have pretended that they were interacting primarily with the British, but on a day-to-day basis, they were often interacting extensively with one another. In the colonial situation, this interaction was hardly acknowledged and was a kind of indirect interaction. Because of this indirect style, there were seldom confrontations, and the two communities were able to develop shared language patterns and other forms of cultural hybridity without a lot of debate. Once the approach of independence threatened to change that arrangement, the confrontation of the two groups within the realm of politics became quite complex, but the undefined cultural arrangements continued. As late as 1995/96 and 2000 when I was conducting interviews, Indians were aware that the cultural arrangements they had with the other groups in their society were still evolving, and they were cautious about defining them, but they did recognize that those cultural arrangements are central to their new postcolonial identity.

The Indian approach to the pluralistic nature of their society in these locations is highly ambivalent. On the one hand, some seem apologetic for the fact that as the last major group added to the social complex, they are in some sense the primary cause of the social pluralism. In this context, they often emphasize the fact that it was an arbitrary British decision that chose to place Indian laborers in the situation, and that it was that decision that made the society pluralistic. Looking at the situation in a somewhat different way, others emphasize how close they came to losing their culture and how thankful they are that the pluralistic nature of the society allowed their elders to search their memories and come up with a distinctive religious tradition, so that they can now leave that as a heritage for their children. There was indeed a loss of culture involved in the move to these locations, and they see it as important that there was an opportunity to recover from that loss before moving on to the new situation. Moreover, finally, almost all Indians now seem proud of the "newness" of their new identity. While they do not highlight the fact that cultural borrowings are a part of their new identity, they do acknowledge how much they have learned in the new situation and affirm the fact that pluralism is an essential part of their new identity. While these three assertions could be taken to be mildly contradictory, and they do sometimes form the basis for disagreements among Indians in these settings, when taken together, they also reflect the range of cultural perspectives people living in postcolonial societies think through as they work out their cultural futures.

New Homelands

In listening to the Hindu storytellers in each location, I was struck by how determined they were to convince me that they had established a new religious tradition in their new homeland. At first, I did not recognize how distinctive the cultural pattern underlying this claim was, and it might be helpful to explain the logic that initially led my interpretive efforts down two not-so-helpful tracks. My first mistake was to think that this claim was unique to each local situation. I was, at the time, concentrating on the particular features of each local story, and, in each case, the physical setting was very different from any other, and the other social group they were sharing the environment with was unique to that location. Recognizing that the religious tradition they were proud of was in certain ways a response to that physical setting and the encounter with that other social group, I tended to take the claim of special creativity to refer to the uniqueness of that setting. Having heard very similar claims in a number of locations, however, I began to wonder if I was missing something. At this point, I made a second mistake and began to wonder if these claims about new traditions were variations on some kind of primordial Hindu claim one might hear in India. On looking at the six different stories, however, I realized that, while they shared something in common, it was not a primordial claim. In each case, the claim involved an analysis of the specific history of that specific location. I soon realized that what I was hearing was a historical claim. These people had struggled in their situation for generations, and now that they had come up with a sense of community and purpose, they were prepared to make the historical claim that they had developed an appropriate religious tradition for their specific community.

The pattern of this historical claim is quite clear. In each case, they describe how they went through a time of cultural crisis when it seemed they had lost their cultural heritage. They then describe how they discovered that they were a community that had survived and that seemed destined to have an identity in this new location. Then came a period of experimentation as people drew from their memories symbols they thought would help in the rebuilding of their culture. Now, finally, they find themselves in a position to make the claim that their memory of their homeland is correct and that their adaptation of that memory provides a special basis for their new religious tradition.

I have called this distinctive sense of religious identity the sense of a "new homeland." In this context, a new homeland is a set of rituals, values, and mythic stories that people agree will define their identity. The authority for this set of traditions is that they are understood as memories of a distant homeland,

but the context in which they constitute a religious tradition is the new context in which people are sharing with others in the creation of a new social order. Although the memory bank on which the new homeland drew was once a rich resource, with people contributing whatever they could from their caste background and their region of India, the memories actually used in the formulation of the new tradition were a select subset of that original memory bank. The memories used were those that had been passed along and modified to fit the needs and the imaginations of the early generations living in this new setting. The new aspect of the tradition was not that it borrowed from other local traditions or glorified the physical features of the new setting, but that it defined the Hindu identity in terms of the locally shared culture. Because the cultural context was a postcolonial one in which no primordial pattern rules, the creators of the Hindu tradition, like the creators of the other traditions within the society, were well aware that their primary responsibility was to create a tradition that all within the local society could understand. While the content of the new tradition was homeland myth, the structure of the religious community that was formed was totally new and defined in terms of the locally relevant social categories.[1]

It might be helpful to contrast the new homeland culture pattern with the two other primary culture patterns in places where one finds Hindu traditions. We will attempt to show first of all how the new homeland pattern differs from the culture pattern of the Indian subcontinent, and then how the new homeland pattern differs from the one now developing in the Hindu communities of Europe and North America.

The new homeland pattern must be contrasted first of all with the unselfconscious sense Indians have about the culture patterns of the subcontinent. Although generations of Western observers have written copious descriptions of India's culture(s), Indians themselves tend to take these culture patterns for granted. They are understood as timeless forms and are not thought of as created by human activity. While in recent years some groups have made frantic efforts to protect Hindu culture, most Indians picture their cultural heritage as something that, while flexible and organic in certain ways, is a given that human beings are not expected to determine. By contrast, the cultures of these six new homelands are described in the language of postcolonial discourse. In describing their culture, people in these settings regularly refer to the creativity of heroic historical figures. Sometimes they can attach names to the figures and sometime they cannot, but they speak of people who suffered profoundly, and people who when they were faced with sickness and death were able to dredge up from their memory the technique for producing a trance-induced presence of a goddess or an inspirational verse of

the *Rāmcharitmānas*. As the story goes on, other heroic figures are described as warding off some kind of false teaching, and still others with seizing the opportunity to give the Hindus a voice in the new sociopolitical order. A tradition was slowly developed, and its authority is now reiterated in the ritual of the community, and taught to the next generation in a systematic way.

In India, the culture is set within a cosmic landscape. This landscape is elaborately described in the Purāna texts, but is understood in everyday terms as coextensive with the boundaries of the subcontinent. Caste groups and individuals are more or less free within the context of this landscape to practice whatever rituals they come in contact with. In the new homeland pattern, culture is associated not with a cosmic landscape but with a community of persons who share a common destiny. They share a common destiny not only because of the historical event of indentureship, but also because the experience of culture-loss left them with the desperate need to create cultural forms and make them into a heritage for their children. With the arrival of independence, the threat of a second culture-loss gave them a new need to define their destiny and to tie it more closely to the community of whose history they are now a part. In this setting, ritual is defined by, and a compulsory part of, community life.

In India, people look back into a cultural heritage that is richly diverse and allows the individual to explore a wide range of religious practices and beliefs. While family and caste duties must be performed, there is no further obligation on an individual to look to the future and help define a group with a shared religious identity and a common destiny. In the new homeland cultural pattern, the religious practice is defined by the future. A foundation is established by means of a sharing of homeland memories, but when that time of sharing is completed the foundation is given a mythic form and the community looks forward. As the community looks to the future, the next generation is carefully instructed in the agreed-upon understanding of the Indian heritage and taught to participate in the open cultural exchange of the postcolonial society. While in India, the fundamentalism one might encounter would not usually have to do with prescribed religious practice or belief, but with a cultural custom such as "no kissing on the Bollywood screen," in the new homeland arrangement, it is the opposite in that Hindu religious practices (and to a lesser extent beliefs) tend to be carefully prescribed, but culture is recognized as a shared social environment. The Hindu component of the new homeland is carefully defined, but it is designed in a form that makes it possible for it to be shared with others in an open cultural environment. Precisely because postcolonial culture is open,[2] Hindus in these settings feel they need well-defined religious traditions in a way that their ancestors in the subcontinent never needed to worry about.

The differences between the new homeland cultural pattern found in these six locations and the cultural patterns found within the Hindu communities of Europe and North America go unrecognized at first, because we tend to think of them all as diaspora communities.[3] The word "diaspora" is now used so generally to describe all kinds of population shifts that we do not even ask if there are significant differences between the diaspora of one century and that of another, or a diaspora in one part of the world and that in another (Clarke et al. 1990; Parekh et al. 2003; Brown 2006). Observing the Indian diasporas of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries more closely, we recognize, of course, that there are many important differences between these two migrations of Hindu persons. The earlier migration for the most part involved individuals recruited by a colonial authority, who set them down in a country of which they had little foreknowledge. The colonial authority defined their work, and the social environment was predetermined. Only gradually did they recognize how fortunate they were to share a social identity with the other Indian workers and to be able to create for themselves a cultural enclave from within which they could work to help define the new society of the postcolonial era. On the other hand, the Hindus that arrived in the West, and particularly in the United States after the 1960s, came of their own volition, along with their families, and only after they had determined that this move offered them the greatest economic opportunity. What they tended to find, especially in the United States, was that while they found work quickly, employment patterns meant that they were scattered widely within a complex society. They had to work hard if they wanted to create an Indian community from among those of various castes and various language groups living in their vicinity. There were opportunities for cultural development, but the host culture was well established and had specific roles in which minority or ethnic culture was expected to express itself.[4]

In the United States of the latter part of the twentieth century, it was possible for Hindus with professional skills and business experience to prosper quickly. With the prevailing atmosphere of religious pluralism making the building of temples relatively easy, there was an initial inclination to build grand and impressive structures. In order to make this vision come about quickly, in most urban areas a committee or board of the most highly successful Hindus was brought together, and from their diverse religious backgrounds an eclectic vision was created. The memory-sorting process within this group tended to be brief and formal, and architects and religious figures from India often played a central role in defining the religious vision of the temple. While, in the new homeland pattern, community developed first and each generation added to the authority of the religious tradition, in the US pattern, religious

institutions were built first and religious communities came together as people were drawn to an institution and the teachers associated with it.

In the new homeland pattern, the newness of the religious tradition is emphasized. The tradition is new historically, because of the break with tradition caused by the now mythologized event of indentureship. People's lives are thought to have been totally cut off from their ritual routines. The Indian homeland is a distant land long since turned into an "area of darkness" (Naipaul 1964) at the level of historical consciousness. Memory brings it back over the generations only in the mythological form, but in that form it lends authority to the new religious tradition. By contrast, in the US model of Hindu culture, the emphasis is on the fact that there has been no break with the Indian tradition. People are proud that Hindu ritual opportunities have quickly been made available in the new setting, and that authentic Hindu teachers from India are once again available. Memories of the subcontinent are abundant and can be renewed with regular visits.

In the new homeland pattern, the emphasis on the newness of the tradition also points to the creativity that is possible in the open cultural situation of a postcolonial society. Even during the colonial era, these small corners of the Empire were culturally open to a great extent, and the Hindus learned that things such as the loss of a language or of clear caste distinctions were not fatal to one's religious life. Once the challenge of a truly open cultural situation came into view with the approach of the postcolonial era, the whole purpose of the development of the religious tradition was altered, and the creative concern was with how to make the tradition relevant for the local situation. By contrast, the Hindus in the United States still struggle with the question of what kind of Hindu tradition is relevant in this new cultural setting. The new cultural setting includes a commitment to pluralism, but that pluralism is primarily a form of public neutrality. It guarantees that the minority community will be comfortable in its worship setting and welcomes the religious leadership into ecumenical gatherings, but it does not allow the new minority community to write up its own history for the school curriculum or to propose its own forms of social legislation. As a small minority community, the Hindus in this setting feel that their rights are protected, as are those of any other minority community, but they do not have the sense that the cultural future is open and prepared for their initiatives in the way Hindus in the postcolonial societies feel.[5]

One final way in which new homeland traditions seem to differ from those developing in the West is in the way the traditions are packaged for the next generation. In the new homeland societies, there is an assumption that their tradition could easily be lost again and that it is important that the next

generation be taught the rituals and beliefs on which the community has agreed. In some cases, this feeling is strong because the community still feels that it faces the possibility of being expelled from its new homeland or being assimilated into a larger population. This fear of losing the newly established tradition is even stronger among those who have decided to move on to the second diaspora and to work in Europe or North America. University students from the six post-indenture societies studying in Europe and North America may not always be personally religious, but they tend to be clear that their families expect them to know the tradition in which they were raised. The packaging of that tradition tells them it is specific to their new homeland community, and that it is an important basis for establishing their identity now that they have moved on to a new setting. By contrast, students whose families have arrived directly from India are much less clear in this regard. They tend to feel that they have a scattered heritage, and often say hesitantly that they come from a Hindu background. While their parents may attend one or another of the available temples, they quickly point out that their grandparents follow different traditions in India, and they are not sure if they will follow either family tradition. For these students, the packaging of tradition has yet to take place, and while some welcome the personal openness that leaves them, others are not so sure what a Hindu identity will eventually look like in the midst of a Western social environment.

The Six Stories

The six story locations that make up the present study are widely scattered. Even though they were all part of the British Empire and received indentured workers through a common arrangement, they have had little contact with one another. In a way, that almost makes them six separate stories, except, as we have already seen, their stories share a common pattern. I will tell the stories as my family and I heard them in each local setting, and will try to highlight the local features of the story as I retell them. In order to avoid grouping the stories in any way, I have decided to present them in terms of a simple chronology determined by the date at which indentureship began in that location.

The story of Mauritius comes first because the French and South Indian planters on the island organized their own recruitment system for Indian laborers early in the nineteenth century, soon after Mauritius became a British colony. When disease and mistreatment were widespread in that early recruitment, the British authorities shut the system down, but Mauritius again started recruiting under the official British system in 1843 and eventually brought in

453,063 workers.[6] In Mauritius, as we have already said, the Indians would become a significant majority, but the French and African groups that preceded them and the Chinese who moved in along with them were sufficiently numerous that a fascinatingly complex cultural conversation developed. The tiny and isolated nature of the island meant that the multiracial society had a kind of inward-looking cultural identity. Each segment of society tended to accept the hierarchically defined values of the whole, while at the same time each group tried to develop a distinct identity that would set it apart from its fellow islanders. The North Indians, for instance, as the largest community, but the bottom of the social pyramid at the beginning, initially took a relatively passive approach to developing its distinct identity. This made it possible for the North Indians to vaguely acknowledge the hierarchical nature of the society, while gradually developing their own forms of social hierarchy. What they did in effect was create a "parallel" hierarchy to the one that pervaded the society as a whole. This solution made it impossible for them to critique the prevailing hierarchical ideology, but it eventually served them well because, with the coming of democracy, the large number of North Indians enabled them to put their leaders in positions of power. Political leadership finally gave them new levers with which to play the old game of status-seeking within the hierarchical traditions of the island.

In the case of Guyana, the indentured Indian laborers started to arrive in 1838 and were put into the old African slave system, even living in the slaves' housing and working for the old estate managers. By the end of indentureship, over 238,909 workers had been introduced into the society, and they worked on the plantations with a similar number of West Africans who had been brought there as slaves a century earlier.[7] In spite of the oppressive structure of this system, there were two features of the situation that encouraged the early development of vibrant Hindu communities. One feature that encouraged the development of community was that initially the workers were brought in large numbers from both North and South India and were packed into plantations along a narrow strip of land along the coast where they had few other options. The other feature that encouraged the development of community was that the community of ex-slaves of African descent still worked on the plantations with the new indentured workers, and they lived nearby at the edge of the plantation in already defined communities. The communities that the Afro-Guyanese were developing at the edge of the plantations provided a model of community life that the Tamil-speaking and Hindi-speaking communities of Indians were quick to emulate, and it was that model that gave them an immediate need to "invent" traditions of their own.

Trinidad received 143,939 indentured workers in much the same way as Guyana starting in 1845.[8] The geographical and sociological circumstances,

however, created a different kind of experience for those who settled in Trinidad. Geographically, Trinidad is divided into hills and valleys, and the colonial planters had to design their plantations in a variety of ways. As a result, the Indian laborers were scattered all over the island, with dense clusters in a few of the more fertile areas. Sociologically, the situation was even more diverse in that the native population and Spanish and French population were still significant factors in the settlement pattern. The West African slaves had already started to share with those other groups in creating an island society over which the British planters did not have direct control. Because the Indians were offered land as soon as their first five years of indenture ended, and this arrangement allowed them to develop their own village areas, for some time they blended in with the geographical and sociological environment without the need to create a distinctive tradition of their own. It was only at the end of the colonial period that they realized that as the single largest community in the society they could use the category of "ethnicity" to assert themselves and insist that they have a role in defining the cultural and religious identity of the society.

With the sugar planters becoming wealthy in Mauritius and the Caribbean, more British businessmen thought that the hot eastern coast of South Africa might also be turned into sugar plantations. In 1860, boatloads of Indian laborers began arriving in Durban, and the laborers were distributed on the coast north and south of Durban, as well as to jobs on the railway and in the municipal government. With the Guyana and Trinidad planters complaining about the rebellious South Indian laborers and asking that they receive fewer laborers from South India (Nath 1970), more boats from South India were sent to South Africa, and, in the end, the bulk of the 152,184 laborers in South Africa came from the port of Madras.[9] By the 1880s, sugar prices began to drop and the plantations of South Africa were barely profitable, so it was no great concern to the planters when at the end of five years many of the laborers moved to the outskirts of Durban where they cleared the swampy river valleys to the northwest and southwest and began market gardening on their own. The Muslim traders from India, who were already in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, helped the laborers find a role in South African society, and Mohandas Gandhi taught the whole Indian community how to challenge the colonial rulers and define their own vision for the "reform" of the society. The Indian community in South Africa continued to grow through all these challenges, and today it constitutes the largest of the indenture-based communities and plays a significant role in South African society in spite of its minority status in that nation.

The last of the sugar lands to be developed with Indian indentured labor was Fiji in the mid-Pacific. Fiji is made up of a large number of volcanic islands

that were partially populated over the centuries by small groups of Melanesians from the west and Polynesians from the east. British businessmen on their way to and from Australia and New Zealand began to wonder about the fertile land on the two largest islands, and when their government made a treaty with the chiefs in 1874, plans for one last adventure with Indian labor started to take shape. In the end, 60,965 workers were introduced into the islands.[10] The government thought they had an indentureship expert available in Arthur Gordon, because he had already served in both Mauritius and Trinidad, and he was appointed Governor. Partly because he wanted stricter colonial regulations of the barracks in which the Indians were to live, and also because he heard the chiefs' objection to imposing labor regulations on the native people, he refused to let the native people work on the plantations and set up a strictly "segregated" society that imposed severe penalties on the native people as well as the Indians if they ventured out of the territories assigned to each. Without the chiefs' assistance, this kind of colonial paternalism would not have worked, but in this situation the two communities remained separate from one another for almost a century until they met in the political arena after Independence in 1970. As one can imagine, the recent experience of learning to live together has been very difficult for both communities.

In East Africa, Indian traders had been visiting the coast for centuries, but, in the mid-nineteenth century, they were invited to settle in Zanzibar and quickly recognized the opportunity available to set up trading posts inland. After the Germans and British decided to take over trusteeships in the area, the British realized the need for a railway to the inland territory of Uganda. Once they recruited 37,747 workers from the Punjab to build the railway through Kenya and into Uganda, Indians became a permanent part of the population in the area.[11] Because the initial group of traders had been Kutchi-speaking Ismaili Muslims from Gujarat with a secret ritual life, they kept to themselves. As a result, each of the Gujarati caste communities that subsequently joined in the trade also tended to keep to itself. While caste consciousness was not as strong among those arriving from the Punjab, they too followed a caste-based social pattern in East Africa, with even the different castes of Sikhs developing their own worship traditions in this setting.[12] While this caste-based worship tradition, and the this-worldly asceticism it eventually fostered, gave the Hindu community some colorful ritual traditions and some spectacular success in developing capitalist enterprises, it produced a segmented community style. The colonial period was a brief and hurried matter in East Africa, so while the Indians with their earlier experience of the dangers of colonialism were in a good position to fight for African rights and teach Africans the rules of economic development, the opportunities for African and Indian cultural

contact were limited during the colonial period. Only when the nations of Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda were formed in the early 1960s did the cultural conversations between the African majority and the Hindus really begin, and it is remarkable that in spite of the initial difficulties the conversation continues.

My Story

My interest in these six post-indenture Hindu communities grew over the years because I often had students from those societies in my classes in Canada. At first, these students were exchange students from Trinidad, but after the influx into Canada from Guyana in the 1960s and East Africa in the 1970s, the majority were from families that were trying to find a new identity for themselves in Canada. Those from Mauritius, South Africa, and Fiji were not as numerous, but they seemed even more anxious than the others to describe their heritage to me.

When my family and I decided we would spend much of 1995/96 (we also ended up making follow-up visits in 2000) traveling to each of these locations, I initially thought I would spend most of my scholarly time on the historical records available. In each location, I was able to find the important ships records and emigration passes, which provide the basic information about every ship and every worker as they arrived from India, as well as other colonial records and a bit of locally produced history. What we found, however, was that our family (our daughter Miriam was 7 years old and our son Nathan 6) was quickly adopted by the local Hindu community in each instance, and we were soon being dragged from temple to temple and festival to festival by people determined that not a fragment of their story would go untold. As a result, the stories I tell here are much like oral histories in that I try to let the local people tell the story as they want it told. Although we were dealing with people who were two or three generations removed from their ancestors who arrived there as indentured workers, they started most narratives by describing a grandmother or grandfather who had come on this or that ship, settled in this or that plantation, and then had a miraculous experience that eventually had some role in the local history.

Historians of religion have a lot of difficult choices to make about their sources. Some use art history and examine the temple buildings and image sculpture carefully. Many let the priests tell them what the ritual history is, when the cult was modified, and why. Others follow Max Weber and analyze the social structure without listening to any of the local stories. Still others rely on the official government records and pick through the fragmentary but

reliable record of census numbers, judicial rulings, and land transactions to find out what they tell us about religious communities. While in this research endeavor I used all of those techniques, I also let the local community's sense of its history and its explanation of its religious practice serve as the primary story line. Walking through their temple compounds and coming out of the many worship services we attended, people seemed eager to explain their tradition as they understood it. Unlike India, where the ordinary worshipper would be unsure of my language skills and unsure if they knew enough Sanskrit to explain what they considered the primordial features of the ritual, in these settings most people seemed sure they could explain to one of the four of us what the worship was all about and what the history of the ritual pattern was. I could probe for a clearer account by making comparisons with Indian ritual or by pointing out some peculiar feature of the iconography of the images, the temple building, or the priest's ritual routine, but in the end they came back to the story of their local tradition as it had been taught to them. Because of the unusual sense of confidence people had about their understanding of their tradition, I have tried to honor that and follow their lead in my telling of their story.

In the end, of course, the story I tell is mine as much as it is theirs. I have spent much of my life trying to understand the traditions of India, and I bring to this study unconscious as well as conscious questions about India that the people living in these locations would ask in a different way, if they would ask them at all. I was also traveling around the world in the early 1960s, as most of these societies were becoming independent, and I had a North American excitement about the freedom dawning in postcolonial societies that was certainly very different from the complex set of questions these people faced at the time. Most important of all, by spending time in all six societies, I became aware of similarities and differences among them that alter and enrich the story that can be told. I will tell the stories as I learned them from these varied sources, but I cannot help but present them through my own lenses. In the end, the reader, whether he or she comes from one of these six societies or from India, North America, or elsewhere, will have the final opportunity to reinterpret and to determine what they think is going on in these social settings.

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Story One

Mauritius: A Parallel Society

The Mascarnes islands in the middle of the Indian Ocean were created by volcanic action many centuries ago. Until some Dutch adventurers visited them in the seventeenth century, they were inhabited only by Dodo birds living in a tropical forest of mostly ebony trees. The Dutch named the second largest (at 720 square miles), but most hospitable, of the islands "Mauritius," and made a feeble attempt to settle there in the middle of the seventeenth century (figure 1.1). As it turned out, the Dutch did not need the island in their struggle to gain strategic advantage over the Portuguese, and their colonies in Indonesia and Śrī Lanka provided all the spice their traders could handle. They did cut down the ebony and killed all the great walking birds, and then they abandoned the island in 1710 (Toussaint 1971).[1]

The French, who were by then in a scramble with the British for land rights in Asia, quickly took over. When Mahé de Labourdonnais, a naval hero who once seized the British fort of Madras, became the French governor of Mauritius in 1735, he started to get the rich agricultural lands of the island cleared. Labourdonnais offered retiring military commanders 90 hectares of land and a loan to bring in African slaves to work it. In 1767, the French government took direct control of the territory, and they brought in South Indian craftsmen and traders to further the development of their island paradise. By the end of the century, 5,000 French merchants and settlers and an equal number of Asian craftsmen and traders were

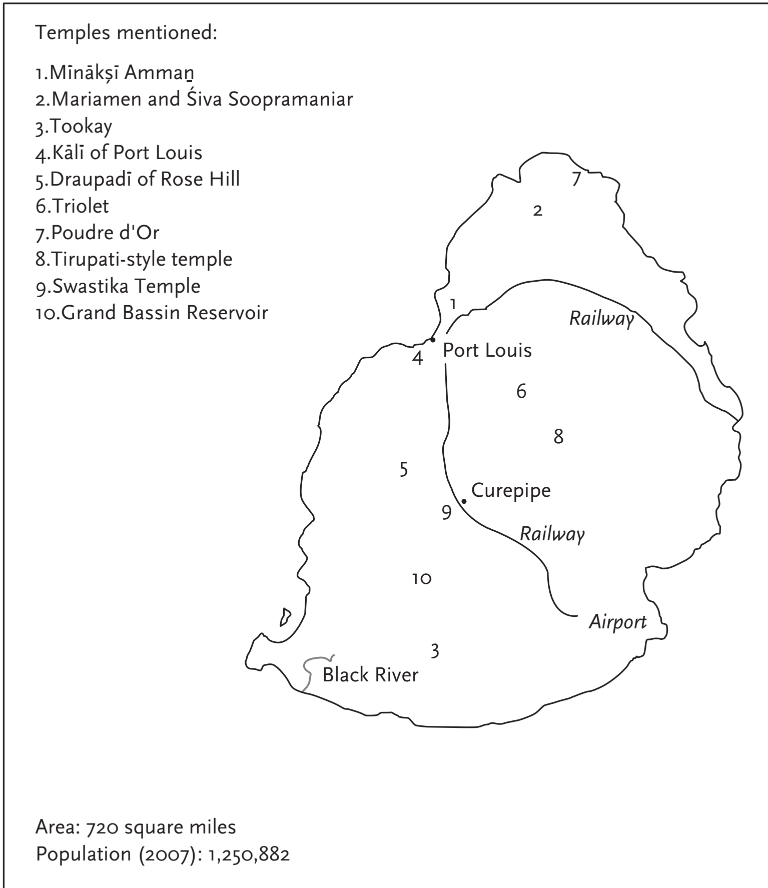

FIGURE 1.1. Map of Mauritius.

directing the work of 50,000 slaves, who were mostly African, and the island's multiracial society was already well established (Selvan et al. 1988).

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British, who had by then decisively defeated the French in the Indian struggle and had near-total dominance of the Indian Ocean, found it a major nuisance to have to contend with the pirates who were allowed by the French to use the harbor of Port Louis. After taking the neighboring island of Bourbon (now called Réunion), they moved in August of 1810 to dislodge the French from the island of Mauritius, which the French called Île de France, and were repulsed. The French in premature delight began to build the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, partly to celebrate this "victory," but, by December, the British had assembled much of their South Indian fleet and 24,000 troops also from India and approached the

island again. The outnumbered French had no choice but to surrender, but they were able to ask for a solid guarantee that they would be able to keep their property, law, religion, and language. The British, who wanted only to get rid of the pirates in the area, agreed, and a very unusual situation developed in which a British colony continued to have a predominately French culture. In order to underline the fact that they had no intention to curb the French presence in the area, the British returned the neighboring island of Réunion to French rule in 1814 (Toussaint 1971).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British government was in the process of taking over the vast territory of India from the East India Company. The capitalist dreams of the free traders in Britain were beginning to think in worldwide terms, and the early experiments with sugar plantations in the Caribbean seemed to indicate that a world market awaited any tropical area that could develop sugar production on a mass scale (Tinker 1974). The French settlers in Mauritius soon had their slaves developing their land into sugar estates, but there was a need for much more labor if the volcanic rock was to be removed and the sugar industry was to be developed in a big way. The British Parliament had abolished the trading in slaves in 1807, so a fresh supply of labor from Africa could not be obtained in the old way, but both the French and the British were familiar with the reliable South Indian labor market, and it was only a matter of time until they would figure out how to make use of it.

The first experimental recruitment of Indian workers was initiated by the impatient planters themselves, who sent their agents to India and brought in about 25,000 workers (Benoist 1984; Bissoondoyal 1984; Deerpalsingh and Carter 1994, p.1). With no controls in place and the system of slavery being converted to an apprenticeship at the same time, chaos took over. The African slaves left the estates altogether, and the new Indian laborers suffered terribly from disease and the ill-treatment of planters accustomed to mistreating their slaves. Reports reaching Britain alarmed the Anti-Slavery Society (Scoble 1840), which had been instrumental in bringing about the end of slavery throughout the empire in 1833, and they convinced the British colonial government to order the recruitment suspended. The French planters mounted an impassioned capitalist argument stating how much they were losing on the capital already invested, and how much better off the workers would be than they were in the crowded villages of India. In the meantime, the British colonial authorities were developing a scheme for a tightly controlled government recruitment of Indian workers for British Guiana (Guyana), which they initiated in 1838. By 1843, a similar scheme was used to resume bringing workers to the labor-short estates of Mauritius (Mookherji 1962; Hazareesingh 1975; Ly-Tio-Fane Pineo 1984; Carter 1995).

By 1860, the island was covered with sugarcane, and, with the prices of sugar high, the French planters were exceedingly wealthy. They remained, however, a tightly knit association, which was difficult for even the British colonial authorities to deal with, and wages were the lowest in any of the places where indentured labor was working. Constantly demanding that workers not be free to move from one plantation to another or to take up other occupations, the planters' association complained bitterly about the workers who had finished their indentureship and were still living on the island. The malaria epidemic of 1865 allowed the French planters to convince the colonial government that the Indian villages needed to be regulated, and only then did the government pass the Labor Bill of 1867 that restricted the rights of the freed Indians in many ways (Deerpalsingh and Carter 1994, 138–53). That law required the Indian workers to carry identification cards, and to allow their premises to be inspected by the police at any time. One planter, Adolphe van Plevitz, thought the treatment Indians received under this law was so inhuman that he helped them petition the government for an inquiry, and a thorough inquiry was held in 1872. Van Plevitz's fellow planters asked that he be deported, and, failing in that, they beat him publicly (Beejadhur 1935).

By the 1880s, a worldwide depression lowered sugar prices, and the planters argued that the economy could not support the 251,000 Indians who by then made up the majority in the population of 371,000. Soon, the depression freed up the rougher parcels of land that the French planters no longer found economical to plant, and Indians began to work these rougher parcels of land on their own. By the time indentureship was finally halted altogether in 1917, Mauritius had received 453,063 laborers and Indians made up about two-thirds of the total population (Ly-Tio-Fane Pineo 1984).

The Population

The island of Mauritius is very small and people can move about easily across the central plateau where there are only a few small volcanic peaks and a few modest rivers. All the many racial and linguistic groups are well aware of one another, and they make a notable effort to live in harmony. In the early years, when females were in short supply, cohabitation among the different communities was apparently quite common, so that the French-African and French-Bengali offspring became the clerical staff of the plantations, and, somewhat later, the Chinese-African offspring became staff in the Chinese-run businesses (Ly-Tio-Fane Pineo 1985; Jumeer 1989). The indentured Indians tended to be

less comfortable with such intercommunal relations, and the British officials constantly ordered that more women be included in the shiploads of indentured laborers so that a better overall gender balance might be achieved. The French-based Creole language developed by the first slaves, who were from many different places and were obliged to communicate with one another and with their French masters, was soon the medium of oral communication for everyone. Those who were inclined to learn to read and write learned primarily French, but Chinese and a number of Indian languages were used at home, and their written forms were preserved by tiny minorities. English was, for the most part, used only in government offices and by a few international trading companies.

The first part of the cultural mix was that involving the early French settlers and the slaves they were able to buy in the eighteenth century. Bourbon (Réunion) had been a French settlement for almost a century when some of the settlers from there were invited to move over to the new settlement on Île de France (Mauritius) after the French took it over in 1715. On the more rugged terrain of Bourbon, coffee was the major crop. The slaves there had been brought primarily from Madagascar, and cohabitation between the French settlers and the slaves had been extensive. In the richer agricultural lands of Île de France, the governor, Labourdonnais, hoped to be able to introduce a select group of planters to a more comfortable lifestyle on big estates. He strongly preferred slaves from Mozambique on the African mainland for fieldwork, and slaves from Bengal for domestic work, but Madagascar still supplied a third of the total (Allen 1983; Jumeer 1989). Part of his strategy was probably to keep control by splitting up the slave population, but he also held the view that there were social characteristics attached to different racial groups, and he knew that the Dutch in Mauritius and the French in Bourbon had found it difficult to control the independent-minded Malagasy slaves. Estimates are that the slave population ended up being 40–45 percent from Mozambique, 30–35 percent from Madagascar, and 10–15 percent from Bengal (Allen 1983).

The reference to the domestic workers from Bengal is interesting. Bengalis are not known in India as particularly good at domestic work, or as a group that migrates for work of any kind (heavy work in jute mills and mines and railways in Bengal is often performed by in-migrant workers from neighboring Bihar), so not much is known about how this recruitment started. There was a French trading post at Chandernagore on the River Hooghly north of Calcutta throughout the eighteenth century, and ships from there would regularly stop at Mauritius. Baron Grant's legendary (1804) history of Mauritius explains the preference for Bengali domestics by quoting the observations of Admiral Kempenfelt and M. de Ronchon who, on a trip to Mauritius in 1757, had

been told by Baron d'Unienville that "Bengalis were valued not only for gentleness, good manners and cleanliness but also for their hair and features, which were similar to those of Europeans, differing only in colour, ranging from a light tan to very dark" (Beejadhur 1935, p. 4).[2]

One assumes that a large percentage of these domestic Bengali slaves were female, and perhaps constituted a form of concubinage. Although, like all slaves of this period, one assumes that most of the Bengal slaves were probably baptized into the Catholic faith and changed their names, one still wonders what role they played later on as other Indians joined the society. Did they serve as an important middle voice, interpreting the values of the French planters to the arriving Indian groups, and interpreting the Indian values to the French? One story from a slightly later period does give an example of how a privileged Bengali woman, who had somehow come to own land beside the estate she worked on, married the Malabard or Tamil "sirdar" or manager of the estate, who also owned land nearby, with the marriage "witnessed" by the French owner of the estate. This couple then completed the set of social links their privileged positions made possible when they built a Hindu temple on a part of their land and then turned it over to the indentured workers of that area.[3] This one example certainly does not provide us with an overall picture of the role the Bengali domestics played, but it does reflect the fact that the society, while severely hierarchical, was integrated and had complicated cross-racial ties at the upper levels.

Labourdonnais' vision was to build a society of privilege in this island paradise. He wanted to develop the harbor of Port Louis as the center of all commercial activity in the Indian Ocean, and therefore he moved the base for French activity in the area from the island of Bourbon to Île de France. The planters soon built themselves magnificent homes on their estates, and they soon became a well-organized elite that banded together to protect not only their economic privilege, but also the religious and cultural advantages of their lifestyle as well. The roots of their culture lay in prerevolutionary France, and, while they were not particularly religious on a personal level, they did think of the whole social and natural order as based on a divine model and headed up by the church. The Lettres Patentes giving legal status to the territory in 1723 gave the Ordre de St. Lazare the responsibility for maintaining the territory's civil status records and seeing that every slave was properly baptized by the time they had been on the island for two years. The social hierarchy the French cherished was not thought of as achieved by military might and capitalist energy, nor was it racist in the simplistic ways British capitalism sometimes was. They fought for a society that gave them privilege, but was at the same time a coherent whole in which all relations were humane in a traditionalist

sense. While never more than 5 percent of the population, this French elite has been able to maintain its privileged position in spite of a shift to British rule, and, more recently, to democratic rule.

In addition to the slaves needed to manage the fieldwork and domestic work of the plantations, the French plan from the beginning had been to also introduce into the multicultural social order groups of people with special skills. Labourdonnais particularly wanted to bring in the skilled masons that had built thousands of magnificent stone temples in South India so that they could build the impressive stone churches and government buildings that are such a distinct part of the Mauritian landscape. It was not long before there were as many Tamil-speaking South Indians in Mauritius as there were French, and many of them became wealthy, and some even bought major estates. To help with this work of developing the urban areas, skilled workers from Madagascar were also introduced into the society. These two groups of skilled workers were provided with suburbs of Port Louis to live in called Camp de Malabards (to the east) and Camp des Noirs Libres (to the west) respectively. While they were free citizens, they were restricted in their access to the center of the city, which was known as La Ville Blanche, and in the kinds of occupations they could pursue. The Indians became the major traders of this era, and, while some were from the South Indian Hindu merchant caste or Chettiars, others were Muslims (locally called “lascars”), and the later group were later given a separate residential area called Camp de Lascar. While the slaves were expected to become baptized Catholics, the free citizens were not, and, in 1771, both the Hindus and the Muslims in the city of Port Louis were given permission to build their own places of worship by the governor Pierre Poivre (Sooriamoorthy 1977; Bissoondoyal and Servansing 1989).

When a worldwide power struggle brought British rule to Mauritius in 1810, all the groups making up the complex local society braced themselves, wary of the changes that were to come. When the National Assembly of Revolutionary France had ordered the end of slavery in 1794, the Colonial Assembly in Île de France had simply ignored the new law. While the slaves probably knew very little about that action, they certainly resented their servitude. When the British Parliament declared the end of slavery in 1833, they tried to introduce a system of retraining called Apprenticeship, but the slaves of Mauritius just left the plantations and went to the city looking for work. They did not cut their ties with French society, however, and continued to accept the French-designed social hierarchy and made an effort to keep the Creole that they spoke as French as they could.

As we have already seen, some of the South Indians who had been brought in as skilled workers and traders had, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, moved into the French elite sufficiently to become estate owners. They now joined with other planters in taking an initiative to solve the labor crisis that was developing in the sugar industry of the island. One of the biggest estate owners of the day was Vellivahel Anassamy, a Chettiar Hindu. Early in the nineteenth century, he had bought the Bon Espoir estate, once owned by the governor, Labourdonnais, which is in Rivière du Rempart in the north of the island. His son, Inonmondy Anassamy, was in charge of the estate in 1833 when the parliament in Britain outlawed slavery. He joined with his neighbor, E. Arbuthnot, who had bought the Belle Alliance estate in 1832, and they brought in privately recruited laborers from India. Anassamy had good contacts in South India, and Arbuthnot's brother had been using Danghor hill coolies on his indigo plantation in India. By 1834, they had arranged for shiploads of workers to be brought to the plantations of Mauritius. By 1837, 25,000 Indian laborers had been introduced to Mauritius in this way, and when the British authorities heard alarming reports about how these laborers were treated, they closed the arrangement down. The planters had not given up, however, and after bitter exchanges between Mauritius and London over the next few years, the planters were allowed to renew the recruitment in 1843 using a modified version of the government scheme started for British Guiana in 1838 (Sooriamoorthy 1977; Deerpalsingh and Carter 1994).

The most important single component of the ethnic mix of Mauritius is, of course, the huge number of workers that started to flood into the island after 1843. Shiploads came from Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay for a while, but the Maratha workers from Bombay did not like plantation work. The early preference for South Indian workers was soon overruled when C. Anderson as the Protector of Immigrants for Mauritius insisted that the schemes of recruitment that he had developed only in North India were the more reliable ones. In the end, three-quarters of all the workers sent to Mauritius came from the Bhojpuri-speaking areas of North India.

The Indian indentured workers ended up in a number of fairly distinct subgroups in the context of Mauritius. There are a number of reasons why workers tended to keep their subgroup identities in Mauritius in a way that was to prove impossible in the other indentured societies. One reason was that the planters never gave up their role in the recruitment system. Because individual planters had their agents on the ground in India and regularly sent loyal workers back to recruit for them, the British system took into account the fact that there would be groups from a given village or region who planned to work on the same plantation or in the same region once they arrived in

Mauritius. This practice also encouraged the general population of workers to try to look for people of a similar background once they arrived in Mauritius. This practice was not encouraged in any of the other indentured societies.

The second reason subgroups of Indians were able to keep their identity distinct in Mauritius is that it was the only indentured colony where women were generally not given indentureship contracts. The French planters stubbornly refused to allow women to work in the fields, but were willing to employ large numbers of them in the domestic sphere. The British authorities complained that this was just a way to save money. They argued that the planters did employ the women part time during the harvest, but, by not giving them contracts, they were not obliged to make a long-term commitment at a fixed wage. The indirect impact of this arrangement was, however, that those women who were not recruited for a specific plantation had to find a suitable plantation to which to attach themselves on arrival. While they were not really given a free choice, they could ask to be sent to a plantation where they knew someone or where a male "protector" (some even listed as "husband" by the authorities) of a similar background was being assigned. Although the ships for Mauritius often had fewer women than the British system required, they did in the end have a higher percentage of women than any of the other indentured societies. The women were somewhat freer from employment than in other locations and were, therefore, more available to build community with others of a similar background (Carter 1994).

Another reason the indentured workers were able to keep their subgroup identities to the extent that they did in Mauritius was that they were encouraged in this regard by the ideology of the French planters. While in the other locations British capitalists looked on the workers as units of production and wanted them to produce exactly defined "tasks" within the allotted time, the French planters saw their "estates" as organisms with different groups playing roles in accord with their inherent natures. Of course the owner did all of the assigning of roles, and the newly arrived workers had the least status and the least freedom, but there was at least some concern for the family life of the workers and a recognition that they too had a sense of community and culture.

At a later point in the history, this sense of subgroup identity would be a major factor in the development of society. Because the workers were only committed to a given estate for five or ten years, the freed workers began very early to form their own villages. The planters complained bitterly to the British authorities that the post-indenture workers should be sent back to India, but neither the workers nor the government were keen to do that, and it was not until after the malaria epidemic of 1865 that the British agreed to bring in the labor laws of 1867 that tried to regulate the life of the free Indian working class.

After protests from the workers and a major inquiry in 1872, the rights of the workers as free citizens were more or less restored. When the depression in sugar prices came about in 1880, only the largest plantations were able to continue and a great deal of land was opened up for Indian workers to develop on their own. Soon subgroups of Indians from one language group or one caste were free to seek out a region where they could develop small farms and a subculture of their choice. Although it was not possible for Indian workers to associate only with their original Indian caste group or linguistic group from the time of their arrival in Mauritius, there was more opportunity to maintain those ties than in the other indenture societies, excepting East Africa, and subgroup identity plays an important role among the Indians of Mauritius.

The two smallest linguistic groups from India have understandably worked hard to keep their identities. The Marathi-speakers from Bombay did not usually finish their contracts before they headed off to the few forested areas in the mountains. There they joined with their fellow Marathi-speakers in the kind of multi-crop farming practices they knew from India. Needless to say, it was not long before the planters' complaints cut off the recruitment of more Marathi-speakers through the port of Bombay, and the size of the community was limited to less than 2 percent of the total population (Mulloo 1991).

The Telegu workers for quite a long time found themselves treated as a subgroup of the larger and better-known Tamil community (both were called "Madras coolies" because they came on ships from Madras), but they became an identifiable subgroup and maintained careful marriage arrangements among themselves (Nirsimloo-Anenden 1990). The indentured Tamils had the opportunity of looking for status by identifying with the Malabard or skilled Tamil workers and traders long established in Mauritius, and they often tried to distinguish themselves from the Telegus, who they called by the disparaging term "Korangi." Telegu village temples offered goat and chicken sacrifices to a goddess[4] and to a protector deity named Munīśvaraṉ, who we see more of in the worship system of Guyana. After Independence, when the census sought to identify the subgroups, and there were both social and economic benefits to be gained by being a well-organized group, the Andhra Maha Sabha began organizing the Telegus. In this context, a strong movement to get rid of animal sacrifice and other indications of low status came into play. Some leaders in the Telegu community were even able to establish contacts in India and arrange to build a magnificent Brāhmanical temple with Telegu associations. This temple, which is described in more detail later, is modeled on the famous Tirupati temple of India. It is not yet clear whether Telegus will eventually be able to

escape their relatively low social status, but they are now generally proud to be recognized as a distinct community even though they make up just 2 percent of the population (Nirsimloo-Anenden 1990).

The Indian group that in many ways has had the biggest impact on the long-term history of Mauritius has been the Tamil-speaking group. As described earlier, South Indian craftsmen were brought to Mauritius by the French settlers of the eighteenth century in order to help them develop the island, and their impact is notable in the many fine stone churches and public buildings of that era. Chettiar traders soon followed, and, as we have already seen, by the end of the century at least one of the major plantations was owned by a wealthy Chettiar who helped set up the first recruitment of Indian laborers. Later, French officials even brought in convicts from South India and took pride in the work they were able to do for the government. When, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, the planters decided they needed contract labor to help them build the sugar industry, they again went to South India and brought in some among the first group from there. By the 1840s, however, circumstances related to the British government's running of the indentured labor system were destined to overrule the French planters' preference for South Indians, and a majority of the laborers would eventually be brought from North India.

Even though the majority of the population would eventually come from North India, the prominent role of South Indian culture would remain. We know, for instance, that the French government gave the Tamils permission to build temples in the later half of the eighteenth century (Sooriamoorthy 1977). As a result, Mauritius has some of the most beautiful stone temples outside of India, and at least some of them were constructed in the orthodox South Indian style. A few of the South Indians seem to have worked very closely with the French planters and developed their own estates, but in general the Tamils kept some distance between themselves and the French and followed their own Hindu and Muslim religious practices. The Tamils I have met who are descended from this early community insist that they are all Chettiars and that they marry only within their own small subgroup.

When the indentured laborers from the Tamil region began arriving in the middle of the nineteenth century, they were faced with some odd choices because of the fact that there was an established Tamil community on the island. In one way, the presence of the earlier community probably gave them a somewhat higher status than they might have had otherwise. At the same time, on one hand we know that they went ahead and built for themselves the kind of village temple for a local goddess that they were used to in India. On the other hand, the opportunity to gain higher social status by worshipping in the

already established beautiful stone temples was also available, as was the compromise developed in the 1870s of having a "goddess" popular with the workers installed in ritually correct stone temples in the cities of Port Louis and Rose Hall. Because these opportunities to identify with the established Tamil community were easier for the Tamil workers than for the Telegu workers that came with them, there did not exist the kind of solidarity among workers from "Madras" that one sees in most of the indentured societies. Although both Tamils and Telegus no doubt practiced animal sacrifice[5] and propitiated village goddesses at first, the Tamils of Mauritius had other options, and many gave up that style of worship and joined with others in looking on those practices as characteristic of the lower-status Telegus.

As the prospect of a democratic reorganization of society loomed, the French and Tamil elites tended to part company. The French tended to develop their political ties through the elite levels of the "Creole" or Franco-African community into the working class of what the Constitution defines as the "general population," while the Tamils developed their ties across the spectrum of Indian subgroups. In the census-gathering system of today the Tamils, like the French, are listed as only 5 percent of the population, but their role in the social system goes beyond what that statistic would imply.

Muslims formed only about 10 percent of the indentured labor forces brought in from Calcutta and Madras on the northern and southern sectors of India's east coast, and in many ways they blended in almost unnoticed at first with the "Calcutta coolies" and "Madras coolies" respectively. However, when the very distinct community of Muslim traders from the west coast of India began to settle in Mauritius in the mid-1800s,[6] the identity of this group began to change. These Muslim traders had been working in East Africa for a number of generations, and they quickly became the main suppliers of rice and textiles to the burgeoning population of this tiny island. This new group of traders joined the Muslims already at the Camp de Lascar, and together they built impressive mosques in the city of Port Louis. Before long, the Muslims within the plantation worker group realized that they had fellow religionists in the nearby urban area.

By the time of Independence in 1968, an opportunity for a major development in the Muslim community's identity came about. When the French and Creole (African-based) sectors of society sought constitutional protection against what they feared might be Indian domination at the ballot box, they stated their claim in religious terms and said they wanted protection against "Hindu" domination. Some of the Muslim leaders saw an opportunity for themselves in the language of that debate, and, at the last minute, they too asked for protection for "Muslims." Once this constitutional request was

granted, a religious line was created that had not been clearly marked before in the rural population; and the Muslims are now a constitutionally recognized minority of somewhat over 15 percent.

Soon after indentureship began, the North Indian laborers came to constitute the largest single group on the island. They recognized the carefully established hierarchical society into which they were brought and began to use the French-based Creole language everyone used and to accept the existing social structures and many of the cultural norms. Their huge numbers, however, kept them at some distance from others in the society, and the number of intercommunal unions in which they became involved was much smaller than had been the practice in the local society. Their speech patterns included many Bhojpuri words, and it was expected that they would follow their own social and religious norms in most regards. They are reported to have had colorful celebrations of the Hindu festival of Holi and the Muslim festival of Muharram in which all participated from a very early time, but, at first, there did not seem to be a great deal of interest in developing village temple traditions. Religious teaching, such as it was, seemed to take the form of minstrel troupes presenting the story of Rāma to village audiences. As landholding became more common among North Indians, a modified version of the French planters' custom of placing a small shrine of Mary at the edge of their property was developed, and one now sees small shrines of Kālī-Mai and *jhandi* flags in honor of Hanumān marking the field boundaries of Indian landowners.

The earliest concerns about identity among North Indian laborers seem to have arisen within the community as people tried to figure out how the Mauritian concern with hierarchy and status was to be linked with the residual forms of caste status that people remembered from India. The ships records reveal that about 13 percent of the workers were Thākurs or Kṣatrīyas, or people who would normally have been from the landowning class in India. They may have been the core that started to insist that their status be recognized in the Mauritian context by using the standard surname or title "Singh." Once this pattern was established, however, others who owned land or were in some other way distinguished probably just added the title to their names, and the aristocratic North Indian class of Mauritius was born. There were, of course, some Brāhmans among the indentured workers, and a few of them gained respect by singing the *Rāmcharitmānas* and performing life-cycle rituals for people, but they did not have a monopoly on status, as, we discuss later, they came to have in Guyana and Trinidad. What was unique about the status game among Indians in Mauritius is the way they learned from the French that, in a hierarchical system, it is landownership that defines one's authority, and it is important to define the duties and low status of others if one is to be recognized

as having high social status. Among Mauritians of North Indian background, the label for those of low status is "Chamār." In the ships records, there were a large number of laborers who had listed their caste as "Chamār," and the caste defined for its work in making leather goods was regularly employed as landless labor in North India during the nineteenth century. They were, however, less than 10 percent of the total among the original laborers, and the title as used in Mauritius was a class distinction that referred to many others of lower caste background who were not within the Thākur or landowning class of "Singhs." The effect of this sorting out of status roles was that the North Indian community in Mauritius developed its own social hierarchy. This Indian hierarchy closely reflects the hierarchical structure of the whole society, a hierarchy that the French planters had set in place when they established their tropical paradise.

Once the hierarchical structure of the North Indian segment of society was set in place, the religious and political forms of the society began to reflect that hierarchy. Landowning, as the French had demonstrated all along, is the measure of status, and a handful of Indian families have been honored for generations because of their links with some major estates.[7] As we see later, major North Indian temples were often built on these estates and then they in turn became institutionalized channels of further status. Uncomfortable in those temple settings, families labelled "Chamār" usually turned to the devotional songs of Kabir and Ravi Dāss for their own religious outlet, and many adopted the religious-sounding names popular in those devotional groups. With the arrival of the Arya Samaj teachers and a more modern ideology that theoretically included moving beyond caste, those labeled "Chamār" tried once again to escape their assigned status and joined the Arya Samaj in large numbers. Once again, the rigid line at the heart of the social formation of North Indians in Mauritius prevailed, and, as seen later, even the Arya Samaj had to split into two groups to keep that hierarchical arrangement intact.

The final group that needs to be described in order to explain Mauritian society is that made up of Chinese traders. The Chinese had long been great seagoing traders, and had once had a major role in Indian Ocean trade. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the Manchu rulers were finding it hard to control the vast territory of mainland China, and the European navies were making one demand after another along the coast of China. The Chinese government ignored male "seamen" who were really emigrants fleeing the disorder, but made female emigration almost impossible. During the period of French rule in Mauritius, some effort was made to bring in Chinese laborers for the plantations, but the few who came rebelled against the oppressive conditions of

work. When the British took over control, however, they could see the advantage of having Chinese traders on the island, and the first governor, Governor Farquhar, authorized a Chinese trader named Hayme, who was already settled in Mauritius, to go to China in 1821 and recruit some of his fellows. Hayme brought back the first group of what was to become a steady stream of Chinese businessmen to Mauritius. Hayme personally controlled the flow by "guaranteeing" each of the newcomers with a bond, and later by making the chief priest of the Cohan Tai Biou or Buddhist temple in Caudan, Port Louis, the "captain" responsible for the Chinese community on the island. The Chinese traders gradually came to control the shop keeping for almost every hamlet on the island. In that role they became an important link in the society because they were the ones who provided credit for the slack periods of work and for those who lived on the margins of society. Because there were almost no women among them until well into the twentieth century, most of the Chinese shopkeepers cohabited with Creole women or, less often, with Indian women, and a whole Sino-Mauritian society developed. As Chinese women began to arrive during the last two generations, they took responsibility for arranging for brides from China and are now trying to create a pure Chinese community with its own language and culture as well as family life. As opportunities arose in the neighboring societies of Réunion, Madagascar, and South Africa, the Chinese of Mauritius expanded their trading operations into those areas as well. In recent years, it has been Chinese businessmen who have established the burgeoning garment industry on the island. While the Chinese of Mauritius make up only about 4 percent of the population, they are widely recognized as having a major influence on the trading patterns both within Mauritius and in the region around (Ly-Tio-Fane Pineo 1985).

Hindu Religious Life

We know that the French rulers authorized the South Indian artisans to build temples for themselves as early as 1771, and some of the earliest temples certainly seem to be the work of professional South Indian stonemasons, who knew all the detailed rules for building temples according to the *Āgamas* or orthodox manuals. An early temple that was clearly built by professional temple builders from South India is the Mīnākṣī Ammaṉ temple on the northern outskirt of Port Louis (figure 1.2). This temple is a perfect replica of a medieval South Indian stone temple, except that it has a series of lovely

FIGURE 1.2. Mınakṣı Amman temple on the northern outskirts of Port Louis, Mauritius.

archways across the front, which indicates that the South Indian stone craftsmen had learned a few new tricks while building the stone churches for the French Catholics. The temple follows the rules for an orthodox temple in so many details that it could only have been built by professional South Indian temple builders who had been recruited by the French for their stone building work. The temple has three *vimānas* over the major deities. An orthodox Śiva Linga is seen deep inside the shrine facing east in the orthodox way out of the main doorway. On its left is a Subramanya image, and, facing south in the standard South Indian position, is the goddess Mīnākṣī, for whom the temple is named. Completing the inside circle of deities, the popular goddess Māriyammaṉ is to the left as one enters, followed by Kṛṣṇa, with Ganeśa to the right of the Śiva Linga, and Dancing Śiva to the left of Mīnākṣī along the south-facing wall, again in a standard South Indian position. Outside one finds Dakṣinamūrti on the south wall of the main temple; Maturai Vīraṉ with two *śaktis* or goddesses in a small shrine beside the outside south wall of the compound; Candēśvaraṉ, the temple "manager" and saint, in a little shrine in the northwest corner of the compound; and Durgā and the planets in a small temple in the northeast corner of the compound. The inner compound of the temple is generous, and the outer compound is huge and appears to have

FIGURE 1.3. Plantation temple, Mauritius.

foundations for a number of earlier structures that have since been taken down. The priest of the temple in 1996 was a temple Brāhman from Śrī Lanka, and he was carrying on a highly Sanskritized worship tradition (personal visit 1996).

Probably one of the earliest of the plantation-era temples is the one still used for worship on the Bon Espoir estate, an estate that we have already noted was established by Governor Labourdonnais in the eighteenth century and was owned by a Chettiar Hindu family for much of the nineteenth century (figure 1.3). Although one assumes that the owners gave the workers permission to build this temple, it was clearly a project of the South Indian plantation workers and in no way benefited from the presence on the island of experienced stonemasons. This beautiful little temple is still nestled under two gigantic old Indian fig trees just 50 feet from the original stone smoke stack for the first sugar processing plant of the estate. The temple is dedicated to "Mariamen and Śiva Soopramaniar." It has a Śiva Linga as well as a Subramanya image in the south half of the temple, and a Māriyammaṉ image in the north half. The temple faces east in the proper Tamil way and seems to be a close imitation of village temples in India. It would seem to have been built soon after the owner brought in his shipload of privately recruited South Indian workers in 1834. On the front wall, there are low reliefs of Maturai Vīraṉ, the protector of Māriyammaṉ, and of Hanumān, who would have been

the favorite deity of the North Indian workers on the estate. All the images are extremely primitive artistic forms and were the best the very earliest workers could do for themselves (personal visit 1996).

At the opposite end of the island is another tiny Tamil temple on a plantation, and it is dedicated to the fierce South Indian goddess Tookay (Tamil: Turkai Ammaṉ; Sanskrit: Durgā). In this case, the legend is that the plantation had a small goddess shrine in the corner of the field as many plantations have. The French planter decided that since nobody worshipped there regularly, he would have it destroyed. Soon, there was one tragedy after another plaguing his family. He then built this more substantial temple to propitiate the angry Goddess, and the temple has become a major pilgrimage site with people coming there for worship from all over the island. This temple faces west, even though it has non-Brāhman Tamil priests and is managed by the Tamil Benevolent Society. Two guardian figures surrounding the Goddess are about ten feet high, and their angry visages have two fang-like teeth. In a separate room to the north of the main deity are images of Śiva, Rāma, Ganeśa, Durgā, and Saraswatī gathered around an image called "Singa Kālī." On the south wall of this room there are images of the traditional Tamil group of goddesses known as the Seven Sisters with the central figure of Kālī being twice the size of the others. All the images are locally made, and, while probably not as old as those in Bon Espoir, are considered frightening and very powerful by the quiet pilgrims. Most of the worshippers are, of course, of North Indian background in that they make up the majority of the island population, but they come from great distances to visit this tiny South Indian-style temple, which is now surrounded by a vast expanse of sugarcane (personal visit 1996).

On the southern outskirt of Port Louis, there is another important South Indian temple that may represent the way in which the South Indian workers' preference for goddess worship and the local South Indian skill in stone masonry were combined. This temple is said to have been built in 1870, sometime after indentureship was in place, and, although it is an elaborate temple in stone, it does not look much like an orthodox South Indian temple. One assumes that the deity was originally called by the specifically Tamil name "Māriyammaṉ," but she is now known by the all-Indian name "Kālī," and one feels that the temple has long been a favorite for Hindus of all backgrounds living in Port Louis. This busy temple was completely rebuilt in 1994 with a modern-looking tower that no longer has a traditional South Indian character, but the priests insist that the ritual is South Indian. The halls of the temple now house a very active school teaching the classical forms of South Indian temple music and dance, that is, Carnatic music and Bharat Nātyam dance (personal visit 1996).

After the malaria epidemic of 1865 devastated the crowded port city of Port Louis, a large percentage of the population of the city took advantage of the new railway line to move out to the high plateau in the center of the island. Most of the French elite moved to Curepipe, and the non-French population that could afford the move went to Rose Hill. In 1878, another example of what may have been a compromise between the South Indian indentured workers' interests and the skills of the established Tamil community came about when they built the beautiful stone temple of Rose Hill dedicated to the goddess Draupadī Ammaṉ. While not as widespread as the Māriyammaṉ cult in South India, the cult of Draupadī has many temples in the areas adjacent to Madras, and its elaborate cult ritual is carefully followed by the Vanniyar or Naicker caste (Hiltebeital 1988). Naickers made up almost 20 percent of the South Indian indentured laborers, and while they were originally scattered all over the island, they have over the years congregated near this temple, which they think of as having been built by some of the first "freed" laborers from their caste.[8] The temple has a large fire pit in the front compound for the fire-walking ceremonies for which the Draupadī cult is known. The walls of this temple are covered with paintings of epic stories, reminding one of the fact that this Goddess was always associated with epic heroism, and that it was probably her reputation in this regard that led the author of the famous Sanskrit epic, the *Mahābharata*, to name his heroine after this Goddess. In more recent times, the temple was expanded to include on the left or northern side separate shrines for Śiva/Murukaṉ and Māriyammaṉ, presumably so that a wider group of worshippers would feel comfortable in the temple. The present temple priest is a local Brāhman trained in Sanskrit ritual, but he communicates with the worshippers in Tamil, and much of the worship pattern used in the temple has an informal Tamil style. The temple is, however, on the main route used by the Śivarātri festival pilgrims, who are mostly of North Indian background, and its grounds become a regular stop in that important pilgrim ritual (see later) (personal visit 1996).

By the turn of the century, it must have been obvious to everyone in Mauritius that the downtrodden North Indians constituted the bulk of the population. While the Roman Catholic practice of putting up tiny shrines to Mary at the boundaries of their land was early on matched by the Tamils putting up tiny Kālī-Mai shrines at the borders of their land, the North Indians began marking out their share of the territory by putting their own Kālī-Mai shrines near their houses (figure 1.4). Later on it became more common to put up Hanumān shrines, and then Hanumān flags, near their houses and beside every stream and seacoast bay. In the sugarcane plantation areas, some of the older North Indian temples, such as those at Long Mountain and Triolet, were

FIGURE 1.4. Goddess as boundary marker, Mauritius.

originally built by major landowners on their estates, but they have gradually become widely popular temples. What the temple managers did in these locations to accommodate the crowds with different caste backgrounds was to build a large number of subsidiary shrines for popular North Indian deities. In 1996, much of the worship seemed to focus on those shrines (figure 1.5; personal visits 1996).

At the seacoast in Poudre d'Or, there is an example of an old South Indian worship tradition that seems to have been taken over by a worshipping community with a North Indian heritage. Outside this temple one finds well-sculpted South Indian-style stone images of Śiva's bull Nandi and Subramanya's peacock, which would seem to indicate that the temple was originally dedicated to Śiva and his son Subramanya. Inside the modest modern building, however, one finds a full array of deity images arranged around the outside wall, with an open area in the middle for the congregation. Going around the

FIGURE 1.5. Triolet temple, Mauritius.

hall in a clockwise direction one first finds the South Indian Vaiṣṇava deity Venkatēśvara, then Rāma and Sītā, Hanumān, Durgā, Ganeśa, Śiva and Parvatī, Subramanya, Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, Saraswatī, a swing, another Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, and a Guru-chair. Near the entrance, there is still more room for a modern Hari Kṛṣṇa display on the left and a Sai Baba display on the right. The hall in which these images are found is a rectangle, which holds a congregation of a hundred or more, and there is a great deal of music in the worship routine. Outside in a separate shrine on the south of the east-facing temple is a very fearsome Kālī image, which faces north (personal visit 1996).

By the 1920s, the North Indian Hindus were awakened from their half-hearted efforts at developing a worship tradition by the arrival of a number of Arya Samaj preachers from India. The Arya Samaj had been established in the later part of the nineteenth century by Dayananda Saraswati, who held that image worship was a later form of Hinduism and that the original form had

been worship around a Vedic fire altar. The Arya Samaj preachers had enjoyed some success in the Punjab in India, but their impact seemed limited to that area. Their impact in each of the small indentured societies was much greater, because they arrived just as the Hindu communities in those places had started to find their identity and were trying to find an agreed-upon set of religious practices in the new setting. In Mauritius, where the North Indian community in particular had not felt any great urgency to define its worship tradition, the Arya Samaj with its professional preachers and well-defined worship system had a strong appeal.

While a large percentage of the Mauritian Hindus were initially attracted to the Arya Samaj, it was not long before the social division within the North Indian community began to be a stumbling block for this new reform movement. A significant number of those who had been labeled "Chamār" or low caste saw an opportunity in the Arya Samaj claim that it was totally opposed to "caste." Once the Chamārs began to join the Arya Samaj in significant numbers, however, a reaction set in. The landowners, who had earlier built temples on their estates, recognized the threat to the local tradition represented by the Arya Samaj, and they took the initiative in organizing a Sanātana or "traditional" Hindu movement to counter the Arya Samaj.

In the context of Mauritius, the Sanātanas had an interesting role model in the way the Catholic Church's influence was felt. The Catholic Church lent its support to the French-led social hierarchy in a variety of ways, and a few of the grand Catholic cathedrals had come to be considered almost state institutions. In a similar way, some grand Hindu temples, such as the one in Triolet, had also come to belong to the whole society and to serve as the source of reverence for the whole island.[9] In contrast, the Arya Samaj took the form of a new religious reform that appealed to specific followers gathered in austere worship halls. The Arya Samaj did not want to be labeled the "Chamār religion," and when it found that it could not break the back of the social division already established in the North Indian community between the "upper" castes and the "Chamārs," it eventually had to divide its own religious community along similar lines. Therefore, the Arya Samaj built separate halls for the members of the Arya Samaj who considered themselves upper caste and for those recognized as "Chamār." The "Chamār" section of the movement was eventually called the Arya Ravi Ved Pracharini Sabha and was considered an identifiable minority group eligible for government funds. Over the years, the controversies associated with the early years of the Arya Samaj have become less important, and, with Hinduism now thought of almost as a national religion, the Arya Samaj fits in comfortably as a welcome voice within a grand national chorus (figure 1.6).

FIGURE 1.6. Plain Arya Samaj temple, Mauritius.

The Modern Period

Mauritius had a singularly quiet political period for a half century from the 1880s to the 1930s. A body called the Council of Government gave the landowners a role in advising the British colonial government, but with only 12,000 people eligible to vote for the few seats on the Council, the Indians were hardly aware that the Council existed, and in practice it served as the voice of the French planters (Addison and Hazareesingh 1993).

An effort at a uniquely Mauritian cultural and political initiative came from a group within the elite community of planters who realized that clinging to a French cultural background alienated the growing number of planters from other cultural backgrounds. They used the term "Mauritian Entity" to describe what they considered the unique cultural heritage of Mauritius, and as early as 1910 established a political party called the Action Libérale in order to nominate candidates for the Council. Gandhi's associate, Manilal Maganlal Doctor, was working in Mauritius at the time and supported the idea, and a significant number of Indians agreed to run in the Council elections under the banner of this party. Although the movement stayed around for a considerable time, Indians eventually saw it as a cloak for permanently establishing the

superior status of French culture. In his history of 1935, Aunauth Beejadhur looked back on the movement with skepticism. He saw it as a way to insist on the superiority of one civilization:

> one based on the Christian religion and the French culture. We do not blame those people (no doubt well-meaning) who, in order to realize the Mauritian entity, want to subject the different races that people this country to one and only one civilization. Well, we cannot blame those people who, not forsaking their own traditions, would like others to get rid of theirs. Being heirs to a civilization, which is at present predominant, they want other people to have a taste of it. But the Indo-Mauritian, too, is heir to a civilization. (p. 66)

By the 1930s, young Franco-African Creoles and Indians both began returning after their study abroad. They soon gave voice to the long pent-up resentment the workers on the island held toward the oppressive working conditions carefully maintained by the well-organized French elite. Dr. Maurice Curé, a Franco-African Creole organized the Labour Party in the 1930s with the help of another Creole, Emmanuel Anquetil. They were soon joined by the Indian doctor and future Prime Minister, Seewoosagar Ramgoolam, who had been active in the London branch of the Indian National Congress while he was a student in Great Britain. By 1937, this new party had been instrumental in organizing unions all over the island, and strikes and some violence began to break out. In a series of elections, a Legislative Council gradually came to be chosen by a broader and broader electorate (Addison and Hazareesingh 1993).

By the election of 1948, however, the political hurdle the society was going to have to face was starting to emerge. The French settlers had by this time become organized, and, under the leadership of Jules Koenig, they had formed the Ralliement Mauricien Party (later the Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate or PMSD) and were trying to find ways to avoid the move toward Independence. Koenig feared that in a democratic society the Indian majority would have power, and he worked to find ways of turning the people of African background or the Creoles against the Indians. Eventually, he saw an opportunity to split the Indian community as well and tried to get the Muslim businessmen concerned about what looked like a prospective "Hindu" majority. Dr. Ramgoolam, who had by 1948 become the head of the Labour Party, calmly led the Indian majority through the next two decades of protracted constitutional talks, carefully working with the more militant voice of the Indians that was expressed through the Independent Forward Bloc (IFB) started in 1958 by the fiery Bissoondoyal brothers (Simmons 1982).

Eventually, the efforts of the PMSD to arrange a continuing colonial link for Mauritius, such as the one France had developed for the nearby island of Réunion, were rejected, and Independence came in 1968. A constitutional guarantee provided some representation for the minority communities. The guarantee was that 8 of the 68 seats in parliament would be reserved for the minority communities that as a result of the vote had ended up represented in the legislature in numbers that are less than their percentage in the total population. For this purpose, the four communities on the island were identified by the labels "Hindu" (428,167), "General Population," which puts the French and the Creole together, (236,367), "Muslim" (137,081), and "Sino-Mauritian" (24,084). In each of the elections held since 1968, the last three groups have divided up the eight reserved seats by granting seats to the "best losers" from the different communities in an effort to achieve the desired representation.

In practice, the political maneuvering of the period since Independence has been lively, with a constant reshuffling of party labels. Each party has felt obliged to choose a North Indian leader, but also includes some active participation of French and Creole leaders, some Muslim representatives, and a dignified role for at least one Sino-Mauritian businessman. With the shift to a system with both a President and a Prime Minister in 1991, an even greater opportunity for balancing the representation of the different communities developed, and, by 2003, Paul Bérenger, the longtime voice in the Opposition, became the first French Prime Minister of the country.

In spite of its comfortable democratic majority, the long-oppressed Indian community has not found it easy to make major changes in the economic and social structure of the society. The Labour Party had once thought of following the lead of the Congress governments in the early years of Indian independence by nationalizing the sugar industry and bringing in other socialist economic arrangements. Some of the French planters, fearing such developments, fled at the time of Independence, but those who stayed remained well organized, and found ways of getting the government to hesitate about these plans. In the end, the ownership patterns in the primary industry have changed very little.

Schooling was extremely elitist throughout the colonial period. Both the colonial government and the Roman Catholic Church accepted the argument of the French planters that the working class did not need education, and most of the educated elite were educated in French. After Independence, the government decided that the language of education should be English, but the French-based Creole the students spoke at home did not provide a very solid base for their performance in English-medium schools. Some progress is

being made as a second generation is now in the school system, but the newspapers are still owned by the French elite and published in French, and the television has no choice but to broadcast primarily in French, Creole, and Hindi, with English playing a minor role. When, in 1983, the second Prime Minister, Aneerood Jugnauth, took over, he decided to steer away from socialist-inspired changes in the economy and society and concentrate on bringing in small-scale industry to boost the economy. The established Chinese traders in the island were especially helpful in this endeavor, and the economy did pick up, but again discernible changes in the role of the long-suffering Indian laborers in the society were hardly visible (Addison and Hazareesingh 1993).

New Religious Developments

In spite of the relatively minor changes in the economic and social roles the different communities play in Mauritian society since Independence, there has been a significant increase in activity within the Hindu community. These new religious developments can probably best be summarized in terms of three categories: new religious movements, new forms of communal activity within the ethnic subgroups, and new forms of public activity on a national scale.

Most of the newer religious movements within Hinduism are found in a significant way in all the regions of the world in which large communities of Indians have settled. As described earlier, the Arya Samaj had an important role in Mauritius as early as the 1920s, and about one-quarter of all the North Indian Hindus list themselves in the census as belonging to one or another of the Arya Samaj organizations. The Ramakrishna Mission has for some time had an important but quieter role, and in recent years the Hari Kṛṣṇa Movement and the Brahma Kumāri Movement have made major efforts to establish a presence in the island. The ecumenical tone of the last three organizations, which allows them to appeal to both non-Indians and Indians in certain parts of the world, does not work so well in Mauritius. In this setting, Hindus like to think of themselves as more "Hindu" than even their relatives in India, and these new religious movements are understood to be only for Indians in Mauritius.

By recognizing religious identities in the constitution, Mauritius set in motion a series of developments in the sphere of ethnic identity that have still to run their course. By using the label "general population" for the diverse groups having European and African ancestry, any reflection on the African heritage of Mauritius has tended to be glossed over. On the other hand the geopolitical reality that places Mauritius within the larger African region has

been given some attention in foreign policy, and this constitutional arrangement might at some future time come unraveled. By freezing the constitutional labels "Muslim" and "Sino-Mauritian" in place, political expediency arrested the natural developments within those two communities. As each of these communities now has a guaranteed, but limited, political role, there is a tendency to inhibit those communities from taking leadership roles in the wider society. This is especially problematic because members of those communities are among the wealthiest and best educated in the society, and they have little opportunity for leadership roles. The most dramatic changes in "ethnicity" were eventually to come within the large majority community labeled "Hindu." When competition developed for the many opportunities made available to the majority community in a democratic society, a host of Indian group identities began to appear in the census (Dinan 1986). Suddenly language, caste, and sectarian-based subgroups all began to take form, in the hope that at some future time they might qualify for a government grant. The answers to the question about religious affiliation on the census became for Hindus a long list that mixed up language, caste, and sect in a hopeless jumble. Identifying the whole country as "Hindu" has had the odd effect of making Hindu identity and Hindu religious practice more difficult to define than it is in other locations, where people expect to hear the voice of the Hindu minority try to make itself heard in the larger society.

One way that the lack of clarity about Hindu identity is being tackled currently is that some subgroups of Indians are taking the initiative of building new temples. One of the more interesting examples of this kind of new initiative is the way the tiny Telegu-speaking community went about building the temple at the inland mountain site of Lalolla. Telegu-speakers traveling back to India could hardly help but realize that the wealthiest temple in all of India these days is at Tirupati in the Telegu-speaking state of Andhra Pradesh. Once a handful of Telegu-speakers proposed that a likeness of the Tirupati temple dedicated to Lord Venkatēśvara be built in the village of Lalolla at the foothill of a mountain in the center of the island, there was little doubt that money from India and from prominent Hindus from all subgroups on the island would be forthcoming. It was not as clear that Hindus in Mauritius will find the orthodox ritual of an Indian-style temple attractive. In 1996, the priests from India were carrying on a regular worship routine in the temple, but there were very few worshippers. The temple was placed in this mountain setting because it is reminiscent of the mountain setting of the Tirupati temple in India, but the idea of seeing that mountain setting as sacred and making an effort to go there on pilgrimage is something that Mauritian Hindus have yet to learn. The Telegu-speaking subcommunity is itself hardly strong enough to

maintain this major temple, and it will probably be some time before it is clear whether their ethnically motivated religious initiative will prove popular with other Hindus of Mauritius (personal visit 1996).

Similar questions, however, are also relevant with regard to the Swastika Temple in the suburban setting of Curepipe (figure 1.7). This relatively new temple is in the wealthy suburb to which the French elite fled in the 1870s in order to escape the malaria epidemic in Port Louis. At that time, they built two of the most magnificent stone churches on the island. Some North Indians have slowly joined the wealthy elite of this community over the years, and it seemed appropriate to some of them that they too have an impressive place of worship. The Swastika Temple is set on a large open ground just beside the stadium. It was build with the worship hall on the second story, and this gives it an imposing external presence that rivals that of the nearby churches. The marble sanctuary has a church-like balcony all around and has colorful giant murals as well as images of the deities. A regular worshipping community has yet to develop, however, and this imposing temple seems like a symbolic center for orthodox Hinduism only on a few special occasions each year (personal visit 1996).

The third new development in Hindu practice during the modern era is the way in which great public manifestations of Hindu devotion have become possible. Festivals in Mauritius always provided a time for great public celebration,

FIGURE 1.7. Modern Swastika temple, Curepipe, Mauritius.

and one of the few ways the downtrodden North Indian community could express itself. With the coming of Independence, however, one of the oldest festivals, the Night of Śiva or Śivarātri, which is held in February or March each year, has become a week-long national celebration.

The usual way in which Śivarātri is celebrated in India is to meet relatives and make offerings to deceased ancestors during the day, and then, whenever possible, to spend the night in a temple ground in prayer. Such celebrations are often observed near rivers, and are especially prominent along the River Ganga in India, which legend holds was caught by Śiva in his hair when it dropped from heaven. Some time back, devout Mauritians of North Indian background began substituting a local source of sacred water for the River Ganga. They would go on foot to a place called Grand Bassin in the forest of southwest Mauritius where there is a great crater that fills with rainwater, and bring the pure water back home for the worship of Śiva during the Śivarātri festival. After someone brought a vessel of water from River Ganga in India and poured it into the reservoir, the place came to be called Ganga Talao, and the water came to be thought of as holy. Now during the week before Śivarātri, groups from every North Indian temple on the island build a colorful decorated shrine they call a "*kawer*"[10] and carry it on foot to Ganga Talao to get the holy water for their home temple (figure 1.8).

FIGURE 1.8. Śivaratri festival procession, Mauritius.

With groups going up and down the highways of the island for a whole week, police escorts form, traffic slows down, and shelters with flags and loudspeakers are put up in every village. One-third of the entire population is said to make the pilgrimage in one form or another, and many of the others are involved in looking after the shelters and mounting receptions when the pilgrims return back to the home temple. The Prime Minister goes to some of the prominent temples for worship, and the national television coverage for the week includes dozens of accounts of the pilgrimage and a nightly special on Hindu temples, Hindu music, and live coverage of worship services being held in the temples. On the banks of the reservoir itself, a half dozen temples have sprung up. The public enthusiasm of the modern festival organizers includes operating tour packages from India and South Africa, making the exaggerated claim that half the population visits Ganga Talao, and putting up a temple on the site in which a "modern" arrangement of the different images (in the corners rather than at the cardinal directions, and with Ganeśa not at the beginning) is established, and liquid offerings to the *linga* of Śiva are carried by plastic pipe. By the end of the week, the self-conscious Mauritians comment over and over again to visitors "we are more Hindu than the Hindus of India." While that statement certainly reflects the public message of the festival, the psychological satisfactions that it provides to individuals are much more varied. The coed, predominantly teenaged, pilgrim groups clearly have a good time and get a strong sense of the island they live on, and the self-expression they can find in that limited world. When they arrive back in the home temple, and the elders in the temple community ceremonially wash their feet, garland them, and encircle them with the camphor flame *arati* light, much as they do the deity, they know that they are an important part of a culturally rich community (interviews with participants 1996).

Analysis

Mauritius is an amazing human experiment in which people from Europe, Africa, and Asia met and tried to figure out how each could find personal and cultural satisfaction within the confines of an island that can now be traversed by car in any direction in less than two hours. The plurality within the population has led to an infinitely extended game of hierarchical status-seeking, but the communities involved have always known that they had to be careful of others in such a crowded atmosphere. In the early years, women were in short supply in all the different groups, and there was a great deal of sharing of bloodlines, but the hierarchical nature of society has gradually increased the need for cultural pride, and ethnic groups have gradually become very distinct, and intermarriage quite rare.

The French settlers, who set the structure of the society in place in the first half of the eighteenth century, reflected the last and most extreme form of French Catholic aristocracy, where Roman Catholicism and a racially based slave society could provide them a comfortable and cultured life on rural estates. This was a time prior to the French Revolution, and also prior to the emergence of capitalism and the commercialization of labor. These settlers did not think in terms of individual rights; nor did they think of the slaves in terms of their cash value. They did not want slaves educated, and they did not want many women slaves for they did not think it was proper for women to work on the land. The church was expected to govern the society, and it was the members of the Ordre de Lazare who kept the records of the society, and saw to it that the slaves were all baptized and properly buried.

The slaves who were brought into this society were, of course, baffled by its elaborate formalism and offended by the racism and brutality it used to control their lives. The Malagasy slaves the Dutch had brought in almost a century earlier had almost all escaped, and they lived in the forests, plundered their former masters, and had a major role in inducing them to leave the island. When other Malagasy slaves brought over from Réunion by the early French settlers also revolted or tried to sail home, Labourdonnais insisted on bringing field laborers from Mozambique on the African mainland, domestic slaves from the French colony in Bengal in northeast India, and others from Senegal and Malaya. There is no evidence that he thought bringing in this particular mix of slave population would prevent slave revolts, but it does seem to have helped in that regard and slave revolts during the later half of the French rule in Mauritius were rare.

Although there was extensive intermarriage within the slave population, that should not be understood as necessarily leading to a homogeneous society. The structure of racism and hierarchy still pervaded all relationships. The slave women knew that the privileges and status meted out by the French masters would be available to children they bore that were of mixed blood. Some slaves were able to purchase the rights to others, and, by the end of slavery, the “privilege” of buying one’s way to freedom was being used by thousands of the slave elite.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the French also brought in freemen as artisans and traders. Most of the artisans were Hindus from the French colony of Pondicherry in South India and were called “Malabards” in the local language, but others came from Madagascar. Most of the traders were Muslims of Arab, Indian, or Malay background, but a few were Chinese. While these freemen could, of course, return to their countries of origin and some did, many chose to settle down with local women and developed the suburbs of Port

Louis to which they were assigned. Many became Catholic in the expected way, but some of the Hindus and Muslims rebelled against that expectation, and provided a more noticeable cultural diversity than the different groups that made up the slave society were able to do. While the music and dance, and some of the healing rituals, of the Black River area that the most independent-minded of the runaway slaves went to almost certainly come from the original cultures of the slave societies, it was the rebellious freemen who first made the French acknowledge the cultural diversity of the island. Before the end of the century, the French government gave the Hindus and the Muslims of Port Louis official permission to build places of worship for themselves.

The slaves' resentment of the oppressive arrangements of the rural estates is clearly evident in the way they responded to the apprenticeship period spelled out in the abolition order of the British Parliament. This requirement quickly turned into a mockery once the announcement of abolition was made, and the government chose to abandon the system early and just set the slaves free. Only a tiny percentage of the freed slaves chose to continue working on the estates for wages. The planters were in desperate need of labor at the time, as sugarcane acreage was expanding dramatically, but they had fought the abolition moves of the French Revolution (Addison and Hazareesingh 1993), and, now a half century later, stubbornly refused to change the terms of the slave's employment sufficiently to induce many to stay. Even in later years when a few freed slaves were employed, they were paid less than the indentured Indian workers, another indication that the planters were unwilling in principle to turn slaves into wage earners.

While history books talk at length about the suspension of the private recruitment of Indian workers in the 1830s, and the investigations held by the British government before the government recruitment was started in 1843, the fact remains that the French planter group kept control and kept wages at Rs 5 per month when there was a severe shortage of labor in Mauritius and wages elsewhere were higher. The assumptions of the ancient aristocracy into which the slaves were introduced a century earlier had been modified somewhat by the capitalism the British brought with them, but the Indians, who came to work for wages in a capitalist sugar economy, came into a situation that put them in direct contact with masters who still lived in the elegance they had taught the slaves to provide for them, and they still held many of the economic and cultural principles associated with that lifestyle. The Indian indentured laborers, like the slaves before them, learned to make the dialect they spoke as French as they could, and they also had no choice but to accept the local understanding that the few females the planters agreed to include in the shipments were expected to stay in their own homes or those of the master

and not become laborers, except during the rush of harvest. The British authorities made it more difficult to impose the Catholic faith on the new wave of workers, and the tight-knit family life of the Indian women discouraged the older pattern of concubinage. In spite of these changes, the previously established economic and social arrangements provided the general pattern the society continued to follow. The Indian workers on the estates fit into that established system with very few modifications.

While it is important to remember that Mauritian society is still defined by the aristocratic values originally set in place by the French planters, it is also important to recognize that in certain important ways the French allowed the flood of new immigrants from India, who arrived in the middle of the nineteenth century, to "live in their own world" in ways that they had not allowed the Malagasays, Africans, or Indians of earlier generations. There were probably two reasons for this difference. One was a matter of numbers. With so many new workers arriving at once, the planters could not deal with them in as personal a way as they had with the slaves, and the Indians too were zealous about keeping their own cultural identity. Secondly, the interference of the British colonial administrators, while handled in ways that the French planters could often control, still had a role in encouraging the development of legalized marriage patterns (from the 1850s), and extensive small-scale landholding (from the 1880s). The net effect of these developments was to allow a North Indian Hindu community to emerge as a kind of subordinate "parallel" society to the ruling society established by the French planters.

As used in this context, "parallel society" refers to a subsection of a larger society that has sufficient autonomy that it feels it can develop its own self-definition and furnish itself with symbols of self-recognition, and yet at the same time defines itself as a mirror reflection of the values prevailing in the dominant or ruling society (Dumont 1957, 1970). It is, in other words, the dominant society that still provides the parallel society with its basic structural pattern, in that the dominant society defines the economic roles, the languages of communication, the rungs of the social hierarchy, and even the opportunities for religious and family institutionalization. Studies of lower-caste communities in India sometimes provide amazingly clear evidence, for instance, of relatively low castes lording it over still lower castes by invoking the ideology of "Sanskritization" used against them by the dominant caste. Chamārs in the Bhojpuri area of North India, where so many of the Mauritian laborers came from, are notorious for the way in which their lifestyle imitates that of the Thākurs or Kṣatrīyas around them.[11] In Mauritius, it was especially the "Singhs" or Thākurs who found the use of French, and some of the other aristocratic skills of the French planters, useful in their effort to replicate the

French social hierarchy within the Indian community. It was also this self-declared Thākur elite among the Indian laborers who skillfully encouraged another group of their fellow workers to claim middle-class status by describing themselves by the mythical title of "Vaishya." These two ranks in the Indian status system of Mauritius neatly replicate among the Indians the roles of the French planters and the mixed blood Franco-African managers at the head of the larger Mauritian society.

By accepting the French planters' notion that women should not be part of the capitalist economy's "wage laborer" world, and that food, dress, and religious practice reflect social status, the Indians were able to reinterpret some of their traditional "caste" values and use them as part of the new "class" hierarchy of Mauritius. While the adoption of the prevailing system of values did little to change the position of most of the Bhojpuri-speaking laborers at the bottom of the social hierarchy, the adoption of a common value system did make the Indians part of an understandable cultural and social hierarchy within which they could look for opportunities to achieve status.

In a general sense, the Indians feel that their earlier agreement with the idea of a common value system should now mean that with the arrival of a democratic political system they should be free to make changes in the system that they find desirable. The promise of this opportunity has thus far proven surprisingly difficult to use in working for cultural or social change. The early decision of the first Indian Prime Minister to make English the medium of education and the nation's official language looked decisive, but it was challenged by the local French elite as an evidence of Indian insensitivity to the pattern of Mauritian affairs, and all the major newspapers and most of the radio and television programs are still French. The impact of this decision over a whole generation has been quite unclear, and the Indian community of Mauritius has not been able to use that declaration to develop a distinct English-speaking intellectual community or replace the traditional values of the French-speaking intellectual elite. In a similar way, the early efforts to define the democratic government as pro-labor and indirectly pro-Indian did not last. What happened politically was that the constant redefinition of political parties and political identities allowed for a regular reshuffling of the cards without allowing for any change in social or economic class or in international perspective. In fact, the theoretical "majority" status the Indian community now enjoys has actually numbed its ability to bring about either cultural or social change through political action. Because of its comfortable majority position, the Indian community expects to have an Indian Prime Minister or President, but much of its attention is then focused on the handing out of favors for the subgroups under the large Indian umbrella. The other three

communities, on the other hand, tend to focus on staying internally united and identifying the government ministry that will bring the most benefit to their community.[12]

Hinduism in Mauritius has now achieved a kind of unofficial status as the national religion. The undergirding of this status is the medieval European notion introduced by the French that a national culture needs a religious foundation. The Catholic Church served in this role for much of Mauritius' history, but the role was not officially recognized after the British arrived in 1810. When the Hindu majority began to assume that role for their religious heritage after Independence, all elements in society felt uncomfortable for a period of time but could find little reason to object.

In practice, what the role of national religion means is that Hindu practice is actually quite general and less ritually distinctive than it might be in a minority situation. Citizens of all backgrounds are happy to see the nation caught up in the Śivarātri celebrations, and temples with different backgrounds are busy importing priests and musicians from India or Śrī Lanka in order to upgrade the quality of their ritual activity. Except for some organizational efforts within the Arya Samaj, there is really no local tradition or sectarian affiliation that is characteristic of Mauritian Hinduism, and no distinctive clerical leadership has emerged.

The odd claim, which one hears so often, that "we are more Hindu than the Hindus of India" has to be understood as a reflection on this status as national religion. India had until recently a truly traditional society that had not yet developed "national" self-consciousness. There were regional rulers, and they often spent much of their time lending their patronage to Hindu institutions. What happened in medieval Europe is that a similarly traditional society had undergone a long sequence of changes that included the development of forms of nationalism, some of which were linked closely with one or another church during their early formation. Prerevolutionary France had a particularly complicated history in this regard with some bishops seeing their strongest ties as being with the church authorities in Rome, while others saw their ties as primarily within the French nation. The early French settlers in Mauritius were very much of the later variety, and even included some Hugenots who had broken with the Catholic Church altogether, but were staunch French nationalists. In this tradition, the "national" part of the religious heritage is considered central. Hindus in Mauritius are Mauritians first, but are also proud to say that they can finally speak of Mauritius itself as "Hindu."

As we will see later Hindus in other indentured societies sometimes wonder how they might assert themselves now that they realize that they are no longer under colonial rule and are in some sense in a majority position.

None of the others, however, have ever achieved the comfortable majority position the Hindus of Mauritius presently enjoy, and they have continued to some extent to think of themselves as the beleaguered communities they were when their religious traditions were first developed. While those situations of uncertainty have not allowed those communities to make the claim that they have established a "Hindu society" in the way the Mauritian Hindus do, they have sometimes in other ways established more distinctive patterns of Hindu life and worship than the community in Mauritius found necessary.

For the indentured workers arriving in Mauritius, their new land must have seemed a bit strange. The French had established a social foundation that pervaded the society, and, whether you worked directly for one of them or not, the hierarchical values of that foundation affected the social and political options the island provided. On the other hand, for the Hindus coming from India the sense of sharing in a sacred civilization and working within a hierarchical social order must have seemed vaguely familiar, and as time went on the two systems must have blended into one another in their imaginations. Indians were not challenged by the colonial system to adopt a new religion or a new system of education, and the imagined world their own festival celebrations and caste hierarchy brought into play seemed to the others to be variations on the shared forms of civilization. When in the context of democratic evolution this imagined world was transformed into the cultural plans of a new Indian leadership group, everyone realized cultural change was coming. Now that Śivarātri has been turned into a national celebration, the rest of society seems to be waiting to see what is next. As most Mauritians see it, there is a deeply rooted island culture, and while it is legitimate that the Hindu majority introduce a ritual element from their remembered past to mark the sacred character of the island, it is taken for granted that there will not be a radical shift in values for anyone else in society.

It is a distinct accomplishment that the workers shipped to this tiny island in the middle of the nineteenth century have been able to establish this new homeland for themselves. For generations they had to quietly make their peace with the strong-minded French planters that were there before them. They could take comfort in their large numbers, but they still had to come to understand the culture the French had established and weave their way toward Independence carefully. Now that democracy gives them more of a leadership role they are taking more initiative, but it is still within the context of building a pluralistic society that they bring memories of the Indian subcontinent into the cultural conversation of their new homeland.

Story Two

Guyana: Invented Traditions

Guyana is a small country on the northeast coast of South America (figure 2.1). Dutch colonists went there as early as 1616 and decided that the lowlands bordering the ocean would be ideal for growing certain crops if they could be protected from flooding. Soon, they were bringing in West African slaves and were able to build the elaborate sea wall, sluices, and canals, which still drain the area. They had, however, a great deal of trouble controlling the slaves, many of whom became runaway "maroons," living in the interior in the tropical forest with the native people. As slave revolts gradually weakened their position locally and other colonial powers challenged them globally, the Dutch had to allow the French and the British to take over parts of the territory. In the end, the territory was divided into three separate colonies, with the French in the East, the Dutch retaining the center, and the British taking over the western area. In time, it became obvious that the soil in the western area or British Guiana was the least saline and the best for growing sugarcane (Cumpston 1953).

The British planters who moved into the colony when the British took over in 1815 were among the most ambitious of a new breed of capitalists. They were Free Traders who wanted a capitalist version of colonial rule to increase trade all over the world. They agreed with the reforms that had led to the ending of the slave trade in 1807, but they were desperate for a new source of labor for the burgeoning sugar industry. They agreed in principle with the reformist push for English education in places like India, and they had no objection to the

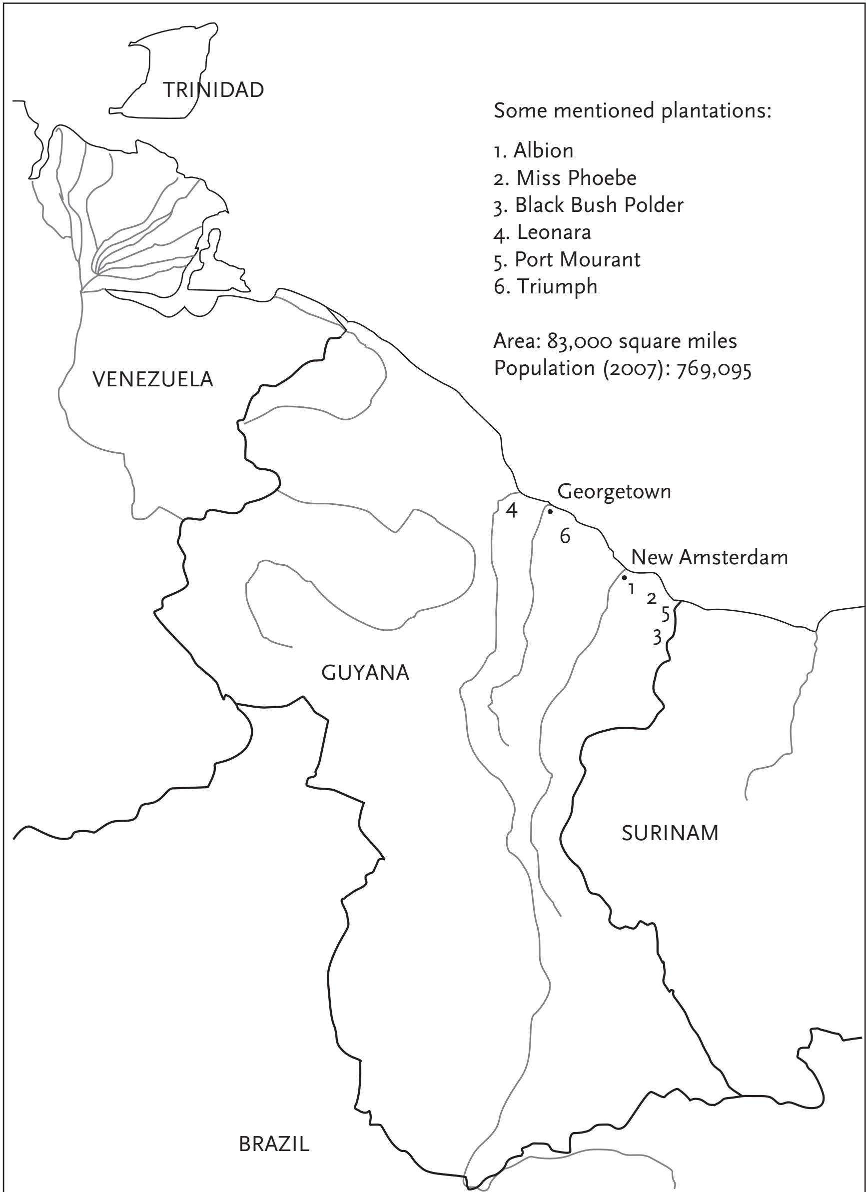

FIGURE 2.1. Map of Guyana.

missionary friends of the Anti-Slavery Society setting up schools at the edge of the plantations to educate the slave population of Guyana. The coastal plain they inherited from the Dutch was carved up into a long string of strip plantations about a quarter-mile wide, which reached back from the rail line (later the road) along the coast toward the inland tropical jungle (figure 2.2).[1]

FIGURE 2.2. Sluice gate, Guyana.

The British planters did not usually live on the plantations as the Dutch had, but resided in Georgetown, or even in Britain, and administered their holdings through salaried managers and other staff. With the call in the British Parliament for an end to slavery focused very much on British Guiana, the planters launched their own demand for an alternative form of labor in the same forum. By the time slavery was abolished in 1833, the Colonial Office was already busy putting together a carefully drafted plan that would see the colonial government in India recruit workers and have them shipped to British Guiana (later Guyana). It was in this spirit that in 1838 the first shiploads of "indentured" workers anywhere arrived in Guyana, and by the time the system was abolished in 1917 over 238,909 workers had been brought to this tiny coastal plain (Smith 1962; Tinker 1974).[2]

With few other options available in the colony after 1833, the 80,000 (Schomburgk 1840; Higman 1984) freed slaves moved into settlements near the plantations and continued to work as day laborers on the plantations. Because the colony had been one of those most directly connected with the antislavery agitation in Britain, the settlements of freed slaves soon had Protestant mission-run schools and churches.[3] The West African–Guyanese segment of the population quickly developed a very British style of religion and education, even though most continued to live in the small settlements at the end of each of the many plantations. As each of the shiploads of indentured

workers from India arrived, small numbers of them were sent to the different plantations. There they were brazenly housed in the slave quarters within the plantation, which had just recently been left vacant when the slaves moved to the settlements. The planters did, however, seem to take seriously the fact that these workers were wage laborers in a capitalist system, and the terms of their contracts were generally honored. The terms of this indentureship were certainly brutal in that many were tricked into leaving home, were taken half way around the globe and set down in a place with no other form of employment available, and were then expected to work long hours on industrial-sized plantations. On the other hand, except for a thin line of salaried staff and some well-meaning missionaries, the colonial whites were largely absent, and the Indians did not face the day-to-day cultural assault that was sometimes associated with colonialism in India. And the presence of Afro-Guyanese working side by side with them on the plantations gave the Indians a ready-made model of how a community caught in a tight situation for a couple of generations could invent cultural and social norms for itself.[4] In a surprisingly short time, the Indians in Guyana also began to establish traditions of their own (Jayawardena 1967; Nath 1970).

Although the colonial arrangements for contract or indentured workers included the provision of a free return trip to their homeland after ten years of labor if they wished, very few in Guyana chose to return. It is not clear why that was the case, except that we know the plantation system was very stable and workers were in demand; so what most did was renew their contracts on the same plantation and continue to develop the community life to which they were growing accustomed. Most of the family histories I was able to trace seemed to indicate that the workers stayed in the slave quarters for two or three generations before moving to the settlement at the end of the plantation. In any case, the option of moving to the settlement in which their African fellow workers lived was there once the first five-year contract was fulfilled, and all the Indians eventually made the move to the settlements. In contrast to each of the other locations where indentured workers went, in Guyana there were no alternative residential or economic opportunities available for workers who had finished their first five-or-ten-year contracts. By the end of the nineteenth century, a few Indians were allowed to use some of the less-productive land for plantation-style rice farming, but even in those situations, the plantation boundaries were maintained and the economic arrangements were not altered in a major way. This economic limitation had an indirect social benefit in that it forced the Indians to work hard at building solid community relations with the Africans with whom they worked and shared a tight-knit settlement community (Andrews 1929; Jayawardena 1967).

During the first couple of generations, while still living in the plantation housing, there was a sharp separation between the Indian workers who had arrived from the port of Madras and spoke Tamil, and those who had arrived from the port of Calcutta and spoke Hindi. During the first two decades of indentureship, there were roughly equal numbers brought from these two ports. Apparently, the "Madrasis" or Tamil-speakers had been more difficult for the planters' staff to handle, and in the 1850s, the planters requested the colonial authorities to send fewer of them (Nath 1970; Campbell 1976). Because a program of indentureship was about to start in South Africa, the colonial authorities decided in 1860 to send most of the Madras ships to Durban, South Africa, for the time being. By the turn of the century, large steamship loads of "Madrasis" once again began arriving in Guyana,[5] but from 1860 onward the Tamil-speakers were a distinct minority (around 25 percent) in the Indian population. It is not clear why the Hindi-speakers and Tamil-speakers became two clearly distinct communities in Guyana, because once people moved to the settlements they all spoke the Creole developed by the Africans that had settled there before them. After 1917, both Hindi and Tamil became languages used only in worship settings. What we have to assume is that, in the beginning, when the Indians were housed within the plantation in the old slave quarters, the language barrier was indeed serious, and that during the first generation, the two communities developed different religious and social practices and began to look askance at one another. By the time people moved to the settlements, this separation was so clear that one finds the Tamil-speakers buried in cemeteries with the Africans, and the Hindi-speakers, whether Hindu or Muslim, buried in a separate cemetery (observation based on study of cemetery stones as seen in 1995). Once the Hindi-speakers were in the clear majority, they were in a position of strength and could link the darker color of the Tamil-speakers with low-caste status and make the differentiation sharper. On the other hand, the Tamil-speakers, who, as we have seen, had already irritated the planters' staff, may have been the first to organize themselves and codify their distinctive traditions, and missionaries and Africans from the beginning seemed well aware of their unusual funeral celebrations and their great skill in dealing with people possessed by evil spirits. As we soon see, these two communities eventually developed two very different, but in many ways equally strong and equally creative, religious traditions (Karna Bahadur Singh 1978).

By the end of the nineteenth century, the social life of the settlements was an interesting cultural mix. Everyone living in the settlement had almost the same social and economic status in that they virtually all worked on the plantations. The 40 percent of the population who were of West African

background had been born in the settlement and, while proud of the legendary slave revolts of their ancestors, were themselves prepared to live with the three-strand colonial regime of British government officials, planters, and missionaries (Higman 1984). The first two strands of this derivative colonial regime were almost totally absent, and the Africans found themselves working most closely with the missionaries, who were in some ways ideologically opposed to the colonial system, which they thought of as the system that had brought the evil of slavery (British Guiana Coolie Missions 1882; Bronkhurst 1883). The Africans loved the school system provided by the missionaries and filled the many small churches that the different Protestant denominations built in each settlement. A small percentage of them used their education to get low-level government jobs in the towns that developed at the ferries that carried people and goods across the three great rivers that demarcated the coastal plain,[6] but most stayed in the settlements near the plantation work and spoke the Creole that all could understand.

During the desperate search for workers in the 1830s, a significant number of workers had been brought in from Portugal and from China. Once the huge flood from India started in 1838, these two other sources of workers were abandoned, but the workers already there have stayed and have formed significant communities even though there are only a few families in each settlement, and in each case they now represent less than 5 percent of the total population. Most of the Portuguese workers came from the island of Madeira where they had already been growing sugarcane, so they were sometimes given supervisory roles in the operation of the plantations in Guyana and were often the first to be able to afford a shop in the settlement. Because they formed the backbone of the Roman Catholic minority in the population, they have tended to move their shops to the larger settlements where there are Catholic churches and schools (Menezez 1995). The Chinese workers were severely cut off from their cultural roots when no more Chinese workers were recruited, but in the multicultural atmosphere of the settlements, they found that their unusual cooking style was much appreciated, and they have been able to make Chinese chicken and noodles and Chinese chicken and rice, the two standard dishes for public consumption in Guyana (Crawford 1989). A few Chinese families have left the settlements and become major figures in the commercial life of the nation.

When the Indians began to move into these tight-knit settlement communities, they did not have many options. They enjoyed a reasonably equal position economically and socially, and they had little option but to speak Creole and send their children to school. Their ability to live a simple life and save their money soon made it possible for them too to open shops, but it

would be a long time before there were significant changes in the basic plantation economy and colonial political arrangements. What was most puzzling to the Indians about life in the settlement was the prominent role played by the Christian churches the Africans and Portuguese attended, and the links these churches had with the schools all the children attended. While the option of sharing in the life of the churches appealed to some (10 percent of Indians were Christian in the 1960 census) in the Indian population and was accepted as part of settlement life, it was not long before the "Madrasi" Hindus, the North Indian Hindus, and the North Indian Muslims all created small settlement-based worship traditions of their own (Jayawardena 1967).

The South Indian or "Madras" Tradition

The Indian group that seems to have developed its own distinctive religious tradition first is the group that came from South India. One possible explanation for their early sense of a distinct identity is that as early as 1845, Mr. Veeraswamy Mudaliar, a member of a prominent landlord caste in South India, was made Chief Interpreter of the Department of Immigration (Nath 1970). Exactly what role he played at different stages in the history of indentureship is not known, but we know he was widely respected and was still in that office in 1880 when one of the plantations went bankrupt as sugar prices dropped, and it was Mudaliar who was made "zamindar" of the plantation and asked to find workers who might want to buy shares and work it (Nath 1970; Karna Bahadur Singh 1978). We also know that his son, J. A. Veeraswamy, was the first Indian appointed to a magistrate's post in Guyana (Nath 1970). One possible role Mudaliar might have had in assisting the development of the South Indian community is that he had the authority to allow workers to move from the plantations to which they were originally assigned. "Madrasis" living in Leonara, west of Georgetown and near the Essequibo River, and those in Triumph, just east of Georgetown, both have family stories that describe the effort to develop a concentration of "Madrasis" in those two places. The present residents of Leonara think their ancestors were drawn to Mudaliar's plantation, but I was unable to confirm this.[7] The major concentration of South Indians is around Albion in the eastern Berbice area. That concentration is not so difficult to explain because in that fertile area there is dense population everywhere, and there would have been enough "Madrasis" in every settlement to sustain temple compounds as close as a quarter mile apart.

In any case by the mid-1850s, the "Madrasis" were such a distinct community that the planters identify them as a particular problem both for their

defiance and their unwillingness to accept the plantation routines. The planters asked that fewer of them be sent to Guyana. A contemporary British historian, Henry Dalton, writing in 1855 added his opinion that the Madras Coolies are "indolent, dirty and vagrant in their habits, . . . inapt at the work for which they were intended, irregular in their attendance, and migrating in their ways; numbers have abandoned the estates to which they were appointed to crowd about the town begging and filling the most menial situations for a bare pittance"(Nath 1970). Once the colonial authorities honored the request that fewer Madras coolies be sent from India, "Madrasis" became a minority among the Indians, and Indian voices of criticism could be added to those of the planters.

What is amazing is that in the face of this demeaning criticism—or perhaps partly *because* of it—the South Indians were able to develop a vibrant religious tradition, which is still thriving. The tradition they developed is based on the widespread worship of the goddess Māriyammaṉ in the region of India from which they came. Bishop Whitehead's much-quoted account of Māriyammaṉ worship in South India (1921) comes from near the end of the indenture period, but he was clearly describing the primary worship style of the working classes for centuries before his account. What is surprising is that in Guyana, Māriyammaṉ-worship ritual is carried out in accord with a very precise pattern and excludes all other forms of South Indian worship that the workers would have known something about in India. It is not difficult to explain why the Sanskritic worship of Śiva and Viṣṇu temples in South India was not brought to Guyana, because in South India those temple traditions have very rigid ritual requirements that can only be carried out by a number of temple priests trained in the routine from childhood (Fuller 1984). It would have been impossible for any of those priests to be included among the indentured laborers. Somewhat more surprising is the absence of worship of the goddess Draupadī, whose fire-walking[8] and other special rituals are prominent among the worship patterns of the South Indian indentured workers in Mauritius and South Africa. There probably were at least some Draupadī worshippers in Guyana too early in the indenture period, but once the intensely focused worship of Māriyammaṉ became the recognized "Madrasi" form of worship, the whole South Indian community seems to have fallen into line behind that pattern.

When did this neoorthodoxy in South Indian worship develop? When I asked B. Matadin, alias "Gop," who is now the head priest or non-Brāhman *pūjari* of the temple in Albion, the temple that is universally acknowledged as the base from which the cult spread, he said (in 1995) "there has been a temple in Albion for 143 years." If he meant that number literally, the date of 1852

would put the tradition very early in the indentureship period, and we would have to assume that any structures built that early were probably made of tree branches and thatch, much like some special structures that are still put together for the festivals. Comins in his history in 1893 speaks of a government survey in 1870 that found only two Hindu temples in the whole country, whereas Comins himself was able to count thirty-three in his day and expressed doubt about the thoroughness of the government survey (Comins 1893). Bronkhurst, who was a missionary in the area for many years and probably closer to the people than either those who did the government survey or Comins, wrote in his history of 1883 that he saw numerous examples of elaborate forms of Hindu worship, which included images and buildings, especially those of mud construction, which one still sees (Bronkhurst 1883).

The South Indian worship traditions of Guyana are probably very old, but the cultural adjustment involved as indentureship stopped in 1917 seemed to represent a new opportunity for solidifying that religious history. In the decade before the close of indentureship, a new flood of South Indians arrived in Guyana (Ships Records, Archives of the Government of Guyana, Georgetown; surveyed in 1995), and we know from family histories (Karna Bahadur Singh 1978) that some of the new immigrants were directly involved in building the Albion temple. We also know from the family history of Jamsie Naidu (personal interview 1995), long the priest of a reformed Māriyammaṉ temple on the outskirts of Albion, that his father was given a generous plot of land in Albion as part of the plantation owner's effort to get the leaders of the community to move from the plantation housing to the settlement at about the same time. This is certainly the era when the temples we now see in the settlements came into being.

Soon after claiming a 143-year tradition, the head priest of Albion went on to describe a more recent point of origin. He described how the present ritual rules go back to a priest named Bailappa who is seen as the great source of spiritual power this temple tradition possesses. In nearby temples such as Rose Hall, Hampshire, and Whim, the worshippers trace their local tradition to miracles that happened on their plantation, but then are quick to identify their link with Albion by claiming that it was Rajagopal from Albion who carved their images, and Bailappa who installed the power of the Goddess (*Tēvi*) in their images. As the present head priest of Albion explains, Bailappa trained and passed on his authority to Ramswamy Ranganathan, who then passed it on to him when he became head priest. Basically, he describes an apostolic succession of three generations (personal interview 1995).[9] So the neoorthodox nature of the tradition, or the form we see today, can be traced to the founding of the present Albion temple, an event that many worshippers living in 1977 when Karna Bahadur Singh (1978) conducted his research could remember.

Fortunately, we also have a contemporary account of the festival of this temple from 1923. Leslie Phillips, the author of this account, describes himself as a Canadian employed as an overseer of labor on the Albion plantation, which was managed at the time by a James Bee. Phillips' fellow overseer was named Vanier, and Vanier's assistant or driver was a young South Indian named Ramswamy who was also a junior priest in the temple. Ramswamy had invited the two overseers to attend the festival of the Goddess on March 2 of that year. Phillips describes a three-day festival tradition that he says was held every year, but in a big way (such as he witnessed) once in five years. He describes it as having thousands in attendance from the far ends of the country and from every community, including both Muslim and Hindu North Indians, and "Creoles," or Afro-Guyanese, as well as many of his fellow white overseers. He describes the major deity as "Kālī-Mai," and seemed unaware of the name Māriyammaṉ that the head priest of today insists on. (As the head priest explained: "The deity is Māriyammaṉ, and all the hymns and prayers are in her name. For the sake of communicating with North Indians, we use the name of the similar all-Indian Goddess Kālī and speak of Kālī-Mai or Kālī-Mother worship" (personal interview 1995).)

Phillips' account speaks of the head priest as a deeply revered "Mailappa" (presumably misheard from "Bailappa"), and seems to be describing a tradition that is well established. As we have shown above, the worship tradition in that particular temple building was in its first decade, but it probably had a significant history and seemed to everyone concerned in 1923 to be an important tradition. The details of the worship ritual, which Phillips describes very clearly, do seem to reflect a mature tradition and, as we see shortly, are still followed in minute detail in worship even today.

Even though in the 1850s the Madrasis had become an irritant to the British planters, and, as a result of fewer workers being brought in over the next forty years, they had become a minority and were sometimes looked down upon by the lighter-skinned North Indians; the development of their distinctive religious tradition had by 1923 given them a clear role within the cultural scene of Guyana society. The role they had chosen combined a clear sense of theological and ritual orthodoxy with an almost evangelical sense of social openness and willingness to share their religious tradition with others. This combination seems to have worked well in enabling this minority community to find its place in the shifting cultural scene around it.

The British role in this cultural scene is interesting. Singh's elderly informants in the 1970s reported that the manager of the Albion estate had made a generous donation to assist in the establishing of the temple, and Ramswamy's father described to Singh (1978) his childhood memory of the opening of

the temple including a procession of the image of the Goddess or *Tēvi* up past the manager's house and then back to the temple site for the installation. Phillips describes a large group of overseers attending the festival with him, and the privilege they had of having Ramswamy pull back the curtain so that they could see the image of the Goddess up close. The colonial atmosphere reflected in Phillips' account has a strange ideological neutrality about it. The cultural initiative in this situation was clearly not with the British authorities, but with the vibrant religious option Bailappa offered when he went into his trance state and cured people from all the different communities. By 1923, it is clear that a specific South Indian religious tradition had been "invented" to address the needs of people within the very tight social situation of Guyana.

The South Indian or "Madras" temples one sees today are all on the outskirts of the settlements, to the north or toward the sea. Some people say this was done so that the sacrifice of animals would not offend the neighbors, but the priests describe the location as "beside a stream" and point out that the large compound required would have to be outside the settlement. Worshippers say that the temples were first made of tree branches, then of wood, then of earth, and most recently of bricks plastered over. All now have corrugated steel roofs and are simple rectangular or square structures. The compounds are extremely neat and are surrounded with a low wall sometimes made only of tree branches but more often of brick or steel. There is sometimes a decorative effect from banners made of old saris and the many flags that adorn the compound (figure 2.3). It would now be taken amiss if one temple were to attempt a more artistic style and add the *vimāna* towers or *gopuram* gateways one would find in South India, or, indeed, in Mauritius, South Africa, or Fiji, because there simply has never been any of that architectural style in Guyana. The images that are worshipped were carved from tree trunks by local artists until very recently, and except for the few near Albion, which were done by the same artist, they tend to have individual characteristics in each temple. This individuality is highlighted by the way they are adorned in the individual temples, and the priests or *pūjaris* take pride in pointing out the individuality. Only very recently have some concrete cast images been produced (personal observations made at thirty different temple compounds 1995).

The religious practice of these temples is a uniform tradition of Goddess or Māriyammaṉ worship, but an equally uniform feature of the tradition is a network of subsidiary deities, each with its own little *koil* or temple, arranged around Māriyammaṉ in a precise geometrical layout. Māriyammaṉ's temple is the largest and always faces east in the prescribed South Indian way (figure 2.4). The most prominent of the subsidiary deities is the heroic Maturai Vīraṉ, whose shrine faces hers in a protective manner and is just south of the line by which one enters her

FIGURE 2.3. South Indian style temple compound, Guyana.

shrine. Slightly behind her and to her north, but also facing east, is Cankani Kaṟuppu, and directly opposite him facing west is the shrine of Munīśvaraṉ. In addition to these core deities, a cluster of "North Indian deities" (Ganeśa, Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu, and Śiva are the most common) are placed together to the north of the main group, and are sometimes beyond a rope barrier indicating that the sacrificial animals should not be taken into that area. Finally, Nakura or the "formless one" is placed at the edge of the compound due east of the Goddess and is often used as a place of worship for Muslims who want to share in the worship of the community.

The rationale for this layout of the compound is complex. In most Māriyammaṉ temples in India, there would be no particular pattern in this regard, and if there were subsidiary images many worshippers would not necessarily be aware of them (Younger 1980). There is, however, some tradition in India that sees Māriyammaṉ sharing her responsibilities with other deities. Whitehead (1921) mentions that there is often a protective Maturai Vīraṉ image nearby, and also that there is usually a plain stone he calls Mundian where offerings are laid.[10] Perhaps more relevant is the finding of the sociologist Louis Dumont who in a much-quoted article in 1959 showed that even though their deities are housed in separate temples, the South Indian villagers saw a replication of their social structure in the fact that Māriyammaṉ was at the heart of the village bringing well-being, while Aiyanār and his huge horses protected the village on the northern side, and Kaṟuppanār, the black deity, provided for the needs of the lowest castes (Dumont 1959).

FIGURE 2.4. Mariyamman image, Guyana.

In Guyana, the priests describe the layout as a cosmological pattern, but then quickly explain its sociological significance as well. They are particularly anxious to explain the arrangement for what they call in Tamil the "Maien–Perumal" or "Mothers and Fathers" on the northern side of the compound. They describe these deities (incorrectly, of course) as the "North Indian deities" or the "Hindu deities," and then they joke about the fact that they are placed "on the north." They then explain very seriously that these deities are worshipped first, and are given only *pāl pūja* or "milk worship" in order to show respect for what they call the "vegetarianism" of their North Indian Hindu guests. At the other end of the ritual, the last altar where worship takes place is described as that of Nakura or the Formless One (figure 2.5). This altar seems to have some earlier meaning (perhaps replacing the Mundian of Whitehead's informants), but it is now clearly described as providing a place for Muslims to worship (and in some cases now actually has a figure in Arab dress). What is a little less clear is the sociology around the black Cankani Kaṟuppu, and the white Munīśvaraṉ, and the way they represent the African slaves and the colonial Europeans respectively, the two groups already on the land when the Indians arrived. The black Cankani Kaṟuppu figure is the strong Dee Bābā who possesses the land and deals with problems people have with black magic (*obeah*), and he still defiantly holds the twelve-feet-long whipping rope used on slaves (and many worshippers, once they are possessed by him, still ask the

FIGURE 2.5. Nakura shrine, Guyana, where Muslims worship at festival time.

pūjari to whip them). The white Munīśvaraṉ is a dangerous deity known in the villages of India, Mauritius, and Singapore (Sinha 2005), but in Guyana he is clearly associated with Europeans, and priests go out of their way to point out his blue eyes, and speak of how he comes from across the sea, and holds two moon symbols that control the tidal currents. He is feared, but thought to be helpful in dealing with mental illness and evil spirits. The cosmology and sociology this arrangement of divine powers represents is creatively Guyanese in the way it includes the whole society within its arrangement, and yet it is profoundly serious in its insistence that any deviation in the ritual routine will bring the wrath of the relevant deity into the life of the community.

The *pūjaris* or priests of each settlement temple are usually two or three persons from the settlement who claim that they carry on a tradition inherited from their grandparents or the first generation of indentured workers. Usually, they have a tradition about how a grandparent became possessed by the Goddess when right after arrival they had to deal with drought, smallpox, or some other crisis. The uniformity in the layout of the temple compounds, and the uniform pattern of worship would indicate that the temples follow a common pattern of ritual orthodoxy, but that orthodoxy includes a need for a sense of local tradition because there is a strong belief that this little temple exists in this particular settlement because the Goddess or *Tēvi* wanted it to. Possibly in an earlier era, the plantation managers had some role in keeping their workers within their

plantation's territory and encouraged the people to build their own small temples. In any case, the thinking now is that the temple serves its own settlement community, and at festival time the ritual includes a visit of the Goddess to every home in the settlement. Although many of the temples are within sight of one another across the fields, it is thought to be very important within this tradition that each settlement maintains its own temple tradition.

Because most of the *pūjaris* still work in the sugarcane fields, worship in the temples is generally held only on Sunday. On Sunday, there is an elaborate worship of each of the deities, with many individual offerings of coconuts, liquor, cigarettes, cocks, or goats incorporated into the worship of a particular deity. During this worship, trance behavior frequently breaks out, and a number of the *pūjaris* and other, especially female, assistants assist the worshippers as they seek to enter into or leave the trance state. The whole worship experience is controlled in a direct way by the different rhythmic beats of the large open-faced *tappu* drum. The priest and his assistants are followed by the crowd as he goes to the *koil* (Tamil for "temple") building of each deity and offers appropriate offerings and prayers. The sequence, which is rigidly maintained, is to go to the North Indian deities first, then to Cankani Kaṟuppu, then Munīśvaraṉ, then Nakura, and then the Goddess. After a pause, this part of the worship concludes at the shrine of Maturai Vīraṉ who serves as a kind of temple manager that must indicate that he is satisfied. Each of the deities receives fruits, flowers, incense, and coconuts along with the prayers, while Cankani Kaṟuppu, Munīśvaraṉ, and Maturai Vīraṉ receive cigarettes, rum, and animal sacrifices as well. The worship of any of these last three may inspire worshippers in the crowd to go into trance and ask for an opportunity to be whipped, or to dance and sing. Special expressions of worship are saved for the extended worship in the larger temple building of the queen-like Goddess or *Tēvi*, and there the sacrifices and dances are usually done near the entrance, and the worship is more reverent and orderly than that in some of the smaller temples.

After the formal worship is finished, there is a break of an hour or more for refreshment before the drums are taken up again in a different beat, and *pūjaris* and other religious specialists go into possession states, and provide the advice or *jāri* of the Goddess (or occasionally other deity) to the queues of waiting supplicants who want to deal with spirit possession. Some people save the sacrifice of their animals for this part of the worship in the hope that as they propitiate the deity the evil spirit will release them. During this part of the worship, the ritual precision of the priestly assistants becomes more notable. A person called "the interpreter" assists the head priest in getting possessed by playing on a small hourglass drum (*utaki*) that "calls" the deity, and then,

because the possessed priest begins speaking in staccato Tamil phrases, the interpreter translates those statements into clear instructions about what ritual steps the person needs to take in order to get rid of the evil spirit. Another assistant serves as "immolator" at the time of sacrifice, and spends the rest of his time doing extensive ritual purification both before and after the sacrifice. The manager of the whole worship routine also becomes prominent at this time as he attempts to purify the area and the persons surrounding the possessed person, so that the spirit once released will leave the area immediately (Karna Bahadur Singh 1978; Magdalene 1978; personal observation at thirty different temples 1995).

Once a year, each temple holds a three-day festival in which this pattern of worship experience is shared with the whole community.[11] On the first night of the festival, the assistant *pūjaris* or boys aspiring to become *pūjaris* go to the river where they prepare pots of water with pyramid-shaped flower decorations or *karakums* (Sanskrit: *kumbhas*) into which they pray for the Goddess to enter. They themselves then go into trance, and with the pots on their heads dance about and eventually make their way back to the temple. The next night, the boys once again call upon the Goddess to enter the pots or *karakums* and dance through each street of the settlement with the Goddess-possessed head *pūjari* (figure 2.6). This procession is followed by a large crowd and stops at almost every house to exorcise evil spirits, perform miraculous healings, or give blessings. Muslim, Christian, and Afro-Guyanese neighbors usually join in this exuberant processional dance, which often goes on until the wee hours of the morning. On the third and final day, the exhausted members of the settlement bring their offerings (usually including many cocks and goats) to the temple compound for a wild day of thanksgiving, which includes animal sacrifice and exorcism and a drink of the *kañci* or rice water the *Tēvi* offers to all (Singer 1976; Stephanides 1988; Younger 2002a).

One measure of the rigid "neoorthodoxy" this South Indian religious tradition developed over time is the tension that surrounds the different efforts to modify the tradition. The first major effort at reform started in 1956. Kistama Rajagopaul, the *pūjari* of Miss Phoebe settlement, had family contacts in New York, and in the early 1950s spent a couple of years there. He used the opportunity to learn to read some Tamil and became at least superficially acquainted with the wide range of Tamil religious texts. During this time, he personally became a devotee of Viṣṇu in the form of Venkatēśvara, which is a Brāhmanical branch of South Indian religion very different from goddess worship, but he decided to come back and continue as part of the Māriyammaṉ tradition of Guyana. He went on a lecture tour to many of the South Indian temples and suggested quite a number of changes in the ritual, but focused his

FIGURE 2.6. South Indian style festival, Guyana. *Karakum* on head, Afro Guyanese manager of festival chasing away evil spirits with lime, head *pujari* and interpreter with drum in background, camphor trays in front.

attention on convincing the temples to put a stop to the practice of animal sacrifice. Only the four temple communities of Leonara, Herstelling, Ganga Ram, and Ngg chose to join with Miss Phoebe in following this reform, and the overall impact of his reform effort was to make the established tradition firmer in its insistence on what had by this time become a pattern of orthodox ritual practice (personal visits to all five temples 1995). What the failure of his reform effort indicates is that a ritual reform on the basis of what scholars call the "Sanskritization" model had little appeal in Guyana. In the "Sanskritization" model, as found in India, lower-ranked castes often try to emulate the ritual pattern of higher-ranked castes in the hope of raising their social status. This model of reform assumes that there is a pervasive sense of hierarchy marking off the social order and the ritual forms each of the social classes use. In Guyana, there was little, if any, sense of social hierarchy, and these considerations were not really present. Those responsible for the "invention" of the South Indian form of worship did not see themselves in a ranked relationship with, for example, the North Indian worship system. To the extent that they addressed that relationship at all, their concern was that their form of worship should be thought of as very different from the North Indian style of worship. They thought of themselves as addressing an intense spiritual need having to

do with healing and exorcism, and they took into account the social implications of their worship system only in the sense that they wanted everyone in the society to have access to that spiritual power.

A second reform movement within the South Indian tradition went in the exact opposite direction from the effort at Sanskritization proposed by Kistama. Jamsie Naidu was for some years one of the *pūjaris* of the Albion temple. His healing and exorcist powers were notable, and he began to be asked to lead worship in other temples (figure 2.7). Under his influence, some women and even young girls became virtuoso spiritual leaders performing difficult healings and exorcisms during trance, as did some Afro-Guyanese and North Indians. In the Albion temple, none of these people were allowed to be thought of as *pūjaris*, and there was some discomfort that they were even being trained

FIGURE 2.7. Jamsie Naidu (white beard in background) watches as assistant (in dress) starts exorcism.

in this way by Naidu. Finally in the late 1950s, Naidu decided to go off on his own, and he built a much larger temple compound outside Albion near the seacoast. It was the worship of this temple compound that attracted attention throughout the Caribbean and North America and brought scholars to Guyana to study the "Kālī-Mai Cult" (Singer 1976; Khan 1977; Bassier 1987; Stephanides 1988; Stephanides and Singh 2000; Younger 2002a).[12] Naidu now describes his reform as "creolization" (personal interview 1995) or the acknowledgement of the hybrid social community that actually worships at the temple. There are only minor ritual changes that go along with the change in community in this reform in that those possessed by the Goddess speak in Creole rather than Tamil, and subsidiary goddesses, such as Gangā and Koterie, who deal directly with black magic, are now included in the main group.

Offshoots of Naidu's reform movement have moved even further than he has from the settlement-based model of temple compound that has generally characterized the South Indian tradition. When a new development of rice cultivation started in Black Bush Polder, Naidu's assistant, Brother Ram, started a new temple there, which is now very popular (Magdalene 1978), and then Ram's family started still another temple in the Bronx in New York. Naidu himself went to Trinidad (see later) and Surinam and helped them found temple traditions in those places. In a local departure from the compound tradition, "Sandra" or Jane Matipaltoo, a North Indian who at 11 years of age was going into trance regularly and was one of Naidu's assistants, later on joined with Parbudial Phagoo and started a modern-style temple in a huge house-like building on the main street of Hampshire just beside Albion. In this temple, the deities are arranged along the wall in the traditional sequence for worship, with the center of the building reserved for a congregation. Worship is held in the usual way on Sunday, but "Sandra" is also busy all week with clients coming for healing, exorcism, and counseling on a personal basis (personal observation 1995) (figure 2.8). Phagoo has since started a similar temple in Jersey City, New Jersey.

This South Indian religious tradition is unique to Guyana. Some of the ritual core of it was a careful reproduction of Māriyamman̲ ritual the worshippers had known in India, but the layout of the temple and the organizational framework in which the ritual is carried out is new to Guyana, and these are now considered essential parts of the "tradition." This religious tradition was the invention of a community caught in a tight corner, as they became a small minority scattered on a hundred or more plantations along the Guyana coastline. Aware of the culturally open or almost "postcolonial" nature of the situation, they creatively set their tradition out in an orthodox ritual and theological form, and then made it as open to all of the society as possible by allowing for a flexible use of nomenclature and a variety of worship possibilities.

FIGURE 2.8. *Pujari* “Sandra” leads worship in new style South Indian temple in Guyana.

The situation facing the South Indian community in Guyana could not have been more different from that faced by the South Indians in Mauritius. In Mauritius, a century before indentureship started, highly skilled South Indians had arrived to build the great stone cathedrals and other buildings for the early French settlers. Many of them had stayed and invited some of the trader caste to join them, and these upper caste Tamils had built a good life for themselves as free citizens. Because of these early South Indian residents, there were Brāhmanical South Indian stone temples available near the cities of Mauritius, and in some cases plantations were even owned by South Indians. The other crucial difference is that at the end of the indentureship contracts, workers in Mauritius had other options and often left the plantation setting to go into sugar planting and other forms of farming wherever they could buy land. Some of them did build Māriyammaṉ temples here and there, but no significant new forms of worship and no uniform tradition emerged. Although the South Indian temple tradition took form somewhat latter in Guyana than it did in Mauritius, what emerged was a thorough response to the new situation and not just a preservation of a variety of Indian worship forms (Younger 2008). (As we will see later, South Indians in Trinidad, South Africa, and Fiji were in situations that were different from both that of Mauritius and that of Guyana.)

The South Indian or "Madras" tradition has evolved into a religious tradition for all those in Guyanese society who feel oppressed by sickness, evil spirits, or the powerful in society. In most cases, the *pūjaris* still tend to be males of South Indian background, but even that tendency seems to be changing. There are now a significant number of Afro-Guyanese and people of native background from the nearby forest found among the worshippers, and, in a half dozen of the temples, these newer worshippers are accomplished in achieving the possession states and are assisting the *pūjaris*. Women and people of North Indian background are becoming even more important participants in the worship, and some are already serving as *pūjaris*.

The social openness of this tradition is particularly notable in the way the barriers between the people of Indian and African background have been set aside as they grow comfortable worshipping together. This link may have started earlier with South Indians joining in Christian worship, for we know of significant numbers of South Indians being baptized (Jayawardena 1967), and Jamsie Naidu, one of the most prominent *pūjaris*, joked about his infant baptism and schooling in a Catholic school. There are also a couple of South Indians who are now prominent Pentecostal ministers ministering within joint Indo-Guyanese/Afro-Guyanese congregations. Today, the link also sees Afro-Guyanese looking to the Kālī-Mai *pūjaris* for help. Brackette Williams (1990) did a study of Afro-Guyanese women being haunted by "ghosts" of Dutch women either widowed or killed in the slave revolts of the eighteenth century, and she was surprised to find that the Afro-Guyanese women experiencing these ghosts were going to South Indian *pūjaris* to have these spirits dealt with.

Under the label of the "Kālī-Mai cult," this very distinctive religious tradition that originated in Guyana is now becoming known in the Indian diaspora communities of Great Britain and North America. In Guyana, it is still usually called the "Madrasi" religion and is universally recognized as having its roots in the religious practices of the early South Indian laborers. Many remember when "Madrasi" religion was also notable for its midnight weddings, and for funerals that featured wild dancing as the departing spirits were chased away. It is, however, the ritual that is centered on animal sacrifice and possession, and regularly takes place on Sunday and during the annual festivals, that has now become the focus of a well-known cult that attracts people of many backgrounds. The Kālī-Mai or "Madrasi" tradition is so distinctive that many people do not even think you might be looking for its temple compounds when you ask for a "Hindu temple." It is the North Indians who were keen to have their tradition labeled "Hindu" in Guyana, and it is to their tradition that we now turn.

The North Indian or "Hindu" Tradition

The great majority of the indentured laborers sent to Guyana were from the central plains of North India. Although they were sometimes called Calcutta coolies, because their ships left from the port of Calcutta, most came from the districts of Busti, Azamgarh, and Ghazipur in eastern Uttar Pradesh, and they were generally called "North Indians" in Guyana (Smith 1962). They were all Hindi speaking, but they came from a large geographical area and from a great many different castes. Sixteen percent are listed as Muslim, 10 percent as Kṣatrīya, and 2 percent as Brāhman, but, as one might expect, lower castes made up a larger percentage than they did in the region of India from which they came (Smith 1962).

In North India in the early nineteenth century, temple worship had been disrupted by five centuries of Muslim rule and the new uncertainties connected with the arrival of British rule. With temple worship difficult, popular devotional practice had come to center on songs and poems in honor of the Vaiṣṇava *avatāras* Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. In the seventeenth century, the great Rāma epic had been retold by Tulsīdās in the local Hindi dialect, and one of the most important forms of religious life was to listen to a recitation and exposition of the *Rāmcharitmānas* of Tulsīdās. In addition to the recitations, the other important way of preserving one's Hindu identity was to carefully follow the life-cycle rituals or *samskāras* and engage a Brāhman to perform at least the most important rituals associated with birth, marriage, and death.

In Guyana, the opportunity for class differentiation was almost nonexistent, and unlike Mauritius, where they became the formulators of a new Indian class system, the Kṣatrīyas in Guyana almost disappeared as a distinct group. What happened in Guyana was that with the missionaries enjoying great success with the people of African background, and some missions turning their attention toward the Indians,[13] the tiny Brāhman minority stepped forward and said that they and they alone could address the religious needs of the Indian people. The government and the planters were inclined to honor this claim, and North Indians, who were still housed in the crowded plantation housing at the time, became a united community with virtually no caste division left. It was not long before those of lower-class background, who might have worshipped a goddess and performed animal sacrifices in India (slaughter of pigs was more common in North India than in South India), were attending *Rāmcharitmānas* recitations and having *samskāras* performed for their families by the local Brāhmans. The percentage of "Brāhmans" within

the population of Guyana has grown remarkably over time, and it seems clear that many who were not born into the Brāhman caste have assumed this title in order to fill a role within the society.[14] Some classic Brāhman names such as Dube, Tripathi, Pandey, and Sharma are found in the ship records, and are examples of individuals who came to work in the cane fields, but the even more common Guyana names such as Prasad or Persaud might have functioned more as a title for those willing to take on this leadership role.

The leadership the Brāhmans offered the Indian community was fairly secular in nature. They were not the kind of Brāhmans who worked in temples in India, and they were not interested in the ritual detail the South Indian *pūjaris* were so careful about, nor did they know anything about the trance phenomena and states of possession on which the South Indians centered their worship. Their initial focus might almost be described as a political one, as they challenged the missionaries[15] and provided the Indian community with an "imagined" identity (Anderson 1983). As long as the Indians lived on the plantations, this leadership was probably accepted by all the Indians to some degree. The Muslim minority had little choice in that there was no Muslim merchant class as there was in the colonies of South Africa, Mauritius, Fiji, and East Africa, which bordered the Indian Ocean. It was only the South Indians who were lukewarm to this leadership offered by the Brāhmans. Not only were the South Indians cut off from the leadership group by language, but their intense religiosity made them less interested in a political or ethnic identity, and more inclined to find a common religious interest with some of their Afro-Guyanese neighbors than the Brāhmans thought wise. In India, the Brāhmans had learned during centuries of Muslim and British rule that it was possible to resist the religious plans of the ruler, but what they found in Guyana was that their leadership in this regard made them responsible on a day-to-day basis for the welfare of the communities of North Indian Hindus as they were being formed on each of the many plantations.

By the time indentureship ended in 1917, the move from the plantation housing to the settlement at the end of the plantation included a majority of the Indians. In this setting, the leadership of the Brāhmans needed to take a more institutionalized form. The traditional North Indian temple form would have to be modified if it was to be the base of this institutional need. An early North Indian temple style that might well have been quite widespread earlier is preserved in the beautiful Śivālaya temple of Port Mourant (Karna Bahadur Singh 1980; personal visit 1995). The original part of this structure is an octagonal cover over a Śiva *linga*, which was placed beside the canal just where the plantation joins the settlement. Worshippers could approach this

kind of temple from any side and would walk around it in a *pradakṣina* or clockwise direction as they worshipped from outside the building. The link with a center of power in its natural setting was the focus of this worship, and priestly care of the *linga* was not central.

Once the Brāhmans had moved into the settlement at the end of the plantation, they were faced with a new challenge. The Brāhmans quickly realized that with the Indian community rushing to put their children into the mission schools in this newly multicultural settlement society, they would have to find a way to give a sharper sense of social identity to the "Hindu" part of the community. If they were to continue to keep the leadership role they had in the plantation housing, they would have to develop a new strategy. What they needed were worship halls where they could gather those who were "Hindu" in much the same way they saw the missionaries gathering the Afro-Guyanese Christians together. Gradually, individual Brāhmans started their own *mandir* or worship hall (often called "church") and brought together a congregation on Sunday morning, mainly to sing Kṛṣṇa *bhajans* or songs and listen to the Brāhman give a "sermon" or *katha*. The sermon was based on the singing or reading of a few verses of the *Rāmcharitmānas*, but it was also an opportunity to give the community general advice and establish its social and political identity. There were often a number of *mandirs* in a settlement, and they were all built right on the main road, often right beside a small Protestant church attended by Afro-Guyanese. They had no architectural distinction and did not face east, nor did they link themselves with a sacred tree or stream as the South Indian temple compounds did (personal observations based on visits to over fifty *mandirs* 1995) (figure 2.9).

The worship within these Guyanese *mandirs* or "churches" is a creative invention unique to Guyana. The Brāhmans of Guyana come from subcastes that were not familiar with the details of image worship, but images of the various Sanskritic deities were gradually set on the altar beside the throne-like area called the *simāsana* or "lion seat," where the Brāhman sits to give his sermon. All the *mandirs* have images of Viṣṇu and his spouse Lakṣmī, as well as Viṣṇu's *avatāras* Rāma and Kṛṣṇa and their spouses. In time, images of Śiva and his son Ganeśa were sometimes added, as was often an image of Hanumān, the monkey devotee of Rāma. Sometimes duplicate images of some deities were donated and included in the grouping on the altar, which was arranged in an aesthetically pleasing way with no particular ritual order. Most of the care of the images is taken on by lay devotees or priestly assistants, and the Brāhmans concentrate their attention on the presentation of the *katha* or sermon. In order to clarify their role in the *mandir*, the Brāhmans are very

FIGURE 2.9. North Indian style *mandir*, Guyana.

insistent that they not be called "*pūjarī*" or "priest," but that they be designated "*pandit*," a term which carries the connotation of being a "learned person."

The worship in the *mandir* is conducted on Sunday morning, and is acknowledged to be a direct challenge to the Christian church services nearby. The "sermon," based loosely on the *Rāmcharitmānas* of Tulsīdās, frequently emphasizes the faithfulness of Hanumān, and the need for Hindus to remain loyal to their faith even when their social circumstances are difficult. These themes from Tulsīdās are given a local relevance as the *pandit* gives advice on intermarriage and other issues that relate to maintaining a Hindu identity in Guyana. There is not a concern about theological distinctiveness, and the description of God, the order of Creation, and the moral consequences in the afterlife are almost identical to those expressed in the Protestant churches next door. The pastoral care of the *pandit* is available to families throughout the week, and most families have the *pandit* plant a sacred protective flag (*jhandi*) of Hanumān at the side of their house once a year in a ceremonial affirmation of their link with the *pandit* and their Hindu heritage. The congregational nature of the Sunday worship is celebrated in a final climax each week as every person comes to the altar and takes the *arati* tray of camphor lights and honors each of the deities and the *pandit* by moving the tray slowly before their eyes (figure 2.10).

FIGURE 2.10. North Indian style temple altar, Guyana.

By 1927, this North Indian-Guyanese tradition had become so thoroughly entrenched in the social environment that the *pandits* decided to seek the official recognition of the colonial government. Taking advantage of the institutional similarity to the Protestant churches scattered up and down the coast, the *pandits* organized themselves into the Council of Pandits and appealed to the colonial government to "recognize" them. While this organizational development had no precedent in the Hindu tradition of India, the government saw the opportunity this organization represented and gave it many of the roles previously reserved for the Anglican establishment. Members of the Council of Pandits were empowered to perform legal weddings, and they soon convinced the government to allow cremation, which until then had not been allowed. The Council soon became an official body representing the Indians and was generally consulted on matters concerning the welfare of the Indian community. Having won this measure of government recognition, the *pandits* were gradually able to develop an institutional structure that went much further than any religious organization in India in establishing a recognized clerical authority (Jayawardena 1967; Nath 1970). In the years to come, the Council would become deeply involved in the politics of the country, but almost as soon as it was formed it provided a focus for serious theological challenge.[16]

The serious theological challenge the Council of Pandits received came from the arrival of a new Arya Samaj missionary from India. As we have

already learned in discussing the situation in Mauritius, the Arya Samaj was a Hindu reform movement started in the latter part of the nineteenth century in India, and it sent missionaries to each of the indenture-based Indian societies in the early decades of the twentieth century. In Mauritius, the Arya Samaj had been able to advocate its reforms without stirring up a major controversy within the Hindu community, and it was gradually accepted as one of the many voices found among the comfortable Hindu majority of Mauritius. In each of the other indenture-based societies, the arrival of the Arya Samaj missionaries provoked sharp divisions within the local Hindu community. In Guyana, the newly constituted Council of Pandits with its government recognition was particularly incensed that its carefully defined response to the religious environment established by the Christian missionaries would be challenged and even mocked from within the Hindu family (Jayawardena 1967).

The Arya Samaj missionary plans for Guyana were slow to develop. Indirectly, it was Mohandas Gandhi's intense involvement with the complex Indian community of South Africa that first made people in India realize that these indenture-based societies were in the process of redefining Indian religion and culture in these new settings. Manilal Maganlal Doctor, the Gujarati lawyer who went to South Africa to live for some time in Gandhi's ashram was an Arya Samajist, and it was probably his idea to have Professor Bhai Paramanand of Lahore University make a lecture tour throughout the Indian areas of South Africa on behalf of the Arya Samaj in 1905. Manilal Maganlal Doctor had then taken his leadership skills to Mauritius in 1907, where he was considered a bit radical, and then to Fiji in 1911, where he stirred up both religious and political controversy and was deported after the major strike of plantation workers in 1920 (see later; Billimoria 1985; Kelly 1992).

In the distant Indian communities of Trinidad and Guyana, the early Arya Samaj missionaries made only brief lecture tours, and were initially received as welcome visitors from the Indian homeland. The leadership roles the Arya Samaj visitors often ended up with in South Africa, Mauritius, and Fiji did not develop during the relatively short tours they made in the early years to the Hindu communities of Guyana and Trinidad. In each of these two Caribbean locations, the local community was large enough and the social situation so tightly defined that the infrequent contacts with India were not a major factor in defining the direction of development within the Hindu community. The local communities were so well defined that no one really expected visitors from India to assume leadership roles. When the Arya Samaj eventually did make a major push for reform among Hindus in Guyana, their intervention was deeply resented by the local Hindu leadership.

The first of the Arya Samaj lecture tours of Guyana occurred in 1910 when Professor Bhai Paramanand, who had already been to South Africa, arrived. In 1928, Pandit Jaimini Mehta, who did missionary work in five of the indenture-based societies, arrived in Guyana to make a more serious attempt to introduce the Arya Samaj reforms in this situation. He was followed by Ayodhia Prasad who represented the Arya Samaj at the World Parliament of Religions in 1933. It was, however, when Pandit Bhaskeranand worked in Guyana from 1937 to 1942, and established the Arya Samaj in an institutional form, that his published lectures (1944) began to provide a clear theological challenge to the thought and practice of the North Indian Hindu temple tradition as it had developed in Guyana (Jayawardena 1967). The cultural angle the Arya Samaj challenge took in Guyana was complicated. Because these teachers could quote Sanskrit references and offer to teach Hindi, they could argue that the local *pandits,* who spoke in creolized English and made only limited use of Hindi songs and memorized verses of the *Rāmcharitmānas,* were not well versed in the religious traditions of the Indian homeland. In order to counter this argument, the local *pandits* scrambled to make contact with the Indian groups calling themselves "Sanātana Dharma" or "traditional religion," who were already challenging the Arya Samaj reforms in their stronghold of northwest India. Almost before those contacts could be made, the Arya Samaj in Guyana shifted the challenge to the other flank by claiming that only they were in favor of the educational and social reforms that were starting to take place. The Arya Samaj's two claims on this flank were that they were in favor of women's rights and were opposed to caste. Almost everyone in the democratically structured society of Guyana agreed with these points, but they still caught the *pandits* off guard because the *pandits* had skirted around those issues in establishing their own authority.

Having put the local *pandits* on the defensive by criticizing their understanding of both India and modernity, the Arya Samaj missionaries then laid out their three major theological challenges:

1. Legendary heroes such as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa should not be equated with deity. (This was an especially sensitive issue in Guyana because in challenging the neighboring Protestant clergy the Brāhmans had been simplifying the theological issues and arguing that Rāma should be understood as a monotheistic deity.)
2. Image worship is a degraded form of Hindu worship, and it should be replaced by a return to a simple fire ritual or *havan* that the founder of the Arya Samaj, Dayananda Saraswati, had reconstructed based on early Vedic texts.

3. *Pandits*, and Brāhmans more generally, have no special authority, and Guyana Hindus should not continue to allow caste or gender to be factors in defining leadership (Jayawardena 1967).

The resulting theological controversy was ferocious. The local *pandits* formed the Sanatana Dharma Maha Sabha,[17] to try to give themselves a stronger religious organization with real control of the local *mandirs*, and used their contact with government through the Council of Pandits to ensure that the Arya Samaj leaders were not able to speak for Hinduism. As things settled down, Arya Samaj converts in a few settlements proved numerous enough to be able to start their own temples, and in those temples a very congregational form of worship was held with a fire altar in the front portion of a very plain hall (personal observation of two prayer halls 1995) (figure 2.11).

In a political sense, the organization of the *pandits* prevailed, and the 10 percent of the Hindu population that liked the Arya Samaj reforms became a minority voice, which everyone listened to, but were unwilling to break organizational ranks to become part of. One major acknowledgement that the reform voice was heeded was that many of the *pandits* introduced a *havan* or fire ritual into the weekly worship service of their *mandir*. In some cases, the intense lay participation in this *havan* made it the true religious focus of the worship tradition, but it became such a well-integrated part of the worship

FIGURE 2.11. Arya Samaj fire altar, Guyana.

service that few worshippers today would even think of it as linked to the Arya Samaj. On the more general issue of defining Hinduism's approach to social reform, both sides eventually figured out how to claim social reform leadership. The Arya Samaj was able to attract an elite following among well-educated professionals by continuing to call for education and women's rights, while the *pandits* made themselves the champions of the Indian laborers' rights within the political maneuvering of a socialist-minded society. What the two sides have not grown closer on is their understanding of deity, so that the lecture tour (much talked about in 1995) of the Guyana-born Arya Samaj lecturer, Satish Prakash, in the early 1990s was understood by the Council of Pandits as mocking the divinity of Rāma.[18]

The North Indian-Guyanese Hindu tradition is a distinctive religious tradition developed by the *pandits* within the circumstances afforded by life in Guyana. The Hindu population on the plantations looked to the Brāhmans for leadership, and when they all moved to the multicultural setting at the end of the plantation it was even more important that their Hindu identity takes some institutional form. The resulting combination of image worship and *pandit* community leadership provides for a form of warm congregational life, which is quite different from the usual religious practice of India. Once this pattern of religious life was sufficiently organized to gain government recognition, and was tested by the blunt theological challenge of the Arya Samaj missionaries, it had emerged as a formidable religious tradition in its own right.

Although the North Indian Hindu tradition is a religious tradition creatively developed by the Guyanese who had arrived from North India as indentured laborers and can readily be seen to have responded to local circumstances and structured much of its worship on the model of the Protestant churches in the neighborhood, it is a tradition that strongly identifies itself as "Hindu." The reason for this is that the atmosphere for which this tradition was "invented" was still colonial. Although the government and the ownership of the plantations were distant, they were in the hands of people who shared the same nationality as the Christian missionaries and the Hindu leaders felt challenged on a daily basis. While we now realize that the ideological energy of the colonial enterprise had died out, and the neighborhood churches really had very little relationship to either the government or the absentee capitalist plantation owners, the *pandits* were anxious to have their new religious tradition recognized by whatever colonial authority did exist. As things turned out, there was virtually no opposition to getting the Council of Pandits recognized by the government, and it would not be long before the society would move into a postcolonial phase and this newly established tradition would have to survive

in the more open and competitive cultural and religious atmosphere associated with postcolonial societies.

Because its self-definition was worked out in relation to the specific challenges of the colonial era, the *pandit*-led *mandir* tradition of the North Indian Hindus of Guyana did not find it easy to redefine itself in the more open atmosphere that arrived with the end of colonialism. Within Guyana, the privileged recognition of government no longer had a clear meaning under a democratically elected government that wanted to pursue a secular course. Other Hindu voices such as those of the Kālī-Mai and Arya Samaj seemed to fit comfortably beside some relatively new Muslim groups and most of the Christian groups (only a few Anglicans briefly dreamed of keeping ties with the state) in the newly "open" atmosphere, but the *pandits* continued to wonder if there was any way in which the privileges they had won under the colonial regime could translate to a position of influence and leadership in the new situation.

As Guyana Hindus went to live in other parts of Europe or North America, the questions about their religious tradition were different. Because the tradition had been developed for such a specific situation in Guyana, many of the emigrants initially assumed that it would not be possible to reproduce that worship atmosphere in a new location. As time went on, however, they started to realize that their religious tradition was one of the few features of their life in Guyana that they could take with them. Soon it became obvious that the temples the immigrants from India were building for themselves had worship traditions dramatically different from those people from Guyana were used to. Longing for the warm congregational atmosphere and the *pandit*-led community building they had known in Guyana, Guyana immigrants in other parts of the world have recently begun to reproduce close copies of the religious tradition they had in Guyana. In the new situation as a minority community, the privileged contact with government the *pandits* enjoyed in Guyana is, of course, no longer relevant, but the *pandits'* leadership skills are actually quite appropriate in providing the community with a point of contact with the clergy of other religious traditions. Because the priests serving in the temples established by the immigrants from India seldom speak English, and are chosen exclusively for their knowledge of ritual detail, the *pandits* from Guyana are often looked to by the wider Hindu community to serve as the Hindu spokespersons for interreligious conversations. Because the tradition developed by the North Indian *pandits* in Guyana has been able to successfully transfer to new situations in Europe and North America, it seems safe to describe it as a branch of the Hindu tree that has taken hold and will continue to develop (Younger 2004).

The Postcolonial Era

After a century or more of political quiet, the 1950s ushered in a sudden rush of political activity in British Guiana. As we said earlier, the freed black slaves, who had moved off the sugar plantations before the Indian laborers arrived, lived in the settlements near the plantations but took enthusiastically to English education. By the 1950s, the Afro-Guyanese were over 90 percent literate, and while the large majority remained in the settlements by the plantations, many had moved to the cities of New Amsterdam and Georgetown at the river crossings, and they provided most of the clerks for the colonial government in Georgetown. The Indo-Guyanese remained primarily a rural society, but they slowly took to education, and were 70 percent literate by the 1950s. They tended to concentrate on business opportunities and the professions when they left the work on the plantations. By the 1950s, Indo-Guyanese constituted 52 percent of the population; Afro-Guyanese about 40 percent; with the Portuguese, Chinese, British, and Native groups making up the remainder (Jayawardena 1963).

It was an Indo-Guyanese named Cheddi Jagan who took the first major steps in the quest for political change in British Guiana. Jagan's father worked on the sugar plantation of Port Mourant, but when the son won a scholarship to study in the United States, he qualified as a dentist and returned to Guyana in 1943 with his American-Jewish wife, Janet. Together, they got involved in labor union activities among the sugar workers and others, and received an enthusiastic response. It was just at the beginning of the Cold War and Americans were nervous about Communist infiltration into the Western hemisphere. It was not long before the excited British and American press began labeling Jagan a "Marxist," and turning him into a bit of an international celebrity. When the electorate was expanded in 1947 so that 16 percent of the population could vote, Jagan ran as an Independent and took up his seat in the Legislative Council at 29 years of age. By 1953, he had formed the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP), and with 45 percent of the population eligible to vote, the party won eighteen of the twenty-four seats. In 1955, the Afro-Guyanese leader, Forbes Burnham, who had worked closely with Jagan in building the party, split off and formed his own Peoples National Congress (PNC) party. Although the PPP again won the vote in 1957, 1961, and 1964, by 1964 complicated constitutional maneuvers led to a coalition government with Burnham as Prime Minister. Independence finally came in 1966. Burnham manipulated the electoral arrangements, developed a personal bodyguard

army, and ruled in an increasingly dictatorial way until his death in 1985. The two decades of Burnham rule are now considered a dark period by all Guyanese. The PNC continued in power until 1992, when the PPP finally came to power with Jagan as President (Jagan 1966; Sallahuddin 1994). After Jagan's death in 1997, his widely respected wife, Janet Jagan, became President, and in 1999 she handed power over to Bharrat Jagdeo.

There were a number of dramatic changes that took place in Guyanese society as a result of the period of political uncertainty associated with the arrival of Independence. One change was that a large percentage of the population emigrated during the turbulent 1960s. Many Indo-Guyanese think that the emigration weakened their community the most, but the truth is that it was the best educated of all communities that left. In recent years, many of the emigrants have returned to set up businesses, build temples or mosques, or at least assist the members of their family left in Guyana. Guyana's local or settlement-based multiculturalism has now in a sense been transposed into an international story. Guyanese abroad now fondly remember how well those of African and Indian background got along in their rural homeland, and they tend to be strong advocates of multicultural tolerance in their new homelands in Britain and North America.

Because the Hindu traditions of Guyana were so well established, both sociologically and theologically, they have been successfully transplanted to Britain and North America. The story of the adjustments that those traditions underwent once again in those new settings would constitute a separate study unto itself, but they were also important because of the income and ideas that streamed back into Guyana from those locations. As we have already seen above, the Madrasi *pūjaris* had been working closely with the Afro-Guyanese for a couple of generations in Guyana, and when Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese moved to the section of New York City that they call "little Guyana," a couple of the most prominent Madrasi priests went there and established that tradition there. When in the mid-1960s, a large number of Indo-Guyanese were able to settle in Ontario, the North Indian or *mandir* tradition of Guyana was established in a major way in Canada. In that setting, the Guyanese tradition was set in direct contrast to the temple traditions arriving at the same time directly from India, and people quickly recognized that the Guyanese *pandits* could give an eloquent *katha* or sermon but had little knowledge of the ritual detail of worship. The issue was resolved by hiring India-born priests to assist in the Guyanese temples, and those temples are now clearly identified and well respected, especially for their ability to deal with the new social issues associated with the life of Indian immigrants in Canada (Younger 2004).

Many scholars thought that the multicultural settlement communities of Guyana would have disappeared during the political turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s. The community life was certainly tested during those difficult years. The British colonial authorities and the Anglican and Roman Catholic church leadership during those struggles did everything they possibly could to interpret the Burnham–Jagan split as a racial divide. Both men were educated Marxist secularists, but when the British colonial authorities and the church leaders made Jagan's "Marxism" the central issue, they succeeded in creating a confusing pattern of alliances within the political arena. Not wanting to be associated with "godless Marxism," Pandit Sharma, as the head of both the Pandits' Council and the Hindu Maha Sabha, was convinced to throw his support behind the PNC of Burnham during the turbulent mid-1960s. The argument also influenced a variety of Muslim organizations and an influential Anglican labor leader in the sugar-growing area named J. P. Latchmansingh. The divide was certainly not a simple one along racial lines. Both the PPP and the PNC tried to provide racial balance in handing out leadership roles and included both Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese at every level in their party organizations. What the time of uncertainty did produce was a fear among the urban Afro-Guyanese working in the civil service that their minority status might cost them their jobs if racial politics were to develop, and a reciprocal fear among the Indo-Guyanese that if the ballot box were not honored the urban Afro-Guyanese might be able to continue to hold a monopoly of power indefinitely. As things turned out, the long-standing multicultural structure of the society prevailed, and the democratic institutions were once again restored, and slowly began to find ways to function within that established social structure (Debiprashad and Budhram 1987; Sallahuddin 1994).

For the Hindu traditions developed to address the narrow confines of the earlier colonial era with its neat plantation system, adjustments were needed to address the much more open situation of the Independence era. In the case of the "Madrasi" tradition, some of the older temples remained rigidly true to their traditions, but the reform branch associated with Jamsie Naidu made important internal changes that allowed it to more accurately reflect the integrated character of the settlement society. By allowing leadership roles to flow to North Indians, women, and Afro-Guyanese, the Kālī-Mai cult both reflected the social reality around and addressed the spiritual and psychological needs of a society at a time of deep political and personal uncertainty. It was able to play this role partly because it kept to a very apolitical style. On the other hand, the *pandit*-led North Indian tradition had fought hard to find a political role for itself during the colonial era, and it had a difficult time adapting to a different role in the new situation. As we have seen already, Pandit Sharma

accepted the argument of other religious leaders in the mid-1960s that Jagan's Marxism was "godless," and he accepted leading roles in the cabinets of the PNC under Burnham, even though a strong majority of the Indo-Guyanese backed the PPP of Jagan. By the 1970s, the split within the Pandits' Council was so wide that Pandit Reepu Persaud formed the Dharmic Sabha to challenge the Hindu Maha Sabha run by Sharma. This new organization called for some reform within the *mandirs*, but its main function was to give North Indian Hindus a way to organize their support for the PPP. When the PPP came to power in 1992, Pandit Persaud was given a prominent cabinet position and became the primary spokesperson of Hindu interests (Sallahuddin 1994; interview with Persaud 1995).

With the restoration of full democracy in 1992, the political initiative was finally in the hands of the Indo-Guyanese, and since then it has been slowly dawning on them that they have to ask some basic questions about their religious traditions and the political realities of their situation. The first question they find themselves asking is whether their long years of suffering justify them taking advantage of their majority situation and looking for ways to insist that their values now be reflected in the society as a whole. A variety of Hindu voices, coming especially from the Dharmic Sabha, the Arya Samaj, and the Bharat Sevashram Sangha, think it is time for a push in that direction. On the other hand, a majority of Hindus in Guyana recognize that they were nurtured in a very multicultural and pluralistic society in the settlements. In developing the first political organizations in the country, Cheddi Jagan and his wife had been very careful to keep them secular and pluralistic, and in some ways this is now an important part of Guyana political tradition. The Hindu leadership at the moment seems unclear as to which approach it will try to take.

As long as the Indo-Guyanese were confined to the plantations, the *pandits* were in a sense able to speak to the colonial authorities for all of them. In the settlements, they continued in this role to some extent after Independence, but as time went on they tended to speak more and more from within their *mandir* setting. Because 25 percent of the Indians were of South Indian background and had developed their own, very distinctive, temple institutions, and another 20 percent were Muslims, and 10 percent were Christians, the *pandits* found that it was harder to represent the interests of all Indians in a democratic situation than it had been when they enjoyed colonial recognition. When with the arrival of Independence, Pandit Sharma was given a cabinet position by the unpopular Burnham, he forfeited even more of the leadership role *pandits* had once enjoyed. In the mass emigration of the 1960s, *pandits* were prominent among those who left the country, and that weakened the leadership role of the group further. Pandit Reepu Persaud, the founder of the Dharmic Sabha, had

loyally stayed with the PPP during its years on the sidelines, and he became a prominent cabinet minister when the PPP was returned to power in 1992. He acknowledges that the colonial arrangements left people with a very confused picture of the proper role of religion in politics, and that there were serious political mistakes made by the *pandits* at the time of Independence. On the other hand, he feels that the *pandits* still speak for the largest single constituency in the country and that even in a democratic system that should give them a major leadership role in the new postcolonial society (personal interview 1995).

Analysis

Both of the Hindu traditions developed in Guyana are now vibrant and newly invented religious forms which are among the most creative religious developments anywhere in the Hindu world during the last century. They were started because of the dire necessity people were faced with when they found themselves living half way around the world, totally cut off from their homeland. They took due note of the basic religious models they had in the worship patterns of the Afro-Guyanese around them, both in the styles of ritual exorcism the Afro-Guyanese practiced and in the way the Afro-Guyanese appropriated the formal rituals of the British churches. Then, they dug into their ancestral memories and searched out the clearest religious visions they found there and reawakened them. The end products were two new religious traditions that have given their communities clear identities with which to deal with major social and political change at home and prepare them for the uncertainties of emigration.

One of the strongest features of these two religious traditions is their sense of congregational solidarity. The two traditions are somewhat different in this regard. The "Madrasi" tradition prides itself on its small temples, where the crowd squeezes in and there is a lot of physical contact and physical exertion as those in trance deal with the spirits, and others assist them and get blessed by holding the arms of those involved. Before and after the all-day services, the compounds look like picnic grounds, as people cook, prepare meals, offer food to one another and hear about one another's lives. The "Hindu" tradition of the North Indians is somewhat more bourgeoisie, in that people come to worship well-dressed, and expect to know one another beforehand. There too, much of the service is devoted to congregational singing, and the universal participation in *arati* and the serving of *prasād* at the end creates a very strong social dimension to the service. Some of these social dimensions of the traditions,

and especially the Sunday worship time, are borrowed from the neighboring Christian traditions, but among the Indian worshippers they are reinforced with kinship ties that give the religious practices a warmth seldom found in any other religious tradition.

Because of the social solidarity expressed in the worship experience, the caste heritage of India has just about disappeared in Guyana. The one social distinction that sounds at first to an outsider like a caste distinction is the practice of designating the priestly community of the North Indian tradition as "Brāhmans." In Guyana, however, this distinction is no longer a caste distinction, but a differentiation of a tiny clerical community. What replaces caste in fact is a very strong sense of the sacred nature of the congregation, something that has little precedent in Hindu tradition. In certain ways the sacred nature of the congregation is a derivative one, in that religious specialists pass along their sacred status to the community as a whole. In the case of the North Indian Guyanese, the worshippers express great reverence for the "*pandit*," and include him in the ritual acts addressed to deity. In the case of the South Indian Guyanese, they show a similar reverence for those who become possessed by the Goddess, and seek to touch them or bring their concerns to the Goddess through the persons possessed. In India, such religious specialists have intentionally obscured origins, but in Guyana these religious specialists are local people and are a part of the congregation in an important sense. In this sense, it is the congregation that is the ultimate repository of sacral presence. Worship services are normally led by an elected "president" of the congregation, and while the "*pandit*" or "*pūjari*" are highly honored as they enter, the service of worship goes on whether they are present or not. In the modern context, where emigration is common and *pandits* and *pūjaris* are often away, congregations carry on without their leadership and make the congregation the focus of sacrality to an extent I have not seen in other places in the Hindu world.

While the South Indian tradition interacts regularly with the Afro-Guyanese population and the North Indian tradition generally does not, both of them are "Africanized" and "Christianized" in numerous ways. In both traditions, women now have very prominent roles, and the humorous and "free" style with which the women express that leadership has an African tone that one would not find in India. Both male and female *pūjaris* of South Indian temples are known to have taken instruction from some of the well-known Afro-Guyanese women exorcists, and the amount of private contact between the traditions of healing and exorcism in the country is probably more extensive than one knows. Both *pandits* and *pūjaris* have sometimes undergone years of involvement in Christian congregations, and a few have even had some preliminary training in the Catholic priesthood. In the context of Guyana, such

contacts are so common that they hardly attract comment, and people are not surprised to hear of mixed marriages in one's heritage or of someone who continues to be quite active in both Christian and Hindu worship.

What is amazing in the end is that the Guyana Hindu traditions are not particularly concerned with preserving traditions brought from India. This attitude is sometimes stated quite bluntly in the context of North America where Guyana Hindu congregations compete directly with temple communities from India, but it is not something developed in that context. Even in Guyana, primary attention has never been on preserving Indian traditions. In some ways, this attitude was a logical response to necessity when the traditions took form in the early decades of the last century, because at that time the community was almost totally cut off from India. Indentureship had stopped, and there was no opportunity available for continuing contact with India. While contact again became possible through the visits of "teachers" from the Arya Samaj and others, and, somewhat later, through emigration to Britain and North America, by that time the "invented" traditions were in place and the religious experience of two generations was indebted to them. When the traditions were forced to help people through the misery of the Burnham years, their authority was once again reinforced. People realized that their survival as well as their solace was profoundly tied up with the faithfulness with which they and their fellows maintained their religious tradition, and this tied them deeply to their fellow Guyanese, and, incidentally, less to their Indian cousins.

Having entered the society of Guyana at the lowest rung in the social scale a century and a half ago, Hindus of Guyana have learned over the years how to give very public expression to their faith. In being faithful to their ancestral traditions of goddess worship, the South Indians found that they were able to overcome the lowest position of all, and they have now come to be recognized as religious virtuosi to whom large numbers turn for power to face problems associated with health and evil spirits. With the *pandits* leading the way, those of North Indian background organized themselves into very cohesive congregations, put their worship flags to Hanumān in very prominent places, and let everyone know that they were prepared to give active political leadership to the whole of society.

It is not particularly surprising that these developments took place without a great deal of artistic or intellectual leadership emerging. Almost all Guyanese are well educated in English, and in recent years quite a number of Afro-Guyanese have been expressing themselves in art and literature, but there have been only a few Indian writers and artists from Guyana (Dabydeen and Samaroo 1987; Birbalsingh 1988). Hindu temples seem to be almost self-consciously plain in Guyana, and the images in many of the temples have

an attractive local quality not necessarily bound by the classical canons of Indian sculpture. Only in the reform movements of the Arya Samaj and the Bharat Sevashram Sangha is there a body of literature circulated and a certain amount of theological thought set forth, but even it is closely linked to the larger mission movements of those two groups and not really a product of the Guyanese community (Smart and Swami Purnananda 1985; Satish Prakash 1995).

Of all the forms of Hinduism one sees around the world, that found in Guyana is the most socially defined. Both at the level of the local worshipping community in the settlement *mandir,* and in the wider sense where all Hindus are deeply involved in politics through their *pandits,* Guyanan Hinduism has a vibrant social character. Stated in another way, this is not a version of Hinduism that would ever be accused of being "other-worldly," and there is really no ascetic component in the religion, with very little fasting and no respected ascetic individuals or ascetic orders, except in a minor way in the reform movements.

While the Hindus of Mauritius took on the manners of the French-defined hierarchical society in that island and waited for their chance to link that society with Hindu symbols of sacrality, Hindus in Guyana were happy to share with the former slaves in the neighborhood in a society marked by its sense of equality. While Mauritian Hindus borrowed a Catholic notion of sacred social hierarchy, Guyana Hindus accepted the prevailing Protestant sense that the only thing sacred was the ethical community one established with one's fellows. The new homeland the Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese established together did not define itself in terms of its natural beauty, but overcame the natural limitations of the environment by carefully maintaining the system of sluices and canals established by the Dutch, and then focusing on the moral order defined by the many church and *mandir* communities maintained in each local settlement. The resulting religious organizations were aggressively defined, small, community organizations that competed with one another, but generally defined God in simple language as the creator of a just social order. For Hindus comfortably placed in this new homeland, the moral order was described over and over in the verses of the *Rāmcharitmānas* where the stories of Rām, Sītā, and Hanumān provided ways of remembering a homeland of perfect loyalty and mutual respect. For those less secure in the new social order, the visitations of the Goddess fought off the fear of disease and evil spirits, and provided even the weak and marginal in this society with a secure sense of home.

Because of the great distance from the motherland of India, the Hinduism of Guyana is the most distinctive reformulation of the memories of that

homeland that one is likely to find. Indo-Guyanese have generally accepted this fact as a given part of their history and attached themselves to the traditions they have invented with great zeal. Within Guyana, the sense of a shared religious world is strong, and Hindus, Muslims, and Christians are all familiar with one another's rituals and are willing to borrow symbols and institutional structures from one another with little hesitation. When Hindus from India met Guyanese Hindus in Britain and North America, they were surprised to discover how strong the Guyanese traditions were and how resilient the Guyanese were in maintaining their own religious practices. The fact that they were able to not only develop their new tradition, but then package it to move on to an even newer setting is evidence of how truly new this packaging of religious practice was. The new homeland of the Indian laborers in Guyana was developed in an aggressively postcolonial atmosphere with two communities sharing a tightly packed neighborhood, unafraid of intermarriage and many kinds of intercultural contact. The result was a confident new form of religious practice that the Guyanese Hindus now take great pride in.

Story Three

Trinidad: Ethnic Religion

The Setting

While the coastal strip of Guyana was an uninhabitable swamp until the Dutch colonists figured out how to rehabilitate it, the nearby island of Trinidad had long enjoyed the life of a tropical paradise (figure 3.1). The Spanish explorer, Christopher Columbus, visited there on his first venture to the Americas, and Spanish settlers soon joined the Arawak natives who had long inhabited the island. People in Trinidad with even a tiny percentage of native blood often boast that it gives them a royal ancestry, and the Spanish-built churches, which still dot the island, testify to the pride with which that heritage too is held (figure 3.2).

By the eighteenth century, however, the colonial capitalists' greed for sugar was spreading throughout the tropics, and West African slaves began to be brought into Trinidad, as elsewhere, to speed up the creation of plantations. Shortly after the British took over control of the island in 1802, legislation against the slave trade began to take effect, and the slaves were eventually freed. Indian workers were then brought into Trinidad in almost the same way they were to Guyana, except that the process started a bit later (1845) and involved somewhat fewer total immigrants (143,000) (Brereton 1985; LaGuerre 1985).

The Indian communities that developed in Guyana and Trinidad were, however, quite different because of three important

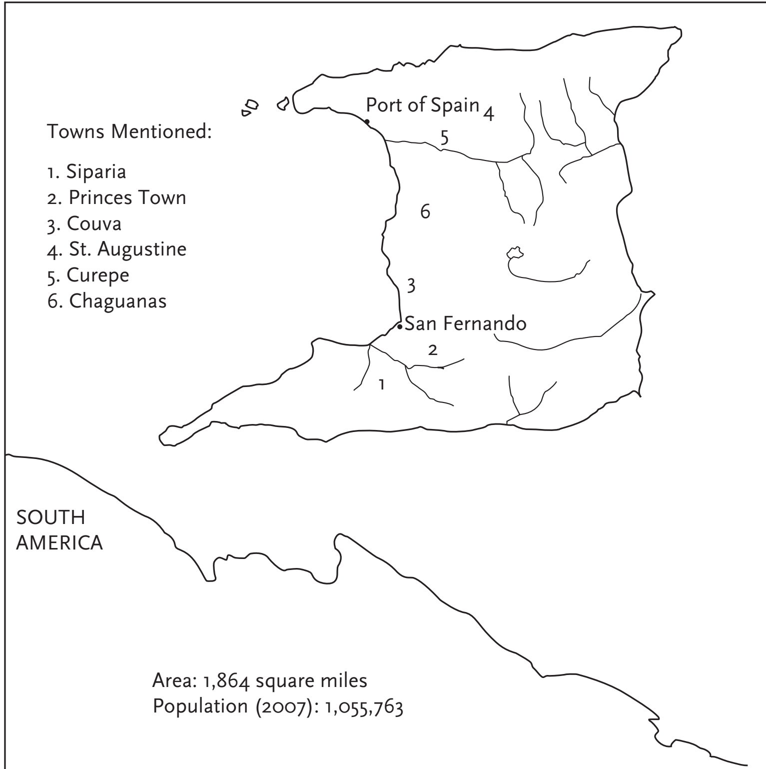

FIGURE 3.1. Map of Trinidad.

differences in the two settings. One of the differences in Trinidad was the presence of Native and European (Spanish, French, and British) settler population. A second difference was the scattered nature of the plantations in Trinidad. A third difference was that in Trinidad, there was land available for Indian settlements, and almost from the beginning indenture-free Indians were encouraged to take up five- or ten-acre plots of land and form Indian villages (Brereton 1985; Laurence 1985). Each of these three features of the Trinidad situation needs to be described in some detail.

Although the indentured Indian workers initially dealt with British planters and with the freed African slaves who still worked in the sugar refineries and sometimes on the plantations, they soon discovered that Trinidad society was much more complex than that. The great churches of the island not only belonged to an era before the British or the Africans, but they also symbolized the fact that there was an island culture that the Native, Spanish, and French people had established and into which the British, African, and Indian components were being added. Intermarriage among these different population

FIGURE 3.2. Old Spanish church, Port of Spain, Trinidad.

groups was probably not as common as is sometimes supposed, but it is important to recognize that, in the culture of the island, intermarriage seems to have generally been looked upon with favor. A touch of Native, Spanish, or at least "White" ancestry is still a source of pride to those of predominately African or Indian background, and many in all segments of the population find the large Roman Catholic churches a good way to quickly point to a symbol of the multiracial roots of the island. As we will see later, political rivalry has recently tended to split the island culture into two camps, and the people of African and Indian background sometimes now try to revive a sense of ethnic identity and get their community members to assert themselves politically. On the other hand, the island culture is still strong, and most of the rich traditions of music, art, and literature reflect that common heritage (I. J. Bahadur Singh 1987; Selvon 1987; Roopnaraine 2007).

In terms of our present study, we need to take note of the fact that in Trinidad the indentured Indians were absorbed into a common culture to a degree that none of the other communities of indentured Indians experienced. Because they eventually constituted about half of the population of the island, the Indians would have a major say in the evolution of that culture. In this complex cultural setting, however, it is difficult to say whether a particular feature of the culture should be described as having a "Hindu" or "Indian" origin, or whether it should be recognized as a creative local reaction to a specific situation.[1] As V. S. Naipaul (*A House for Mr. Biswas* 1961) has written, Trinidad Indians are now part of a Caribbean culture, and they find the effort to work backwards and "rediscover" India difficult. The "Hinduism" and "India" of their minds does not correspond to the religion or culture now practiced on the subcontinent of India according to Naipaul (*An Area of Darkness* 1964), and they do not know how to sort out their differences from the motherland, and define the cultural heritage in which they want to take pride.

On the other hand, the current political situation of the Trinidad Indians makes them want to cling to their Indian heritage and use it to help define their ethnic identity. Politicians, clergy, and businessmen regularly make impassioned references to the Hindu "heritage" of the Indians of Trinidad, but the specific religious practices and traditions they refer to when they use this term are not easy to identify. What we will be arguing in this chapter is that the Hindu identity of Trinidad is best described as a cultural form that developed slowly as other groups in society became aware of the Indian ethnic identity, but that it only became a self-conscious projection of the Indian community fairly recently when ethnic rivalry became such an important part of the island's political culture in the modern era. In that sense, Trinidad Hinduism should be understood more as a current in a shared island culture than as a cultural import from India.

A second reason why the Indian community in Trinidad developed in the way it did was geographical. On the island of Trinidad, the sugar estates were scattered around in several distinct fertile belts. The central belt along the Caroni river, where the airport is now, the western central coast, and the somewhat larger area in the southwest were the three regions where the plantations were concentrated, but smaller units were scattered elsewhere as well. Some of the plantations were massive enterprises with thousands of workers and their own roads, shops, and quasi-governmental institutions, while others were smaller satellite units selling their cane to nearby refineries. The Indian laborers learned from the beginning that there were all kinds of population groups scattered about earning a living in a variety of ways, and that after just a few years they too would have options. The plantation owners

fought hard to keep a supply of indentured workers coming in so that the wage rates would stay depressed, but in many ways the economically closed system of slavery, which had continued in many ways under indentureship in other places, was broken by elements of a market economy in Trinidad. For the Indian laborers, the economic options were not great, and most chose to take further contracts on the plantations, or, at least, stay in the rural areas. They did not, however, feel the constraints of the system to the extent that communities of Indians in other places did and quickly came to understand the complex cultural and economic opportunities the island of Trinidad offered (Brereton 1985).

The third difference from the situation of the Indians in Guyana, and the most decisive "opportunity" set before the indentured Indians in Trinidad, was the offer the government made to them to trade their right to a return journey to India for five or ten acres of land (Laurence 1985). The plantation owners were not sure they liked this system because it took workers off the plantation, but it did keep them in the rural area, and many ended up going back to the plantation to work or at least to sell the cane they were growing on their own land. What it also did was to provide the Indians with the limited economic options of a rural setting, and people began to grow rice, fish, catch crabs, open shops, and lend money to one another. Most importantly, the settlement arrangement encouraged Indians to establish their own villages, and it was in these areas that a rudimentary caste system and something like village life in India emerged (Klass 1961).

The opportunities arising from land ownership would eventually prove ambiguous. They gave the Indian community a rural bias and limited the community's ability to take advantage of opportunities in education or in industry and the civil service. Although the Muslims and Christians among the Indians lived in these Indian-only rural settlements at first, they tended to use education and business opportunities quicker than Hindus did, and, in an important symbolic sense, the rural value system was more and more linked with the Hindu identity (Vertovec 1992). These geographical boundaries around the subcultures of Trinidad were almost completely set aside by World War II and the economic and political events that followed, but they had an important role during the formative generations when the Indians were finding a place for themselves in Trinidad culture.

Because during the important second and third generations Indians for the most part lived in their own villages, they did not have the intense multicultural experience their counterparts did in the settlements beside the plantations of Guyana. On the other hand, in a more distant sense, they did share in the multiculturalism of the island culture, and in recent years have

been plunged into the wider Caribbean culture, and even to some extent the still wider North American culture. In these latter contexts, the Indians of Trinidad have been emerging as important voices in some creative new ways of bringing a variety of hybrid cultural forms onto the world stage.

Village Religion

As we saw in the last story, the Indians in Guyana were encouraged to move off of the plantations after indenture ended in 1917, and, when they moved into the settlements at the end of each plantation, where the Afro-Guyanese had been for some time, they became part of a Creole-speaking society. In this situation, they had to decide quickly what they wanted to do about the mission schools and churches the Afro-Guyanese attended, and they responded by asserting their own religious heritage and developing two very strong religious traditions of their own. In the exclusively Indian villages of Trinidad, the need to develop specific religious traditions to counter the Christian traditions of the Africans was not as pressing, and distinctive traditions did not develop immediately.[2]

The memories of older immigrants (La Guerre 1985) in Trinidad describe the religious life of the plantations and Indian villages primarily in terms of a number of festivals. They report that all Indians enjoyed the "Madrasi" celebration of *Fire Pass* (people in trance walking on burning coals),[3] the Muslim celebration of *Hosey* (the Shi'a festival of Tazzia or Muharram),[4] and the North Indian Hindu celebration of *Phagwa* (Holi) (Jha 1985). We know that Indians of all backgrounds participated enthusiastically in each of these festivals, and one suspects that because they were very public celebrations they were intended to also function as a means by which the Indians could share their cultural heritage with the rest of the island population. This kind of traditional ethnicity and culture-sharing is deeply rooted in the island culture of Trinidad, and we will see later that it continues in new ways in the modern styles of festival celebration that one sees at the present time.

One of the interesting early adaptations of the South Indian love of festival religion was the way South Indians in particular, and all Indians in some degree, took over the old Spanish tradition of worshipping the Black Madonna of the church in Siparia in the south of Trinidad (Vertovec 1992; Noel 1995; personal visit in 1995). The Black Madonna in this church had a reputation for healing that long preceded the Indian indentureship period. In the mid-nineteenth century, the area around this little town was covered by plantations and Indian laborers. The Indian laborers quickly responded to the Madonna's

reputation for healing powers, and they started going to pray to her in huge numbers. Now during the regular Good Friday feast of this image, many thousands of Indian worshippers stream through the church and turn the grounds into a festival scene. They virtually make the Madonna image into an Indian goddess as they cry out in prayer to "Kālī kī Mā," literally "Black Mother," but also the name of a famous Hindu goddess for whom a popular temple cult exists in other locations on the island.

In the Indian villages, a rudimentary caste system gradually developed. Morton Klass in the 1950s made a detailed anthropological study of how this system worked in one village. He argued that the new system did not really keep people in the caste rank they brought with them from India. What it did do was introduce a new system of status ranking into the society. At the top of this new scale were wealthy families who were vegetarian, and somewhat below them were other wealthy people who were nonvegetarian. These groups were anxious to distinguish themselves from the ordinary laborers they called "Chamārs," who were said to eat pork. Finally, even the Chamārs were keen to distinguish themselves from those on the edge of the village who were landless laborers and caught crabs. While wealth seemed to be the true basis for this ranking, it was reinforced by the ritual purity associated with the primary food the group consumed. What gave the status ranking its formal ritual leverage was the way in which each family was able to perform the *samskāras* or life-cycle ceremonies of its members. If a family could hire the most expensive *pandit* available to perform these ceremonies, and spend lavishly on the clothes and meals associated with hosting the ceremony, it would reinforce or even raise its social status within the community. While in the equalitarian atmosphere of Guyana, the *samskāras* were done for everybody and had the effect of eliminating some of the lower class religious practice, in Trinidad they were performed in an elaborate way by the wealthy and had the effect of reinforcing class differences.

The Brāhmans among the indentured laborers often had very little religious learning. In the village setting just described, however, they quickly learned that if they could perform life-cycle ceremonies it would enhance not only their status, but their income as well. As a result of their concentration on life-cycle ceremonies, the *pandits* in this rural environment had the very conservative job of reinforcing the status hierarchy of the local community. Stated in another way, the *pandits* of Trinidad did not take on the leadership role of their counterparts in Guyana, who from very early on organized the Hindu community, demanded recognition from the colonial authorities, and developed new forms of public worship for their *mandirs* or temples. There was no immediate need to develop a Guyana-style distinctive Hindu identity in the

exclusively Indian villages of Trinidad, and the *pandits* became conservative custodians of an inward-looking social hierarchy. This would later change as they were given a new role when Hinduism became institutionalized in the post-World War II era, and the Sanatana Dharma Maha Sabha stimulated the development of impressive temples and began managing the Hindu-run schools.

Emerging Leadership

During the 1920s and 1930s, a pattern of leadership began to emerge in the Indian community of Trinidad. This leadership was stimulated almost completely by the special education system for Indians put in place by the Canadian Presbyterian Mission. In all of the indentured societies, Indian laborers ran into Christian missionaries, but, in Trinidad, the Canadian Presbyterian Mission concentrated its attention on the Indian community. This special mission was started by the strong-minded missionary, Rev. John Morton, in 1868, and, by 1900, the Canadian Presbyterian Mission was running sixty elementary schools and had also developed secondary schools and three colleges (including one for women). Almost all of the educated leadership in the Indian community came out of these schools. While only a small percentage of the students became practicing Christians, Indian Christians took a leading role in the community and often returned to the school system as teachers or played an active role in starting other organizations within the community or representing the community to government. In the 1920s and 1930s, many of the prominent leaders in the Indian community were Christians, or, at least, people influenced by their time in these Presbyterian schools (Morton 1916; Grant 1923; Samaroo 1975; Campbell 1985).

The two most notable of the organizations within the Indian community during this period were the East Indian National Association founded in 1897 in Princes Town and the East Indian National Congress founded in 1909 in Couva (Kelvin Singh 1985). The educated leaders of these organizations tried to provide political and cultural leadership for the Indian community in an essentially secular form. These organizations were unequivocal about their intention to draw the Indians out of their rural isolation and interest them in education and political issues. On the other hand, they continued to follow the practice unique to Trinidad of planning their effort in a way that was exclusive to the Indian community. In this regard, they had accepted the arrangement originally brought into being by the land settlement, which led to the development of exclusively Indian villages, and which had been reinforced by the

decision of the Canadian Presbyterian Mission to have schools exclusively for Indians. When in 1922, the East Indian National Association and the East Indian National Congress began to push for representation in the Legislative Council, it never occurred to them to ask for anything but "Indian representation," and the special form of ethnicity found in Trinidad became embedded in the political consciousness.

The most prominent Christian leader during the 1920s was Rev. C. D. Lalla. He was the first Indian representative appointed to the Legislative Council. His real fight, however, was with the mission-operated school system, which he criticized for stubbornly refusing to give significant leadership roles to Indians. Recognizing the force of his argument in some measure, the Mission separated the church structures from the schools. The purpose of this organizational change was to encourage Indian leadership in the churches, while keeping control of the schools in the hands of the missionaries. In accord with this new organizational structure, Lalla was elected as the first Moderator of the Canadian Presbyterian Church in Trinidad in 1924 (Campbell 1985). In time, other graduates of the Mission schools took up the cry for Indian leadership in a host of different institutions. Three notable examples were Sarran Teelucksingh, F. E. M. Hosein and Timothy Roodal. Teelucksingh, although a Christian, wanted to see Hindus move out of their rural villages, and he helped organize some of the first efforts to establish Hindu schools. Hosein was the most prominent Indian lawyer of his day and argued that the plantation system was inherently unjust and should be abolished. Roodal became the long time mayor of San Fernando, the largest city in the south of the island, and he helped start some of the first labor unions. All three were elected to the Legislative Council when elected representation was established in 1928 (Samaroo 1985).

By the 1930s, it was clear that the Presbyterian Mission's near monopoly of Indian education was creating odd status imbalances within the Indian community. Even Indian Christian leaders such as Sarran Teelucksingh recognized the injustice of this monopoly, and meetings were held all over the island to explore ways of making a change. Most proposals involved the starting of Hindu or Muslim schools, but the organizational basis for doing that was not in place. In a fit of frustration, a group in Chaguanas did actually form a "Hindu–Muslim" school, but it too involved a major struggle with the government and did not last long. The government was not very helpful, because it was reluctant to give up the well-established and successful arrangement it had with the Presbyterian Mission. In the end, the government's position was that it would treat each religious group in the same way and would subsidize Hindu or Muslim schools following exactly the same arrangements it had with the

Presbyterian Mission. If Hindus and Muslims wanted to develop their own "denominational" schools, they would also receive subsidies and would even be allowed to teach Hindi or Urdu to the Indian children. The government insisted, however, that clear religious organizations be established to head up any Hindu or Muslim schools, and in both cases appropriate religious organizations really did not exist at the time. What this debate did, however, was to entrench a religious divide within the Indian community and encourage the development of religious ethnicity within the political arena. It would be two decades before the religious organizations within the Hindu and Muslim communities were strong enough to take advantage of this offer and develop their own systems of denominational schools, but the idea of dividing the community along denominational lines dates from this debate (Campbell 1985).

As we have seen in the stories of indentureship in other places, one of the important "wake up calls" for each of the indentured societies was the arrival from India of the missionaries of the Arya Samaj. In Trinidad, the efforts of these missionaries were less successful than in other places. In Mauritius and Guyana, these missionaries were challenged by the local leadership, but they had significant success and established many temples. As we see later, in South Africa and Fiji the local leadership was not as entrenched, and the Arya Samaj had more success. The Arya Samaj missionaries became recognized reformers of South African Hinduism, and in Fiji they went even further and constituted the first wave of political leadership (Billimoria 1985; Kelly 1992). In Trinidad, the Arya Samaj missionaries were challenged from two sides. On the one hand, they were fiercely opposed by the established *pandits* of rural Trinidad. These local *pandits* could not compete with the Arya Samaj missionaries in terms of education, but they had a monopoly in terms of serving the ritual needs of the rural people, and they did not want that monopoly challenged. At the same time, the educated leadership in the society had all come through the Presbyterian Mission school system and had put a number of secular organizations in place for the advancement of the Indian community. These better-educated leaders were also not prepared to welcome new leaders with a narrow sectarian message. When the Christian leader, Sarran Teelucksingh, started the Sanatana Dharma Mahasabha of Couva in 1932 he was trying to show that the local leadership of the Indian community wanted nothing to do with the Arya Samaj. His organization did not have strong ties with the rural *pandits,* nor was it able to start Hindu schools as he had hoped, but it did have the effect of limiting the role of the Arya Samaj in Trinidad at the time (Samaroo 1985; Vertovec 1992). As we discuss later, it was only in 1952 that a new organization with much the same name was able to

build up a major network of Hindu schools and become the recognized voice of Trinidad Hindus.

By the mid-1930s, the middle-class leadership in the Indian community seemed prepared to move in a new direction. As a budding labor movement began to emerge in Trinidad,[5] Indian leaders at the time seemed to move beyond the tradition of participation in exclusively Indian organizations and ethnically based forms of representation. Some of this new group of leaders had not only come through the Presbyterian mission school system but they had also gone abroad to study. When they returned to Trinidad they were eager to look beyond the Indian community and to address the issues facing all racial groups in the difficult days of the Great Depression. Starting in 1924, Captain Arthur Cipriani, who was a White Trinidadian, took over the Workingmans' Association (WMA) that had earlier represented only the Black dock workers. He gradually built up the Trinidad Labour Party (TLP) and got the Party involved in the fight for the rights of the sugar plantation workers, as well as the workers in the growing oil industry. His closest ally was for many years Timothy Roodal, the Indian Christian leader, who was also the mayor of San Fernando and an elected member of the Legislative Council. Cipriani and Roodal wanted Trinidad to be part of the Federation of the West Indies, and tried to see African and Indian Trinidadians as part of one society. F. E. M. Hosein, the leading Indian lawyer in the country, was their close ally, and an advocate of radical economic change, including the total abolition of the plantation system.

By the mid-1930s, the labor movement found even more radical leadership. Adrian Cola Rienzi had been born "Krishna Deonarine" in a Brāhman family in rural Trinidad. While studying in England, he had been part of radical student groups and had changed his name. He returned to Trinidad in 1934 and founded the Trinidad Citizen's League and started the paper *The People*. An able organizer, he started working with Cipriani and Roodal and helped form solid unions for the oil workers, the sugar workers, and other factory workers. As one can see by his change of name, Rienzi represented the climax of the leadership pattern started in the Mission schools, in that he was determined to be a leader for all races in the society and to lead them into a secular and revolutionary future (Samaroo 1985).

Rienzi's leadership within the Trinidad labor movement was destined to be eclipsed by a series of fast-moving events. The first complication was that a Grenada labor leader, T. U. B. Butler, established his British Empire Workers and Citizens Home Rule Party as a Caribbean-wide political movement, and, in 1937, the widespread West Indian uprising he was leading turned into a general strike. Butler was put in jail and Cipriani's leadership was compro-

mised by his ties with Butler. In the confusion, Rienzi emerged as the main organizational leader of the Trinidad labor movement. For a time, it looked as if his revolutionary thinking might have a major impact on the situation. His organizational skill led to a strengthening of a number of unions, he won a seat in the legislature in 1938, and, partly because of his recommendations, the Moyne Commission, which had been appointed to look into the issues of 1937, proved quite radical and recommended that Trinidad develop a health and welfare system and grant the population universal franchise.

The prominence of this "Indian" leader in national politics began, however, to prompt criticism from those in the Black Consciousness movement of the day. Although he had carefully tried to develop a Caribbean identity and represent all communities in the society, by the early 1940s Rienzi found himself trying to straddle a growing divide in the social structure. The conservative village leadership in the Indian community had never trusted him, and now his Black colleagues within the labor movement became suspicious of his prominence. The Black leaders found a perfect opportunity to trap him when they supported the proposal of the White business community to compromise the move to universal franchise by requiring voters to demonstrate a knowledge of English. Everyone knew that this would limit the vote of the Indian villagers, and in the larger political arena this move was intended to limit the political rights of the Indian majority. Rienzi fought the move as a matter of principle, and he was eventually able to persuade the colonial government, but the dispute severely crippled his ability to work with the Black leaders of the labor movement. In 1944, he shocked all sides when he suddenly took himself out of day-to-day politics by accepting a seat on the Executive Council (or upper house) of the government (Samaroo 1985). This dispute effectively ended the multiracial effort to create a revolutionary labor-based movement to push for Trinidad independence.[6]

As this discussion indicates, the Indian community in Trinidad was exposed to a wider spectrum of intellectual and political thought during the 1930s and 1940s than the similar communities in any of the other indenture-based societies. As the life stories of the writer V. S. Naipaul and the labor leader Reinzi indicate, some within the small Brāhman community of Trinidad followed the opportunities their education gave them to develop brilliant perspectives on the human situation in which they found themselves. They had in the process, however, removed themselves from the rural roots in which the majority of their caste and their community remained at the time, and their leadership potential was not able to carry their community forward into a truly postcolonial era. As things turned out, it was after the major social dislocation of World War II that a totally different kind of leadership arose within the Indian

community. It was that leadership that gave the Hindu community the will to fight for its place as the leading ethnic community within Trinidad society.

The Postwar Era

By the end of World War II, Trinidad society seemed to be confronted with a whole new set of issues. The British were tired of colonial rule, and they made clear that Independence would soon be coming. The Americans had military bases all over the island during the war, and that had made the population aware of a new cultural alternative. The war had also gone a long way toward breaking down the boundaries between the old rural and non-rural sections of the society. The Indian community in particular suddenly found itself with new economic and political opportunities, and it quickly developed a new sense of identity and new leadership.

The new leader of the Hindu community was Bhadase Sagan Maraj. He seemed to come out of nowhere. He was originally known for his wrestling prowess, but at the end of the war, he made a fortune handling the army surplus property associated with the dismantling of the American military bases. He used the respect this fortune gave him within the Indian community to develop a simple and direct way of giving organizational form to the value system of the once rural Hindu community. Almost simultaneously, he organized both a vigorous Hindu Maha Sabha organization to represent the religious interests of the Hindu community and a political party called the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to give the community a public voice. He personally managed both until his death in 1971 (Vertovec 1992).

Bhadase Maraj recognized the long-standing feeling within the Indian community that Hindus needed a school system of their own. The first purpose of the Sanatana Dharma Maha Sabha when it was formed in 1952 was to set up denominational schools in the pattern already long-established in Trinidad society. Within a couple of years, the organization was running thirty-one schools, many housed in old American army barracks. (The Anjuman Sunat-ul-Jamaat Association set up Muslim schools for the smaller Muslim community during the same period.) Because the Maha Sabha needed local branches in every corner of the island to manage these schools, it suddenly became the centralized voice of the far-flung Hindu community. Almost overnight the Maha Sabha became a very modern institutional form representing a very conservative and rural-based community.

While the government rule was that it should be a "religious" organization that set up the denominational schools, the Sanatana Dharma Maha Sabha at first had almost no contact with religious institutions. Having taken its stand as a "Hindu" organization, however, it was not long before a number of religious activities began to flow through its organizational structure. With the village base of the community rapidly disappearing, ambitious *pandits* started to build showy new temples in more urban areas and affiliate them with the Maha Sabha. With both schools and temples newly making the claim to speak for "Hinduism," the Maha Sabha soon went on to provide them with a standard creed and a set of prayer books (by 1995 there were many variations available, all with Prefaces by the Maha Sabha Secretary General). With government-induced denominationalism the style in Trinidad society, the Maha Sabha soon found itself with a quasi-legal responsibility to arrange for the public celebration of Hindu holidays, and to address a variety of questions directed to it from the government and the courts. In this way within just a few short years, an ethnically defined religious community was born with a single administrative center.

Just a year after getting the Maha Sabha organized, Bhadase Maraj went on to organize the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to give voice to the Hindu community's political aspirations. This was an odd political party because it had little organization and little policy other than to give voice to the Hindu Maha Sabha. On the other hand, it did come into existence just as Trinidad was about to make some momentous decisions about its future, and it gave the Indian community a say in those events and a political foundation.

With the colonial era winding down, the dream in the region was that all the British colonies might form the Federation of the British West Indies. For the 1958 election to the Federation parliament, Maraj decided that he should reconstitute the PDP party and he renamed it the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) and fiercely challenged the whole idea of a Federation. His argument was bluntly protective of the Indian community, in that he argued that in this larger entity the Indian communities in both Trinidad and Guyana would be swamped by the Black majority in the region as a whole. To everyone's amazement, his party won six of the ten Trinidad seats in this experimental parliament, and his argument, along with other difficulties, eventually led to the abandonment of the Federation dream.

With that matter settled, the political attention returned to Trinidad politics and the preparation for Independence in 1962. Eric Williams, the renowned historian of slavery (Williams 1944; 1964), who would be the first Prime Minister of Trinidad, condemned Bhadase Maraj as a narrow religious bigot tied to the Hindu Mahasabha organization of India. Because Gandhi and

Nehru had so roundly condemned the Indian Mahasabha for trying to introduce religious divisions into Indian politics, Williams' argument disturbed even the Indian electorate of Trinidad. Maraj could rightly argue that the organization he had started had no direct links to the organization with a similar name in India, but Williams had made his point, and the "Hindu" nature of Maraj's politics became a central issue. Muslim and Christian Indians gave their support to Williams' People's National Movement (PNM) party, and it led Trinidad into Independence in 1962. Maraj was no good as an Opposition leader, and he died a frustrated man in 1971 (La Guerre 1985). Williams remained Prime Minister until 1986.

While the organizational form of the ethnic identity Hinduism took on in Trinidad came from the strong leadership of Bhadase Maraj in setting up the Sanatana Dharma Maha Sabha and both the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the Democratic Labour Party (DLP), there were other factors that gave that ethnic identity the rich and subtle social form it has today. Among the factors that contribute to the ethnic character of the Hindu identity in Trinidad are the long history of informal and familial religious life in the Indian villages, the pervasive social hierarchicalism of Trinidad society, and the energy of the call for "creole" cultural forms to stand up to the "metropolitan" cultural forms coming out of colonial Britain and more recently out of the American global hegemony. We need to look at each of these factors carefully.

The informality of the religious forms in the villages of Trinidad is probably a good reflection of the informal religious activity one might have found in all of the indentured societies during the first generation. In places such as Guyana and South Africa, it is easy to trace the dramatic change from this pattern that took place as the second or third generations moved off of the plantations and created more formal religious practices. While changes were less dramatic in Mauritius and Fiji, in each of those places, as well, important changes took place in the second generation in that few continued to work on the plantations. In Trinidad, the government push, starting in 1870, to settle Indians in their own villages created a sudden need for a local cultural model. In the absence of other social pressures, the informal religious activity of the plantation became routinized and legitimated in the village as "Trinidad Indian Culture."

Indian immigrants would have brought with them memories of dozens of different religious festivals, but it made sense in the context of the Trinidad Indian village for each subgroup to introduce only one of its festivals to the community as a whole. It was in this context that the Madrasi *Fire Pass*, the Muslim *Hosey*, and the North Indian Hindu *Phagwa* were given new meanings as unifying community celebrations in which everyone participated. Other

informal religious practices also continued as people got together with friends to sing, dance, and look for healers or exorcists (Manuel 2000). Talented ritual performers became known throughout the village and beyond, and music and exorcism rituals (*obeah*) were sometimes shared with the nearby African-based populations (McNeal 2009a). Rituals such as animal sacrifice and possession trance, and activities such as the erection of Hanumān flags and the offering of water or rum to the earth became part of the informal local culture, which over a number of generations became the accepted culture of the whole Trinidad Indian village. Protecting this village culture, informal as it was, had inspired a spirited defense against the Arya Samaj in the 1930s. That same spirited defense of the village culture was still the underlying tone of the spontaneous support Bhadase Maraj received when he called for the Hindu community to get itself organized to deal with the challenges of the 1950s (Maharaj 2006).

The second factor that prepared the ground for an ethnic definition of Hinduism in Trinidad was the intense concern with status and hierarchical ranking that pervades Trinidad society. As we have already seen, Mauritius had a different style of hierarchical consciousness, one that was based on a set of criteria derived from the French planters' links to the value system of prerevolution France. Guyana, on the other hand, had an amazingly equalitarian society based on the understanding that the British planters always intended to leave and wanted no social rank, and the African and Indian members of society were all just considered "plantation workers." In Trinidad, much of the Spanish, French, and British population considered themselves permanent members of the island society. During the nineteenth century, they introduced a racially based sense of hierarchicalism that Aisha Khan (2004) and others have described in detail. This elaborate racism was intended to insure that these groups remained on top in status and in power. To make the Trinidad system of hierarchy work, the European settlers had defined their racism in a way that gave those of mixed blood the second rank in both status and power, and they enforced this arrangement by ensuring that those persons were given the education and the positions in business and government that would enable them to hold that rank. Until the end of the colonial era, the Africans and Indians adapted themselves to this hierarchical system and did what they could to improve their status in terms of the criteria being used. Both Africans and Indians in Trinidad are still quick to identify themselves as having mixed blood, a European religious affiliation, or an English education. For people from India, where Anglo-Indian blood lines are looked down upon, the Trinidad Hindu's readiness to boast about their mixed blood and European links seems strange, but in the complex hierarchicalism of Trinidad ambiguous ties

to a variety of established symbols of status and power is the basis of social organization.

The racial basis the Europeans set out for establishing the island's hierarchicalism was not challenged by either the African or the Indian communities at first. In both communities, those who aspired to leadership had already bought into the European criteria for status achievement. Those who were not part of the racially defined elite were at least busy seeking opportunities for themselves or their children in the elite-run education and government systems.

The way the pervasive island concern with social status first entered the Indian village was through the indirect effect of the Mission school. Favored graduates got the best jobs within the school system or the government. Soon the shopkeepers and money lenders of the village saw to it that their slight economic advantage was turned into a more permanent advantage by sending their children to the Mission school and to outside employment. Working in the shadow behind this newly wealthy elite were an increasing number of *pandits* who showed how their "Brāhman" status could be linked with status from increasing wealth (Maharaj 2006). What they could offer the Indian villager was to certify the status claims of their clients by performing a variety of rituals for them. Gradually, elaborate *samskāra* rites became the final measure of status inside of the Hindu community, and the wealthy began to host grand ceremonies for the naming or the marriage of their children.

The special Indian twist on Trinidadian hierarchicalism was the possibility of claiming "Brāhman" status. In all the indentured societies, 1 or 2 percent of the workers were identified in the ship records as "Brāhman." In Mauritius, South Africa, and Fiji, these Brāhmans pretty much disappeared as a separate community. In Guyana, as we have seen, they had fallen into a leadership role on the plantations, and when the Indians moved into the settlements they had started *mandirs* for Hindu worship right beside the previously established churches of the Afro-Guyanese. In Trinidad, the Brāhman role developed somewhat later as *pandits* began to function as the ritual specialists in Indian village life. Bhadase Maraj's initiatives suddenly changed that very inward-looking perspective when he called for "Brāhmans" to assume a public position as the highest rank of the Hindu community, a community that he was determined to project into a leading role in the whole society.

Maraj's vision of "Brāhman" leadership had many odd twists. Brāhmans over the centuries in India certainly enjoyed the highest "status," but they enjoyed that partly because status was so clearly distinguished from "political power" and "wealth," which were the domains of other groups. Maraj's personal rise in status was not because he was born into a Brāhman family, and

certainly not because of his learning or religious acumen, but it was because of the wealth he fell into managing the army surplus property. He realized, however, that in the Trinidad system he would somehow have to link his "wealth" with "education" and "political power" in that the three were taken together as the measures of status in Trinidad. His first focus was on the long festering issue of the school system, and, without waiting for the anachronistic denominational system to be challenged by modern critics, he held the government to the promises it made twenty years earlier and plunged into the organizational challenge of raising the money to finally get "Hindu" schools up and running. In a traditional Indian sense, it seemed right to him that "Brāhmans" would be associated with "education," but in the local Trinidadian world, the local *pandits* represented the polar opposites of the secular and modern young people that had been educated in the Presbyterian Mission schools. Maraj just ignored that problem and forced *pandits* to help with the organization of the schools. He then forced the secular-minded teachers to honor the Brāhmanical goals the Maha Sabha laid down for the schools. The Hindu schools were not a great success academically, but they did give the Hindu community the institutional base it had lacked. And the struggle to establish them helped people think about ways to tackle the future question of what kind of role the ethnically defined Hindu community would choose for itself in the political arena. Thanks to Bhadase Maraj's bold initiatives, the Indian community of the postwar era moved out of its rural setting determined to make its own claims to status and power within the established pattern of Trinidad hierarchicalism.

A third factor behind the development of Hindu ethnicity in Trinidad was the cultural anxiety the whole society felt as it found itself in a postcolonial world. Bhadase Maraj never really understood this new cultural environment, and when he started the PDP in 1952 he was thoughtlessly following the longstanding assumption in Trinidad that Indians needed their own cultural and political organizations. He was still working in that framework in 1958 when his DLP party fought against the Federation of the British West Indies by bluntly stating what the fears of the Indians would be in that arrangement. He was not even thinking at the time of what alternative the Indians might propose, so that when Eric Williams identified him as a religious bigot in 1962, even many in the Indian community felt that simply calling for loyalty to "Hinduism" was not a healthy political position to take in a multicultural society.

The real impact of the postcolonial era arrived in Trinidad with the "black power" uprising among the youth in 1970. Until that point, the White establishment continued to hold power in almost every company and government

office. Eric Williams' development plans were trying to put a better infrastructure in place, but he had not effectively challenged the colonial economic and cultural arrangements. Suddenly the "black power" movement declared that the White (British) establishment had to go, and the neocolonial American interests would have to be opposed. Politically, the uprising produced an immediate crisis for Williams, but culturally a healthy new sense of "creole" identity came into being.[7] When the Organization of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil cartel forced the price of oil up a few years later, Trinidad went into an era of prosperity as well as cultural vitality, as many new industries were developed from the wealth in oil (La Guerre 1985).

The Indian community's reaction to the development of a new postcolonial consciousness is complicated. The initiative in 1970 was taken in the name of "black power," and the new industries started during the oil boom were thought at the time to benefit the urban African population more than they did the more rural Indians. On the other hand, the racial typology introduced by the White establishment had been challenged, and most of the "black power" leaders were keen to have Indians include themselves in the new definition of "black." Some of the Indian student leaders and musicians enthusiastically embraced this new identity (Manuel 2000), but even the more conservative Indian religious leaders realized that in the new situation Indian culture would have to be reinterpreted as a part of the common "creole" that gave Trinidad its own cultural identity. Part of this would be to behave in such a way that the general public would welcome "Hinduism" as a part of the cultural whole. It was only a subtle change in religious practice from the informal customs of the Indian villages, but the new ethnically defined religious behavior had to redesign those customs in order to serve a new society-wide purpose.

We will describe some of the recent religious changes in the next section, but it might be helpful to finish the political part of the postcolonial story first by describing the issues surrounding the 1995 election. During the 1970s and 1980s, the DLP struggled to find its role as the long reign of Eric Williams wound down. Eventually a coalition made up of breakaway factions from the PNM and the DLP formed the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR), and this new party swept to power in 1986. When that coalition did not last, the PNM came back to power under a new leader, Patrick Manning, and when he became Prime Minister, he resigned himself to the fact that most of his support came from the Black community, and he tended to ignore Indian interests. In this new setting, the DLP had to redefine itself. When the party was reorganized, it called itself the United National Congress (UNC), and its new leader, Basdeo Pandey, went out of his way to project an image of himself

as a modern, well-educated economist, and made no mention of Hindu interests as such. Because his family name is the best known among Brāhman names, Indians certainly assumed he had Indian interests at heart, but the political process had reached a point where it was possible to believe that the Indian majority could also properly represent the interests of the "creole," or the whole Afro-Indian population of Trinidad. In 1995, the UNC won the parliamentary election, and Pandey became the first Indian Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. While he had trouble holding that office in the next couple of elections, the point had been made that Indians now played a full role in the political process. In the process, the point had also been made that Indian politicians no longer followed the direction of the Maha Sabha and were part of the secular and pluralist political process like everyone else.

New Religious Forms

When the "black power" revolution of 1970 set in motion the creation of new cultural forms, it put the Indian youth in an awkward position. A few of the leaders of the revolution did understand "black" to mean exclusively "African." They wanted people to rediscover African cultural forms, and wanted the leadership to remain exclusively in the hands of those of African background. The majority, however, wanted Indians to be included in the "black" or "creole" culture Trindadians hoped to produce. Indian young people joined the revolution with enthusiasm and have played a significant role in developing the musical forms and university life that people point to as this new creole product (Manuel 2000). While the young people of African background gradually gave up on a search for African roots and concentrated on developing local versions of the music and other art forms for this culture, the young people of Indian background actually had semi-traditional religious rituals being practiced in their midst that they could imagine playing some role in their new culture.[8] Unlike their ancestors, they came to feel that they did not need to choose between modernity and their Indian heritage, and they dug into the memories of their parents and grandparents and tried to identify religious forms that did not seem inconsistent with the creole culture in which they now lived.

What developed in the Hindu community of Trinidad in the 1970s and 1980s is sometimes described as a "Hindu Renaissance," simply because so much was going on. There was no real intellectual rebirth as the term "renaissance" might imply, but Indians were leaving the rural areas and entering the new economy in a big way, and the resulting social changes were dramatic.

Some found the dislocation of the new social situation troubling, while others prospered and wanted to use their new wealth to support rituals and temple building in the new setting. What everyone found is that new cultural initiatives were accepted by the wider society as legitimate contributions of the Indians to the complex ethnicity developing in the new Trinidad (Maharaj 2006). This new situation includes many new trends, and some Hindu leaders are alarmed that on one side are Pentecostal Indian churches that appear to them to be growing fast, and on the other Muslim teachers who are teaching militant new forms of Islam. What we will present here are three examples of Hindu religious activity that have developed quite dramatically in response to the new needs and opportunities brought into being by the newly popular creole culture.

One of the most interesting examples of Hindu religious revival to take place in Trinidad in the 1970s was the introduction of a South Indian or "Madrasi" temple tradition from Guyana (personal observation 1995; McNeal 2003). As in Guyana, South Indian religious practice in Trinidad had in the beginning of the indentureship period centered on individual practitioners providing healings and exorcisms for people while possessed by the goddess Māriyammaṉ. As we have already seen, in the Indian villages of Trinidad a yearly festival when these *pūjaris* performed the *Fire Pass* or walked on burning coals before doing their healings and exorcisms was a favorite celebration for the whole Indian community. As we saw in Story Two, these South Indian religious practices were given an institutional form in Guyana around 1917 when a temple compound was built in Albion by the respected *pūjari* Bailappa, and was soon copied in many of the small settlements where the plantation workers lived in Guyana. This kind of institutional development never took place in Trinidad, primarily because, in the Indian villages of Trinidad, there was not a tradition of building places for regular Sunday worship as there was in Guyana. In the context of Trinidad, the South Indian healers and exorcists did have some people approaching them for help and did have links outside the Indian villages with the Afro-Christian cults such as the Shango Baptists (McNeal 2009a). During the period of rapid social change after World War II, new Shango Baptist churches began to spring up all over the island, and their primarily female ministers began to deal with the widespread fear people had in the new social setting that their troubles were caused by evil spirits (interview with practitioner 1995). Word began to spread that an even more effective solution to these kinds of problems was available in the Kālī-Mai temples of Guyana, and a regular traffic began to develop with people going to Guyana for relief.

Eventually, one of the remaining South Indian exorcists in Trinidad decided to go to Guyana and see for himself (interview with his son in 1995).

In the early 1970s, Bharat Moonaswamy, one of the prominent practitioners of the South Indian healing and exorcism cult in Trinidad, went to Guyana to see for himself what the Kālī-Mai cult there was like. He became acquainted with Jamsie Naidoo, one of the most prominent *pūjaris* of Guyana described in Story Two, and functioned as a *pūjari* for a time in Naidoo's temple compound (interview with Naidoo 1995). Eventually, he persuaded Naidoo to come back to Trinidad with him and assist in establishing a temple tradition there. What they did was make an exact replica of Naidoo's home temple, including his extensive set of twenty-seven subsidiary deities. Since then a half dozen others have built Kālī-Mai temple compounds in Trinidad, and they all follow the very popular South Indian-style worship traditions of Guyana.

The first of these temples, established by Bharat Moonaswamy in St. Augustine near the university, was being run in 1995 by his son Seechan Moonaswamy, and it has a zealously orthodox version of the Guyana tradition. The layout of each of the subsidiary images has been carried out with precision, and the possession states of the many assistant *pūjaris* are a highly organized version of the healing and exorcism powers that have made the Kālī-Mai tradition of Guyana so widely known (personal observation 1995) (figure 3.3). Just a block away, Bharat Moonaswamy's brother-in-law, Mootoo Brown, has developed a somewhat more modern version of the temple tradition. In this case, there is an effort to make the architecture more ornate and it includes locally designed domes or *vimānas*, and the mythology associated with the various subsidiary images has been expanded so as to include local Trinidad stories (Guinee 1990; personal observation 1995).

While these two temples are still headed up by South Indian *pūjaris*, and the first one at least is very determined to be true to the tradition it introduced from Guyana, in certain ways the religious life in both temples blends in very comfortably with the atmosphere of sharing that characterizes the religious life of the lower classes on the island at the present time. In both of these temples, people of African background are prominent as assistant *pūjaris*, and in the second temple one of the prominent assistants wears his Sikh turban, a dramatic indication of the "openness" that characterizes religious practice in Trinidad today (figure 3.4). In both temples, also, women are prominent among the assistant *pūjaris*, another feature of religious practice in Trinidad, which is especially notable in the groups that have more African ties. Another prominent Kālī-Mai temple in Chaguanas is headed up by Krishna Angad who is of North Indian background. While, in all these ways, the Kālī-Mai cult has

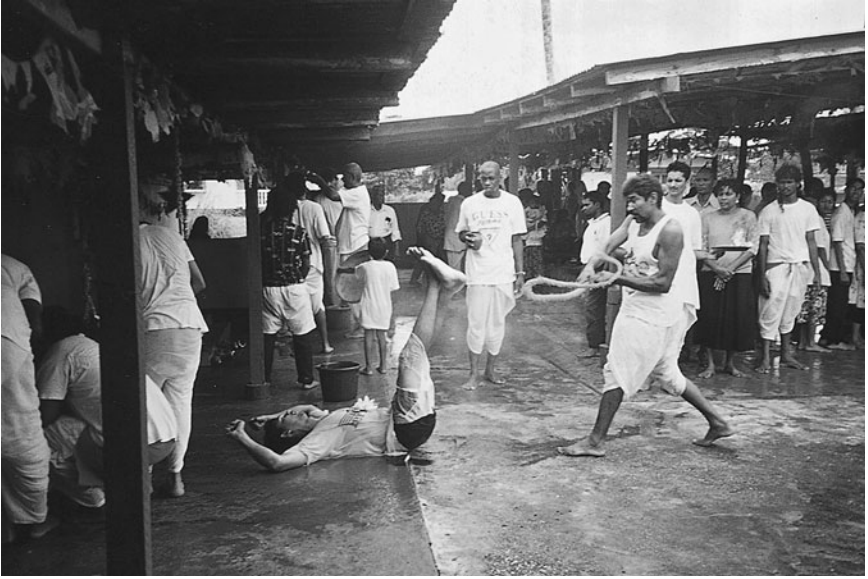

FIGURE 3.3. Exorcist being whipped to test whether he is in trance. Kalı Mai temple, St. Augustine, Trinidad.

been deeply integrated into the general religious atmosphere and addresses the need within the wider community for dealing with personal problems arising in the time of rapid social change, it is also recognized as a welcome South Indian contribution to the ethnically rich culture of the new Trinidad. Even people who had never been to any of these temples were proud to tell me that this rich tradition was being carried on.

A second new form of religious activity that developed in the Hindu community during the 1970s was the expansion of the traditional family-sponsored *satsang* and *yagña* into major institutional forms. In the village setting, the *satsang* was a neighborhood practice of gathering in someone's house to sing devotional songs. After World War II, the village atmosphere largely disappeared. When Indian entrepreneurs did very well after the oil boom of the 1970s, some of them wished to find a way of claiming status within the Hindu community, and the *satsang* and *yagña* were revived in a new form. In this new context, the singing of *bhajans* was not a community exercise, but a semiprofessional performance. Groups of Indian youths became trained singers of devotional music, and wealthy families and temples competed to be able to sponsor their performances. Like the traditional *samskāra* celebration, these events brought prestige to the sponsoring family, but they also moved beyond the family interest and become public events the whole community was interested in. Whether attended by

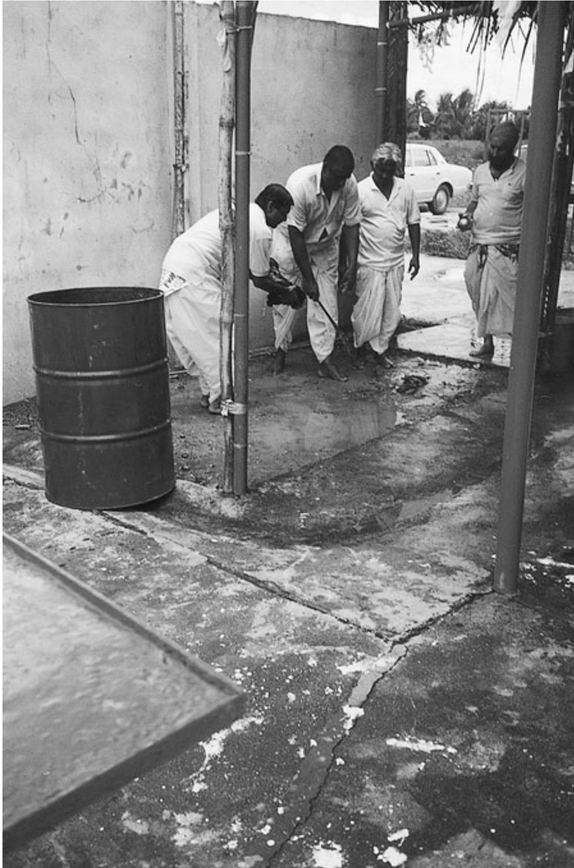

FIGURE 3.4. Cock sacrifice. Head *pujari*, Mootoo Brown, with Sikh assistant and others, Trinidad.

non-Hindu friends or not, they were understood to make a public statement about the importance of the family and the Hindu devotionalism it supported. In this context, the Brāhman *pandit* was also included in the event, and his presence ensured that the event was understood as part of the overall Hindu revival.

The *yagña* event has some of the same features as a *satsang* in that it is sponsored by one or more families and is staged as an expression of unusual devotion or thanksgiving for special good fortune. It is different in that the role of the *pandits* is central, and the celebration can last several days. Based on the Vedic idea of "sacrifice," the *yagña* usually involves a number of *pandits* reciting lengthy religious texts and otherwise performing marathon worship exercises before the images. *Yagñas* are often performed in prestigious family homes, but are also closely associated with the new temples built during the 1970s and

1980s. Some of these temples were linked with the Maha Sabha, as most of the temples built during the 1950s were, but others were built by one or more of the newly wealthy families and were really part of a general religious entrepreneurship (Vertovec 1992; personal observation 1995).

A third new religious form is the very public way in which Hindu festivals are now celebrated. Festivals were a part of the religious life of each of the indenture-based societies. In Trinidad, they had for generations had an even more central role as they functioned as the only essential religious practice in the exclusively Indian villages. In that setting, they were an expression of the traditional ethnicity of the society in that they served to internally socialize the various subcommunities within the Indian community and they also served as the public presentation of Indian culture to the rest of the society. In the period after 1970, when the Indian community decided that it needed to make its contribution to creole culture, and especially needed to assert itself politically, the term "festival" took on a new meaning as one part of the Indian religious heritage that the Indian community felt it could reasonably expect all of Trinidad society to acknowledge and even participate in.

In 1995, I watched with amazement the insistently public way in which the festival of Divāli was celebrated in the parking lot of the ultramodern suburban mall in Curepe. News reports had already indicated that the Indian community had complained that the national election was being held on its festival day. Divāli is not one of the three central festivals referred to as part of the earlier Trinidad Indian village, but it was probably celebrated in some way in the early villages and the Sanatana Dharma Maha Sabha now has a semiofficial role in deciding what the recognized Hindu holidays are and how the festival should be celebrated.

Everywhere in the world, Divāli is celebrated as a festival of "lights" and of triumphant joy. It marks the return of Rāma to his kingdom after a long absence. In Trinidad, in 1995, that symbolism had special meaning because it was expected that later that evening Basdeo Pandey would become the first Indian Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. In the suburban mall of Curepe, half of the large parking lot was taken over for the celebration, and a temple-like structure was erected and chairs were set out for a huge audience. The lights and the loudspeakers were spectacular. As the evening approached, a group of *pandits* performed an elaborate *pūja* or worship in honor of the goddess Lakṣmī, right in the public setting of the mall parking lot. Finally some of the best music groups on the island entertained the audience with their music. In the accepted ethnic arrangements for Trinidad culture after 1970, this celebration was evidence that Hinduism had finally found its place as a colorful part of that eclectic scene.

The new public role Hinduism has found for itself in Trinidad is even more evident in the Disney-inspired theme park near Chaguanas, called the Divāli Nagar. The colorful story of the *Rāmāyana* has for thousands of years been a childhood favorite. The story starts with the boyhood rivalry of the four brothers, and goes on with the arrival of the absolutely perfect model of femininity, Sītā, to be the wife of Rāma; the arduous journey through the forests of South India for Rāma, Sītā, and his faithful brother Lakṣmana; the encounters with the evil and monstrous *rakṣasās*; the kidnapping of Sītā by the *rakṣasā* king Rāvaṇa; the assistance of the monkey rulers and the brave and faithful monkey-hero Hanumān. The story concludes with the great battle to rescue Sītā from Rāvaṇa's fortified city in Śrī Lanka. Each of these colorful scenes provided material for drama troupes over the centuries in places such as Thailand, Cambodia, and Indonesia, as well as India. Now a Trinidad theme park has taken those scenes and created situations where the visitors can walk themselves through the story and watch the drama presented with the most up-to-date theatre styles imaginable. Here, even more than in the Divāli celebrations at the mall, Hinduism becomes a public expression of the Indian contribution to the ethnicity that Trinidad has chosen to identify as its cultural heritage.[9]

Analysis

In some ways there has been less traditional Hindu practice in Trinidad since the beginning of indentureship than in any of the other settings included in this study. On the other hand, one might visualize the recent developments in the schools and the political arena as a revival of Hinduism and acknowledge that the zeal about being "Hindu" may be stronger in Trinidad today than it is in many other parts of the Hindu world.

It is also true that the deep secularity of the Indian community in Trinidad needs to be recognized. In the exclusively Indian villages, in which most of the workers lived during the second and third generations in Trinidad, people were busy making a living and having a good time, and there was no threat to their heritage and no special reason to develop new religious forms. People were comfortable in their Indian cultural forms in the village, and yet were in touch with non-Indian forms of culture through much of the day, so that both parts of their cultural life became deeply their own without really coming into conflict.

The central institutional form that made this system work was the Canadian Presbyterian school system. For generations, it offered schooling to Indians without asking them to venture out of their exclusively Indian com-

munity. When the educated Indian elite started the cultural and political organizations called the East Indian National Association and the East Indian National Congress, they called for Indians to move toward modernity, but they interpreted that call in purely secular terms, and even gave it a tone of inclusivity in the hope that Hindu, Muslim, and Christian Indians might act together. During the 1930s, the appeal to religious solidarity was stretched to the limit as it became more and more evident that in spite of the broad base of education provided by the Presbyterians, it was Christian and Muslim students who seemed to move on and get the best jobs. Even then the government's offer to subsidize denominational schools for Hindus and Muslims too did not get much of a response. Indians chose to continue with the village style they had fallen into when land was offered them in the late nineteenth century, and memories of India were of primordial customs that did not need a great deal of redefinition. Unlike Guyana, the people of African origin usually did not live in the same village as the Indians in Trinidad, and their religious practices were not of immediate interest, and the missionaries were concentrating on education and not making a major pitch for conversion. It seems odd that the rich intellectual and social currents that ran through the educated sector of society during the 1920s and 1930s would not have prompted more change in the Indian villages. The Indians had become accustomed to watching developments in the African villages and White business and government sectors from a distance, and, as long as students were finding opportunities for work, it seemed best that Indians concentrate on keeping their culture base separate and not get involved in redefining the larger society. In the long run, this posture meant that the Indian community in Trinidad remained more united than it did in any of the other indenture-based societies, but it also meant that the cultural initiatives the community was eventually to take to play its role in establishing its new homeland were not very clear for quite some time.

Finally, after World War II, Bhadase Maraj identified the widespread social changes that came from the war and the development of the oil wealth as a threat to "Hinduism," and an intense reflection on religion developed among the Indians of Trinidad. Maraj did not really challenge the deep secularity that had developed over the generations, so much as he identified the way in which ethnicity worked in Trinidad society and called on Hindus to develop a modern form of their own ethnicity. The two institutional forms Maraj saw as essential if Hindus were to have a modern form of ethnic identity were their own denominational schools and their own political party. He himself had little to say about the role of temples in this new ethnic identity, but as the village life disappeared and the *pandits* of the villages followed the new wealth in the community to the urban areas, a new style of temple life developed in those

settings and became the third, and perhaps most stable, of the institutional bases of Trinidad Hinduism.

The development of Hindu denominational schools in the 1950s was a powerful tool in the development of a Hindu identity, but as an educational exercise it was almost too late and would soon be eclipsed in importance by political developments and the building of temples. Because the government required that the denominational school system be run by a central religious organization, the Sanatana Dharma Maha Sabha had to be founded, and it quickly evolved into the most centrally organized religious institution anywhere in the Hindu world. For a time, its leadership spoke on matters of doctrine and on matters of politics with an assurance seldom found outside of the Vatican. Because developments in politics and in temple building eventually moved faster than the inexperienced Maha Sabha was able to cope with, that Vatican-like role did not continue. Nevertheless, even during its short period as the central voice of Hinduism, it was able to redefine Trinidad Hinduism in terms of a central creed, and move the way of defining Hinduism from "practice" to "belief" to a degree that one seldom finds in the Hindu world.

Developing an appropriate political voice for Hindus in Trinidad proved more of a challenge than filling in the long-felt need for denominational schools. At first, Maraj's simple formula that called for a Maha Sabha-run political party had surprising success. Almost a century in exclusively Indian villages had given the Indian community a hesitation about making common cause with others, and Maraj was initially able to get support from the whole Indian community just by articulating the fear that Indians might get swallowed up in a Caribbean federation dominated by Afro-Caribbeans. The racial polarization that early vote on the Federation revealed did not continue, however, because Eric Williams knew enough about India's politics to raise the specter that a Maha Sabha-controlled party might base some of its policies on obscure communal and religious interests and automatically put Brāhmans or even *pandits* into positions of power. Even many Indians did not find that prospect desirable. For some years after Independence, Maraj's Maha Sabha-based political voice became a relatively quiet opposition, while the Christian and Muslim segments of the Indian community explored other forms of coalition politics. That coalition movement had some success, and put together the NAR government in 1986, but that government did not prove stable. By the time the political cycle moved on and there was another opportunity for change in 1995, the Hindu politicians had also redefined themselves and had left their Maha Sabha roots behind them. In its new form, the UNC was seen as an ethnically based coalition but not a religious party, and in that form it was able to gain broad enough support to form the government.

While Bhadase Maraj's effort to create a centrally organized Hindu identity, with schools and a political party controlled by the Sanatana Dharma Maha Sabha, was crucial in redefining Trinidad Hinduism in the 1950s, there were many other factors that played a role in bringing into being the diverse temple traditions that are at the heart of Hindu identity in Trinidad today. Soon after the establishment of the Maha Sabha, some temples were built with the intention of being directly affiliated with the Maha Sabha. As social change accelerated, however, most of the temples were joint efforts of newly wealthy members of the Indian community and some of their favorite *pandits,* who were now keen to move from the quickly fading village areas. These entrepreneur-inspired temples had less of the creedal rigidity the Maha Sabha had tried to impose, and often reproduced for the urban Indians some of the warm community sense that had characterized the village. In this new setting, the opportunities available to the *pandits* were not limited in the way they were in the village setting, and some of the *pandits* became entrepreneurs in their own right as they booked themselves for *satsangs, yagñas,* and *samskāras* or set about building a new temple with a number of wealthy supporters.

It must be remembered that the Indian community of Trinidad has not really abandoned its deep secularity in the process of suddenly developing this set of "Hindu" institutions during the last fifty years. The situation is a bit like that in the United States where one finds prosperous religious institutions in the midst of a basically secular society. Neither the rigidly observed daily ritual practices that one finds in India, nor the regular practice of weekly worship that one sees among Hindus in Guyana are common in Trinidad. On the other hand, the rights of the largest single ethnic group are loudly defended by those who identify themselves as "Hindu," and those rights are now widely acknowledged as an important part of Trinidad culture. The island's culture found it hard to remove the racial hierarchy that the colonial era had set in place, but African-based music and Indian-based religious forms have finally found their place alongside the Arawak legends, the great Spanish churches, and some British government traditions in the new postcolonial mixture in which Trinidad's people take such pride.

For Hindus this need to develop a set of religious practices to meet an ethnically defined social situation is a new thing. In India, Hindu practice was constantly responding to social and political change, but the culture was not already predefined in so many ways as it is in modern Trinidad. In modern Trinidad, the economy and the international affairs of the country are already well defined, and the roles the Native, Spanish, British, and Black cultural units would have in the cultural whole were already fairly well established. What Maraj saw, as Independence arrived, was that ethnic fair play would most

certainly welcome a significant cultural and political contribution from the largest single ethnic group, which was the one made up of Indians. The trick was to dig into the rich but undeveloped memory bank of the Indian villagers and bring out symbols that were authentic enough that all Indians would be proud of them and public enough that the whole of society would be willing to honor them. Maraj's own zeal tended to go to too narrow a base by linking everything with the Maha Sabha organization, and the energy of the Black Consciousness revolution almost went too far in another direction by not wanting to acknowledge religious symbols of any kind, but in the end both excesses helped the Hindu leadership recognize just what kind of ethnic contribution the postcolonial society would tolerate. The Hindu Renaissance that made this quick adjustment in the latter half of the twentieth century was fortunate that the rich memory bank was available and that the society was as open as it seems to be to more active Hindu participation in the life of the nation. Religious practices designed to meet the needs of an ethnic balance in society represent a relatively new form of religious development, but, in this case, they seem to have a deep authenticity and seem to be working well. Perhaps they represent a model of things to come as Hindus face up to other situations around the globe where they find themselves a welcome part of a society, but have to share the scene with a fair number of other cultural voices.

In many ways, the label "new homeland" seems most appropriate when it is applied to the Hindu community in Trinidad. When the recruiters in the nineteenth century were trying to convince Indian peasants to become indentured workers, they sometimes described to them an island utopia they called Cini-dad or Land of Sugar. In each of the other lands to which workers were taken, opportunities opened up and homelands were established, but in Trinidad people felt at home almost from the beginning. At the end of five or ten years of labor, workers were offered land instead of the promised return trip to India, and they were soon living in comfort with their fellow Indians. As we have shown, that comfortable arrangement did not immediately stimulate the creation of new religious traditions, but the sense of security was there and in time the creativity also began to appear. In each of the new homelands, the cultural situation involves a postcolonial sharing with others and a nervous concern about the political future. For the Hindu community of Trinidad, however, that future seems more secure than for the others. While they may not feel they have found the promised utopia, they do feel they have found a permanent home.

Story Four

South Africa: Reform Religion

Indians in South Africa have survived so many crises and made so many difficult cultural choices during their time in that land that they are justifiably proud of their new homeland. They now proudly proclaim that they are the largest Indian community outside of the subcontinent of India (numbering well over a million), and that it was among them that Mahatma Gandhi learned his now legendary political techniques. Many now make brief visits to India to buy saris or visit holy places and then describe what they saw while there with a string of disapproving anecdotes. Claiming that their practice of Hinduism is superior to that currently practiced in India, Hindus in South Africa eagerly support "reform" movements of all kinds and share reformist tendencies with the very active, but smaller, Indian communities of Muslims (18 percent of Indians) and Christians (13 percent of Indians). In general, the Indians of South Africa have had the most dramatic history of any Indian community during the past hundred years, and, as a result, one has the sense that intellectually and politically they have moved the farthest from their Indian roots of any of the Indian communities around the globe.

The Arrival

Following the pattern first established in Mauritius and then Guyana and Trinidad, British ships began bringing Indian laborers

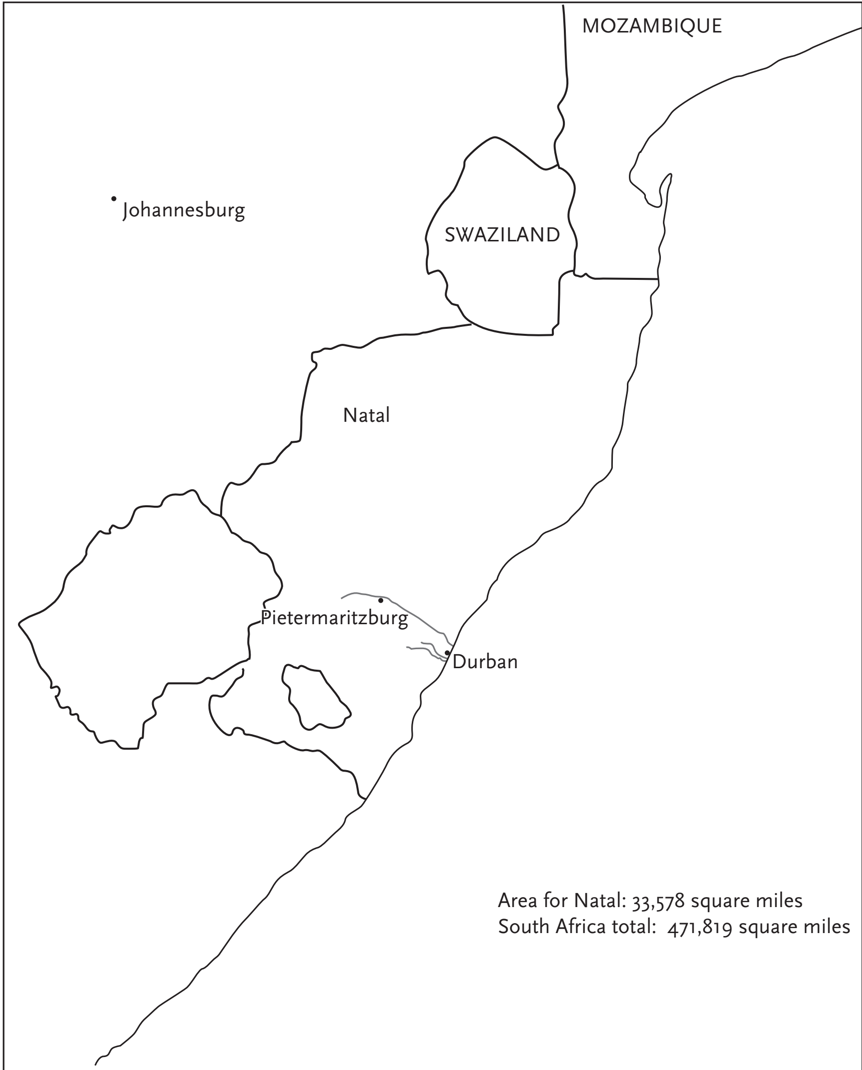

FIGURE 4.1. Map of Natal, South Africa.

to Natal on the east coast of South Africa in 1860 (figure 4.1). In contrast to the situation in Mauritius, Guyana, and Trinidad, where over three-quarters of the laborers were from North India and sailed from the port of Calcutta, in Natal about two-thirds were from South India and sailed from the port of Madras (Y. S. Meer 1980; Bhana 1987). This difference is an important factor in the cultural differences that show up later in the history, but it has not been very well explained in the history books on the indentureship period. As far as one

can tell, it was an accident of colonial whim, in that when Mr. Anderson, the strong-minded Protector of Emigrants in Mauritius, went to Calcutta and arranged his own recruitment system for his colony in that region, he asked that most of the laborers for Mauritius be shipped from Calcutta (Story One). A short time later, planters in Guyana and Trinidad made some mild complaints about the South Indians among their laborers, whom they considered "too independent" and "too dirty" (Story Two). As a result, when the South African indentureship began in 1860, it was apparently decided that for the time being most of the ships from Madras would be sent to South Africa. In any case, by the time the shipping of indentured laborers to Natal was halted in 1911, 152,184 Indian laborers had been introduced into the complex social mixture that is today South Africa, and most of them were of South Indian origin (Y. S. Meer 1980; Bhana 1987; Arkin et al. 1989).

Almost as soon as the Indian laborers began arriving on the shores of Natal, South Africa, Indian traders used the presence of the laborers as an excuse to venture over to South Africa and take up shop-keeping there. Muslim traders had actually been in Cape Town since the sixteenth century.[1] Both Muslim and Hindu traders from Gujarat were busy in East African trade from the mid-nineteenth century on, so it seemed natural for them to move into Natal when the opportunity presented itself. These Indian traders were mostly Muslims from western India and they had very little in common at first with the indentured workers who were mostly Hindus and Christians from South India. Mohandas K. Gandhi's arrival in 1893 dramatically changed that, because he worked closely with both the Muslim business community and the second generation of the indentured community. He had come to South Africa to work for a Muslim business family from his native Gujarat, and he built his initial unit of the Natal Indian Congress with Muslim leadership, but he befriended indentured workers from the beginning (Gandhi 1925, chs. 7 and 16), and relied for organizational help on the educated South Indian Christians in the second generation of the indentured community (Gandhi 1925; Brain 1983; Swan 1985).[2] The stories of how during his years in South Africa from 1893 to 1914 Gandhi challenged the various pass laws, head taxes, restrictions to specific colonies, denial of citizenship rights, and forced repatriation that were being imposed on the Indians are very well known. They were, however, only the beginning of what was to be a long battle as Indians fought to find a place for themselves within the very unstable social arrangements that characterized all of South African society throughout the twentieth century (F. Meer 1969, 1996; Pachai 1979).

Unlike the situation in most of the other locations that imported indentured workers, the sugar plantations were not the only location to which

indentured workers were sent in South Africa. Although the nervous colonial entrepreneurs had made an impassioned plea for Indian workers in order to start a sugar industry in 1855 (Y. S. Meer 1980), they did not have the long-standing experience in sugarcane growing that the planters in Mauritius, Guyana, and Trinidad did. They did establish plantations north and south of Durban along the coast, but as the flood of workers started to arrive in 1860, many were given indenture contracts with the railway, the coal mines, the municipalities of Durban or Pietermaritzburg, or with ambitious farmers or businessmen elsewhere. With a large percentage of the Indian community based near the urban centers of Durban and Pietermaritzburg, and with even the plantations within reach of the cities, community celebrations, such as the Muharram celebration, which was called the "Coolie Christmas" and involved the entire Indian population,[3] were held in the cities. When the price of sugar dropped in the 1880s, it hit the industry in South Africa much harder than it did in places where the planters were more established. With the plantation economy in difficulty, the Indian workers who had finished their indenture contract found other occupations more inviting, and were soon fishing off the shore, market gardening in the river valleys, farming further inland, and taking up business opportunities of all sorts. Most of the South Indians gradually gravitated toward the outskirts of Durban where there were fertile river valleys along the River Umbilo, coming from the southwest, and the River Umgeni, coming from the northwest, and the legendary vegetable market of Durban developed based on produce from the Indian market gardens in those river valleys. Moving to the Durban region brought the indentured workers into contact with the Indian traders developing their businesses along Grey Street, and the prolonged struggle between the Indian and the White citizens of Durban was begun (Bagwandeen 1991; Goonam 1991; Bhana 1997).

The White citizens of Durban panicked when they saw the growth of the Indian community, partly because their own position in South Africa was so tenuous. By the later half of the nineteenth century, the colonial history of South Africa had already undergone a number of major changes. During the earliest phase of colonial activity, Dutch settlers had occupied the Cape area of South Africa. They had used the Khoi-san[4] or local people as servants, and the children of the cohabitation between the Dutch and Khoi-san became numerous. In the Western Cape, the original Khoi-san and those of mixed race have come to be spoken of as the "Colored" people of South Africa (Callinicos 1980). The Xhosa-speaking tribes[5] to the east of the Cape, however, fought hard to retain control of their land, and the efforts of the Dutch settlers at the Cape to expand in that direction were limited. By 1780, the British took over control of the Cape, but they too were repulsed by the Xhosa to the east. Eventually, the

Dutch Afrikaners attempted to escape British rule, and bypass the Xhosa, by marching inland and setting up independent political units for themselves there. The British also decided to bypass the Xhosa resistance by moving around the coast to the port of Durban, and a significant number of British businessmen settled there by the mid-nineteenth century (Callinicos 1980). Both these European communities came in contact with the Zulu-speaking tribes[6] living in the eastern part of South Africa, and, after some fierce battles and the British defeat of 1879, the Zulu-speaking peoples were able to keep the Europeans out of their farmlands. In return for leaving them alone in their farmlands, the Zulus allowed the English to develop the cities of Durban and Pietermaritzburg and the coastal plantations near the port of Durban (Guy 1995). Everyone ignored the Afrikaners' move to settle on the dry inland plateau at first, but late in the nineteenth century the inland plateau began to produce diamonds and gold, and the situation was shuffled once again. Many Zulus and some Indians took up work in the mines, and the British colonial authorities decided to reassert their control over the whole of South Africa by taking on the Afrikaners in what has been called the Boer War between 1899 and 1902 (Wilson and Thomson 1971).

When M. K. Gandhi arrived in South Africa in 1893, the number of Indians was sufficiently large to raise political questions. In the Cape, there was a long-standing accommodation among at least the educated elite of all racial groups, and the 10,000 Indians were not uncomfortable among the 400,000 Europeans and almost a million Coloreds and Blacks. In the inland plateau of the Transvaal, there were only 5,000 Indians and 120,000 Europeans and 650,000 Blacks, but most of the Afrikaners and nearly all the Blacks lived in the countryside, and the Indians shared the cities with a small number of British businessmen and civil servants. It was, however, in Natal where 50,000 British businessmen and 50,000 Indians shared the two cities of Pietermaritzburg and Durban that political tension was at a high level. We will need to come back to the political part of that story later when we describe the string of political crises that continued to define the Indian community of South Africa, but before we get to those later changes in the nature of the community, we need to examine the primary patterns in the religious life of the first two generations of the Hindu community of South Africa.

Religious Life of the Early Community

The religious history of the Hindus in South Africa can be divided into a number of distinct historical stages. The first stage, of course, would be the

single generation when much of the community still lived on the sugar plantations along the coast. Because the majority of the laborers brought to Natal were from South India, it is not surprising that many of the reports we have about the religious practices of the plantations involved the worship of the South Indian goddesses Māriyamman̲ and Draupadī. In the dryland districts of the old Madras Presidency close to Madras, where most of the recruitment of workers took place, most of the lower classes worshipped these two goddesses. In Chingelpet, North Arcot, and South Arcot districts of present-day Tamil Nadu, and in Chitoor district of present-day Andhra, the Vanniyar or Naicker caste led the worship of Draupadī (Hiltebeital 1988). Throughout the more extensive Tamil-speaking areas of South India most of the lower castes worshipped Māriyamman̲ (Whitehead 1921; Younger 1980, 2002c). It is not surprising therefore that most of the South Indian temples we hear about from the earliest period were Śakti or goddess temples of Māriyamman̲ or Draupadī. This is what one would expect given the area from which the largest number of laborers came, and given the fact that there was no Brāhman leadership among the South Indian laborers. The lower-caste *pūjaris* who serve Māriyamman̲ were available, and the Vanniyars who serve Draupadī were actually numerous among the laborers. From what we know about the small temples of the early period, they involved worshippers walking on burning coals, *pūjaris* doing a great number of animal sacrifices, and specialists going into trance in order to do healings and exorcisms.

The interesting difference between the goddess or Śakti traditions of Guyana and those of South Africa is that in the former case they evolved into a rigid tradition, which still has a clear pattern as one proceeds from one plantation settlement to another. In South Africa, on the other hand, many different practices developed, and the goddess worshippers in different localities blended in with all sorts of other religious practices during later periods of the history (Desai and Vahed 2007). While in Guyana, for instance, a rigidly defined set of subsidiary deities was placed around Māriyamman̲, who was the primary South Indian deity there, in South Africa these subsidiary deities are rarely associated directly with the goddess. Maturai Vīran̲, who is the ever-present protector of Māriyamman̲ in Guyana, is frequently found outside a Māriyamman̲ temple in South Africa as well, and the much-feared deities Munīśvaran̲ and Koterie are also known (Kuper 1960). There is, however, no consistent pattern in this regard, and some of the subsidiary deities, such as Cankani Kar̲uppu, who receives almost as much attention as Māriyamman̲ herself in Guyana, is not found at all in the South African temples.

Fortunately, a few examples of this early pattern of goddess worship have been kept alive as a result of the special sacrality associated with some temple

locations near Durban. The Isipingo temple is now on the southern outskirts of Durban, but that area was probably part of the plantation area when the temple was first built. Many worshippers today say that they consider the Māriyammaṉ worship in the Isipingo temple special because they see it as a direct continuation of their ancestors' plantation tradition. The K. Moodley family, which now manages this busy temple, claims to have built it in 1870 (Mikula et al. 1982). While most of the earlier plantation temples probably had thatch roofs, this one has three *vimāna* domes made of reed with plaster shapes built on top of the reed domes. The Maturai Vīraṉ image and the adjacent altar where the sacrifices are performed are well out in front of the temple. The Maturai Vīraṉ image faces east or *away* from Māriyammaṉ, rather than toward her in the protector mood as in Guyana. The image of Maturai Vīraṉ is clearly the work of a local sculptor, as are most of the images in different parts of the temple. The temple has survived partly because it is still managed by the Moodley family, but also because it continues to adhere to a rigidly defined worship tradition known for its many animal sacrifices and its reputation for healing and exorcism. The ten-day festival of the temple is called the "Good Friday Isipingo Festival" (sometimes the "Easter Festival") and is known throughout the country. The festival includes grand theatrical performances, as well as the usual animal sacrifices, possessed *pūjaris*, and processions of the images (personal visit 1996).

Two other goddess temples in the Durban area are described by worshippers as carrying on some of the worship tradition associated with the first generation, but they are not located in what was once the plantation area, and they probably represent a reconstruction of that tradition as people moved to the urban setting. One of these is the Gangā Ammaṉ temple in the Cato Manor area, where many of the South Indian market gardeners originally settled when they left the plantations. This temple is a tiny metal shed built over two huge anthills that house snakes, and the anthills are thought by worshippers to have faces of a lion and a goddess respectively. It is a very busy temple, and has a very charismatic caretaker/*pūjari* who calls herself "Miss Govender,"[7] and who claims that it was her grandfather who found the anthills and established the system of worship. The building is extremely simple in spite of the large crowds, and worshippers insist that they do not want any change in the very natural environment that prevails around this temple. The houses in the area were all bulldozed in the 1960s, when the Group Areas Act forced Indians to move to townships further from the city, but the authorities agreed to leave a number of temples in the area that were considered very holy. This temple was again in the way when a highway was put through, but again the warnings from the worshippers won out, and the highway was placed between the temple and its flagstaff (personal visit 1996).

Somewhat similar to the Gangā Ammaṉ tradition is that found in Newlands in another river valley where market gardening was common. In this case, as well, a metal-clad building is built over what is a ten- by twenty-feet square anthill that also houses a snake. Worship appears to have been carried on here somewhat sporadically over the years, and an old image of Māriyammaṉ that is largely unattended is behind the anthill. In 1988, however, the temple was taken over by Guru Krishna Naidoo, who is the President and Guru of the Sathie Sanmarka Sungum based in the Asherville section of the city of Durban, and he introduced a new style of worship. Now the temple tradition includes full festival processions, and *obāyams* or visits of the images and the entranced Guru to one's home or shop in return for major donations. This temple might now be described as an old style of worship that now serves a very new style of spirituality centered on the sacred character and teaching of the Guru. I visited this temple with a modern family of North Indian background that knew nothing of the tradition of Māriyammaṉ worship but were deeply devoted to the Guru (personal visit 1996) (figure 4.2).

These three examples of temples in which the distinct characteristics of the goddess temple ritual are still carried on remind us of just how deeply rooted that tradition is among South Africa's Hindus. It is not an organized tradition in the sense that the Kālī-Mai tradition is in Guyana (Story Two), but

FIGURE 4.2. Plantation style Mariyamman temple, South Africa.

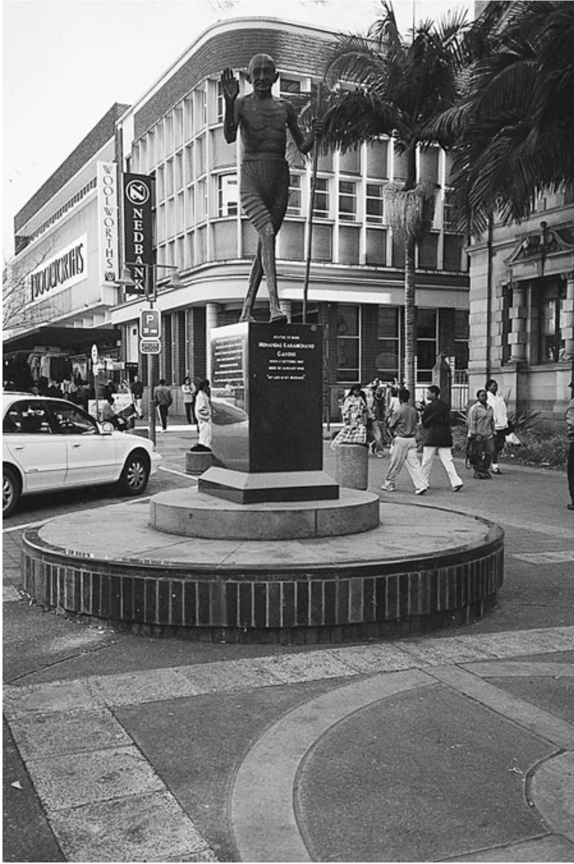

FIGURE 4.3. M. K. Gandhi statue in Pietermaritzburg, Natal, South Africa.

elements of the tradition are preserved in these three temples. What we will see next is that at the beginning of the twentieth century, the goddess traditions were not discarded but were reformed and carried forward into the worship of the temples that combined goddess worship with the worship of male deities.

A second stage in the development of the Hindu identity of South Africa emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century as the former indentured laborers left the plantations and moved to the vicinity of the cities of Durban and Pietermaritzburg to take up work as market gardeners, railway workers, or shopkeepers (figure 4.3). These dramatic changes in geographical location and employment came about during equally dramatic changes in the political environment of the colony, and they gave the Indian community a totally new cultural outlook.

The Boer War (1899–1902) between the colonial armies of the Afrikaners and the British provided the backdrop of political uncertainty, but it was M. K. Gandhi's leadership that brought the Indians into one community and determined how they would claim their rights within the larger society. The Zulus were gradually taking over the work on the plantations, but the cities of Durban and Pietermaritzburg were by this time populated with more or less equal numbers of Indians and nervous White settlers. The cultural opportunity the Hindu community recognized in this situation was many-faceted, and initiatives of all sorts were soon underway.

One feature of the response to this situation by the majority or South Indian subcommunity among the ex-indentured workers was to implement a series of social and religious reforms. In the new urban setting, people of lower-caste background felt free to adopt the ritual forms and lifestyle of the higher castes in an effort to gain a higher social status. Scholars of India have called a somewhat similar practice in India "Sanskritization," because it usually involves giving up the oral religious practices of the village and adopting forms of worship that include the ritual use of the Sanskrit language and its texts (Srinivas 1952). One of the underlying political reasons the South Indian indentured laborers had for adopting these reforms was to join in Gandhi's effort to create a more unified Indian community. Muslim and Hindu merchants from Gujarat in western India would have looked down on the animal sacrifices and trance behavior associated with South Indian goddess worship. By adapting to some extent the ritual forms of the Sanskrit texts, the South Indian workers arriving in the cities were able to gain a measure of social respect and close the ritual and social gap separating them from other Indians.

In addition to addressing the issues raised by the ritual differences within the local Indian community, the reforms also showed a sensitivity to the ongoing story of religious reform in India and the encounter between India and the colonial voices critical of the Indian religious tradition. Workers in Guyana and Trinidad were so far removed from the story of religious reform in India that any redefining of tradition they engaged in grew out of the context of local need (Stories Two and Three), but in South Africa there was a constant arrival of new perspectives from India, and these were taken seriously in the culturally alert environment at the turn of the century. People knew about the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj,[8] and the teachings of Vivekananda, each of which in different ways had agreed with the British criticisms of temple life and had proposed new forms of Hinduism. While in India the encounter with the criticisms of the British were filtered through the Indian elite before the great mass of the population knew about them, in the cities of South Africa there was day-to-day contact between the British and Indian residents, and

South Indians in particular approached those contacts by defining their cultural identity in terms of the reforms they were prepared to carry out.

For a significant minority of the South Indians of Pietermaritzburg and Durban, ritual reform meant a conversion to Christianity (see later). The Hindu and Muslim merchants from Gujarat argued forcefully against that kind of culture change, and Gandhi also discouraged it for both theological and political reasons, even though his close association with Christian colleagues seemed to many to make it a credible option. Less radical options for reforming one's religious identity were available within the Hindu tradition itself. Unlike the situation in other indentured colonies, ships traveled frequently from Durban to Madras, and many former indentured workers made brief trips to India and returned with new ideas for cultural adaptation. As the traffic grew heavier, a trickle of upper-caste merchants[9] began to arrive from South India as well as Gujarat, and the opportunity was soon in place for most South Indians to adopt higher caste names and join with others in the community to bring in temple architects[10] and Brāhman priests and build Sanskritic-style temples.

One of the important evidences of "Sanskritization" among the South Indians of South Africa was the widespread adoption of high-caste names (Kuper 1960). Numerous families explained to me that this was a decision of their grandfather, and that it had been explained within the family as something that was appropriate as the family set aside caste and moved into the urban area and a new set of social and political alliances.[11] For Telegus, the name "Naidoo," and to a lesser extent "Reddy" and "Maistry," proved the most popular, and for Tamils the names "Pillai," "Govendan," and "Moodley" were the popular choices. All these names represent landlord titles in South India, but individuals with these names or from these castes were not numerous in the lists of laborers that were brought with the ships when the laborers first arrived (Y. S. Meer 1980; Bhana and Pachai 1984; Bhana 1987; Bhana and Brain 1990). These names became prominent at the turn of the century, and some families linked the family's adoption of a new name with the family's decision to begin worshipping in one of the new temples that used Sanskrit ritual.

There were quite a few South Indian-style temples built around the turn of the century, and, in each case, one can imagine the founders discussing the complicated questions of which deities to worship and how far to go toward a Sanskritic style of worship. Among the earliest examples of the "turn of the century" temple style are the two neighboring South Indian temples of Clairwood, a crowded area on the southwest edge of Durban.

The temple on what is now Sirdar Road in Clairwood is called the Shree Siva Subramanyam Alayam. The compound is made up of a temple of

Māriyamman̲ facing east, and to the north of it a temple of Subramanya or Murukan̲, the second son of Śiva and a popular deity in South India. There was once a fire pit in front of the Māriyamman̲ temple that is now paved over, and the protector deity, Maturai Vīran̲, has a shrine facing her from the other side of the fire pit. There is a grand old fig tree planted just beside the Maturai Vīran̲ image. The more elaborate Subramanya (the temple tends to use the Sanskrit name for the deity that Tamils would more often call "Murukan̲") shrine has delicate art on its modest *vimāna*, and the temple managers claim that they have always employed Sanskrit-knowing priests. It would be difficult to determine whether the Subramanya shrine or the Māriyamman̲ shrine was earlier, and it seems at least possible that an earlier Māriyamman̲ tradition was "Sanskritized" by adding the Subrahmanya temple later (personal visit 1996).

As we have already seen, festivals were an important part of Indian life in South Africa, and the Muharram celebration saw the whole community flood into the streets of Durban. The Isipingo Temple still provides the community with a central location for a celebration with the goddess Māriyamman̲. Festival was one part of the South Indian tradition that was not given up when people decided to build their more Sanskritized temples. One can imagine that the Sirdar Road temple complex once included a full Māriyamman̲ festival with fire walking, animal sacrifice, and trance behavior, but today the major festival of the temple complex is the Kāvaṭi Festival of Subramanya, a festival it shares with many other temples in the city. A *kāvaṭi* was originally a bamboo pole that was carried over the shoulder with a pot or basket tied to either end. As a form of worship, a *kāvaṭi* dance in South Indian Hinduism was a special dance step in which the male dancers whirled around with the *kāvaṭi* on the shoulder, and it was thought that the god Murukan̲ was pleased by the dance. This dance is incorporated into many forms of Murukan̲ worship in South Africa, and the festival of Tai Pūcam at the beginning of February is one of the most prominent and is called the Kāvaṭi Festival. Another form of worship traditionally associated with Murukan̲ was to perform acts of bodily torture by putting hooks in the body and hanging pots of milk or coconuts from the hooks, putting small spears or *vēls* through one's tongue or cheek, or walking on sandals made of nails. In South Africa, these forms of bodily torture have become such a central feature of the celebration that even those who carry *kāvaṭi* now do so with solemnity. It is as if the Indians in South Africa have carried over from the Māriyamman̲ tradition the idea that all festivals should be undertaken only after a solemn vow and arduous fasting and celibacy. The large number of participants and the large audiences that attend the various Kāvaṭi festival celebrations today attest to the sense that even the more "Sanskritized" temples wanted to

continue with the early tradition's practice of appeasing the divine with extremes of physical exertion (Younger 1980, 2002b).

The neighboring, and possibly somewhat later, temple on Jacob's Road in Clairwood is called the Murukaṉ Kadavul (using the Tamil name of the deity) and has an identical arrangement to the one on Sirdar Road in that the Māriyammaṉ temple is to the south of the Murukaṉ temple. The important difference between them today is that the fire pit in front of the Māriyammaṉ temple on Jacob's Road is still used and the Māriyammaṉ festival is celebrated in a big way. Both the Māriyammaṉ and Murukaṉ shrines in the temple on Jacob's Road appear to be newer than those on Sirdar Road, and in this case the Māriyammaṉ tradition may well represent a revival of the plantation ritual tradition, after the temple committee realized that even the most Sanskritized temples were including Māriyammaṉ in their temple compounds (personal visit 1996).

Somewhat west of Clairwood and closer to the Umbilo River is another example of a turn-of-the-century temple. At first sight, this temple seems less like an orthodox South Indian temple than the two in Clairwood, but that is because it was built by a self-taught creative architect named Kistappa Reddy, who arrived from India and ended up building more than a dozen temples in an idiosyncratic style that featured fully rounded sculptural figures on the *vimāna* or dome. In 1905, he built this temple, which is called the Second Umbilo Temple because it replaced an earlier effort of 1903 that was destroyed in the flood later that year (figure 4.4). This temple follows the "Sanskritizing" tendency of the time in providing a Subramanya temple, but because the sponsoring family were Vanniyars or Naickers, they had the goddess temple to the south dedicated to Draupadī. There is a very large fire pit in front of her temple. Indians were moved away from the area around this temple under the Group Areas Act of the apartheid era, but the temple was allowed to stay and its Fire-walking Festival is still thought of as a central event in the life of the whole Indian community of South Africa (Mikula et al. 1982; personal visit 1996) (figure 4.5).

The temple complex built in the inland city of Pietermaritzburg about this time is also of considerable interest in this regard. Pietermaritzburg is a couple hours inland by train from the Durban area, but there is abundant evidence that indentured workers went there looking for work as they did to Durban when they left the plantations. The family managing the Pietermaritzburg temple today has served as both priests and temple management in the past and has been involved in the life of the temple from the beginning. In this case, there is a Māriyammaṉ temple on the north, facing east with a large fire pit in the front of the temple. The managers of the temple say that this temple dates

FIGURE 4.4. Second Umbilo temple, Durban, built in 1905 by Kistappa Reddy.

FIGURE 4.5. Area for fire walking in front of Second Umbilo temple. Note treed area all around where houses were bulldozed during apartheid era.

from 1885, but there is some evidence that it was remodeled by Kistappa Reddy (work dated to 1909 by Mikula et al. [1982]), and it has also undergone quite recent remodeling. On the north side of this temple are uncarved chunks of local rock arranged so as to provide for the worship of the planets, and although newer neatly carved images of the planets have been arranged nearby, the older set are the ones worshippers think of as having spiritual power. In 1915, a very orthodox-looking Subramanya temple was built just to the south of the Māriyammaṉ temple by the veteran architect Kothenar Ramaswamy Pillai who had already built the famous Umgeni Road temple in Durban in 1910 (Mikula et al. 1982; personal visit 1996). Worship in this temple complex centers on Māriyammaṉ, and her Easter Festival involves a very intense fire-walking ritual with many female worshippers in the area participating. In this case, it seems that the Māriyammaṉ tradition moved to the city fairly early, and the addition of the Sanskritic tradition served only as a veneer and never became the primary worship tradition (personal visit 2000).

The final example of the "Sanskritization" process that swept through the South Indian community of Natal at the beginning of the twentieth century can be seen in the building of the important Umgeni Road temple at the edge of the city of Durban in 1910. The Muslim shopkeepers, who had come as "passenger" Indians and established themselves along Grey Street, lived in the center of the city and built their mosques there (figure 4.6). Most of the Hindus, however, had come as indentured laborers, and, by the turn of the century, they were either market gardeners working in the river valleys on the outskirts of the city or they were railway workers housed in the railway barracks on the northern edge of town. As a result, the Hindu temples came to be widely scattered in the complex network of hills and valleys that surround the city on three sides.

The temple usually called the Umgeni Road Temple was built on the northern outskirts of the city where the South Indians employed by the railway and housed in the railway barracks would find it convenient (figure 4.7). All the other small South Indian settlements up either side of the Umgeni River valley and on to the north along the coast would have also found it convenient for attending the temple's festivals. The temple is the busiest temple in the city to this day. Worshippers speak of the temple as "the oldest temple in Durban," and there are evidences that it was built as early as 1885 and was receiving major endowments by the turn of the century (Desai and Vahed 2007), but art historians describe the present building as being built in 1910 (Mikula et al. 1982). The builder was Kothenar Ramaswamy Pillai, who came to South Africa, via Mauritius, of his own volition as a "passenger Indian" in 1885, and had a major impact on Hindu practice by building a great many temples in accord with fairly orthodox canons of Hindu architecture.

FIGURE 4.6. Grey Street mosque built at the beginning of the twentieth century in Durban.

FIGURE 4.7. Umgeni Road temple, Durban.

FIGURE 4.8. Umgeni Road temple festival.

The Umgeni Road temple's proper name is the Shree Vaithyanathan Easwar Alayam, and it is a temple dedicated, in a very orthodox style, to Śiva in the form of a *linga*. The *linga* is housed inside a *garbha griha* or inner central shrine separated from the large public hall by a smaller hall for priests. On the left as the worshipper approaches the central shrine is an image of Ganeśa inside its own shrine, and on the right is a shrine for the image of Murukaṉ or Subramanya with his wives Devayanai and Valli. Along the north wall are smaller shrines for the Goddess and for a collection of metal images placed around a central Naṭarāja or Dancing Śiva. Outside near the flagstaff are the *vāhanas* or bull and peacock of Śiva and Murukaṉ, respectively. The temple faces east in the orthodox way and the arrangement of the images, the walkways, doorways, and towers all remind one of medieval temples of this size in South India (figure 4.8). Separate temples for Viṣṇu and Māriyammaṉ in slightly plainer styles were added to the temple compound over the years,

and a generous compound with coconut trees, tulsi trees, and fig trees from India, marriage halls, and priest's quarters all combine nicely to preserve a quiet worship atmosphere in the middle of what has become a busy strip of auto body repair businesses along a major highway into the city (personal visits in 1996 and 2000).

The orthodox Śaiva worship traditions found at the Umgeni Road temple are typical of what one finds in the towns of the Kāvēri River valley in South India where the Vēlāla landlords were primarily responsible for the temple traditions. Both the major donor and builder in this case were "Pillais" or Vēlālas, and it seems safe to assume that they had the orthodox South Indian model in mind. For at least part of the time since this temple was built, the managers have been able to bring Brāhman priests from India to serve it, and a Brāhman from Śrī Lanka was serving in the temple in 1996 and 2000. It seems quite likely that this effort to establish an orthodox Śaiva temple was the final culmination of the early twentieth-century effort to "Sanskritize" or upgrade the goddess traditions that had arrived with the earliest South Indian workers.

Before we move on from the turn-of-the-century era, it would be helpful to note that while "Sanskritization" is most notable among the indentured workers of South Indian background, the minority among the workers, who came from North India, were also anxious to build temples that raised their social status as they moved into the city. It was in this context that in 1901 North Indian laborers had the lovely Sometsu Road temple of Rām built right in the middle of the railway workers barracks where they lived on the north edge of Durban (figure 4.9). In the North Indian style, this temple consists of a square *garbha griha* that the worshippers can walk around, and a two-story tower topped by a lovely *śikhara*. The *garbha griha* has doors on both the north and the east and has more light than would usually be the case in a temple in North India. The central images are Rām, Sītā, and Lakṣmana, but there are also images of Hanumān and of Radhā and Kṛṣṇa in the central sanctuary. Under the great fig tree to the east is a more recent shrine of Śiva, and under another great tree on the west a couple of even more recent shrines with all sorts of popular images of goddesses, saints, reformers, etc. The present priest is of the Dube subcaste of Brāhmans. His ancestors came as indentured workers from North India, and he claims his family has served this temple from the time it was built. He admits that he uses the name "Maharaj" in public settings, because, like others who wanted to be recognized as Brāhmans in South Africa, his family found that it was the most widely recognized Brāhman title. He does not use the title *pandit* as the Guyana Brāhmans do, and recognizes that there is not a strong tradition of North Indian Brāhman leadership in South Africa, as he has heard there is in Guyana and to some extent in Trinidad (personal visits 1996 and 2000).

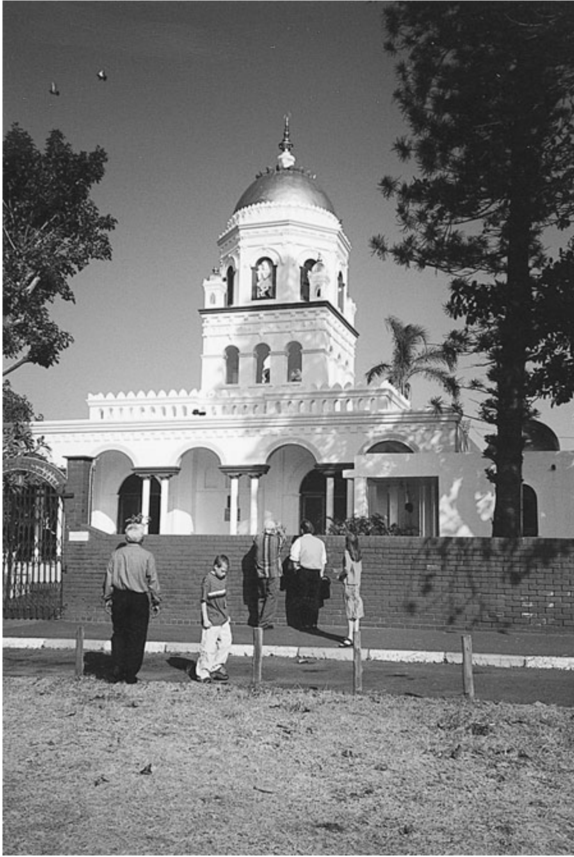

FIGURE 4.9. North Indian style Sometsu temple, Durban.

A brief reference to a very different type of temple is necessary to complete the story of the early phase in the development of Hinduism in South Africa. In 1912, a wealthy Hindu family among the traders from Gujarat decided that a proper Gujarati temple was needed in South Africa. They brought a professional temple builder named Ramjee from Gujarat to build the temple in Verulum north of Durban, and had M. K. Gandhi open it before he left South Africa (Mikula et al. 1982). There was no concern with Sanskritization in this case, and they were simply wealthy enough and close enough to India that they were able to move the temple tradition they were familiar with to South Africa and hire priests from home to maintain it. Although the Gujarati Hindu community is a small percentage of the overall Indian community in South Africa, its temples provide a very orthodox style of worship in all the major cities.

By the time Gandhi left South Africa in 1914, the shiploads of indentured workers, many of whom had started out on the sugar plantations north and south of Durban, had been molded into an urban and progressive sector of South African society. The Hindus among them had decided on a temple style that preserved something of the passion with which they had clung to Māriyammaṉ at first, while at the same time responding to the need to redefine those traditions in the more public atmosphere emerging in the urban environment. The redefinition not only enabled them to form a solid community with the Muslim and Hindu Indians who had come to trade, but it also enabled them to engage the British Christians, with whom they shared the urban environment, as equals, and claim that they too hoped to build an educated and progressive society.

The Middle Period

Some historians have described the period from 1915 to 1950 as the quiet period in South African history. Compared to the far-reaching changes that took place in the Indian community at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the violent clashes of the apartheid era that were to come, the time in between was relatively quiet, but it was a time of difficult choices for the Indian community.

In the social chaos at the turn of the century, Gandhi had stood out as a voice of reason, and the Indian community had decided to make a place for itself within the society of South Africa. At the time, South Africa was made up of four different political units with different laws and different strategies on how to handle the complex set of cultural groups that made up the population. All this would change after 1910 when the Union of South Africa was established as a separate nation, and the first major step was taken toward the creation of a common society.

While the creation of this Union was primarily a colonial action that would not affect the distant corners of the country for a long time, it did put many social and political forces in motion. The native Africans, who would be most dramatically affected in the longer term, had only the slightest awareness of the issues involved in 1910. Some African tribal leaders recognized that if a new nation was coming into being they would eventually have to redefine their ties with one another and prepare their educated youth for the responsibility of providing a new style of Black African leadership for this new nation. In some areas, this seemed to be a more urgent matter than in others. In the Cape Colony, for instance, everyone had enjoyed limited political rights for some

time,[12] so the Xhosa-speaking Africans in that area were astounded in 1909 when the draft constitution for the new nation rolled back those limited rights. By 1912, the Black leaders responded to these developments by forming the African National Congress (ANC) (Liebenberg et al. 1994; Mandela 1994). The initiative at the time came from Xhosa-speaking leaders, but they chose a Zulu from Natal, John Langalibalele Dube, as their first president in an effort to make their political initiative a national one. Dube was the founder and principal of the Ohlange Institute School and the editor of the newspaper *Ilanga lase Natal*. He lived near Gandhi's Phoenix Ashram, and most certainly was aware of, and perhaps inspired by, Gandhi's struggles with the colonial authorities, but Gandhi does not mention any contact he may have had with Dube in his *Autobiography*. We have to assume that the cultural barriers the British had established between the people they ruled were still effective at this point in the history of Natal. The Zulus were beginning to be employed on the sugar plantations and in the mines, but had only limited contact with the Indian community developing within the nearby cities of Durban and Pietermaritzburg (Gandhi 1925; Kuper 1960). By 1950, the political initiatives of the Indians and the Black Africans would come together into a solid alliance right across the nation, but in the intervening period the Indians were largely on their own as they tried to make a place for themselves beside the British settlers in the various cities.

The Natal Indian Congress was formed in 1894 under Gandhi's leadership and understood its mandate in the early years to be establishing the rights of the Indians within the British Empire. Gandhi, in particular, carefully held to this position during his years in South Africa. He took this position not only because he then believed the British were fair-minded, but also because he was not sure what role the Indians would have in the much deeper struggle he thought the Black Africans would be engaged in when they fought to regain control of their native land. His assumptions about fair play were to be tested early when the British got together with the Boers to discuss constitutional arrangements. In those discussions, the Boers convinced the British that they should limit the rights of Indians in the neighboring colony of Transvaal, where the Boers were in the majority. As early as 1907, the Transvaal government introduced the Asiatic Registration Act (No.2) that required that all Asians register and provide fingerprints, and that all new immigrants to that colony (such as former indentured workers from Natal) pass a literacy test. These new restrictions came on top of the insulting tax of £3 already in place on all ex-indentured workers and the legal challenges that had arisen to the legitimacy of marriages celebrated according to Muslim or Hindu rites. Gandhi moved to the Transvaal and directed his primary attention to these new issues.

When the Union government came to power in 1910, Jan Smuts, the rising star in the new government, kept his word and agreed to negotiate with Gandhi, but the Indians had to fight every step of the way (Bhana and Vahed 2005). It was only after years of agitation, a march of thousands of indentured workers across what was by 1913 a state boundary, and thousands of arrests that the Indian Relief Act of 1914 was passed. That Act finally did away with the tax, recognized Indian marriages, and allowed for the free movement of Indians throughout the country.

Unlike the situations in Mauritius, Guyana, and Trinidad, where Indians began in one way or another to share with people of African background in a common creole culture by the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, in South Africa Indian culture was defined by the urban environment the Indians shared with Whites. In a political sense, this shared environment was characterized by a bitter face-to-face struggle between the Whites and the Indians for economic opportunities and residential rights. On the other hand, the culture the Indians lived in was defined by the common use of the English language and British-style public discourse, and there were many educational and economic opportunities available in that urban environment. Late in the period, the Indian leaders in the political arena would meet their counterparts in the parallel Black African political struggle, and the two political movements would join and give one another important support, but during most of the 1920s and 1930s the Indians had surprisingly little contact with African culture. The effect of this cultural orientation was important because, in spite of the bitterness between them, the English and Indian subcultures of South Africa shared an English-speaking urbaneness that sets South African Indians apart from Indians in other parts of the world. For Hindus in South Africa during this period, the cultural commitment was clear, and the central question was what further "reforms" in their traditions would be necessary before they could feel comfortable calling themselves "Hindu" within this urban and multicultural environment.

In the many political and cultural organizations that sprang up within the Indian community during this period, leadership was shared among the Muslim, Hindu, and Christian business and professional elite. Gujaratis were prominent in the early stages, but, as South Indians became educated, they played a role more in accord with their large numbers, and, in the major local protest movement of the 1940s, it was two Tamil (South Indian) physicians (one male and one female) who played the leading roles. Some of the prominent Indian leaders were fairly secular in orientation, and a few were deeply committed members of the South African Communist Party. Muslims continued to be prominent leaders in education, journalism, and politics, as

well as business, throughout this period. It was primarily Muslim business interests that linked the Natal Indian leadership with Indian and Black leaders in other areas of the country, and it was those links that brought the Natal Indian community into the national scene.[13] Many of the Hindu leaders active in political and cultural organizations were also active in the religious reform movements that sprang up within the Hindu community. Of the many different religious movements started in the Indian community during this period, we will look at three of the most distinctive in the Arya Samaj, the pentecostal-style Bethesda Temple Movement, and the cautious Saiva Siddhanta Sangha.

The Arya Samaj has had an important role in South Africa as it has in other indentured societies, but in South Africa it played a somewhat different role. In the other indentured societies, Arya Samaj missionaries arrived after local Hindu traditions were well established, and it took the role of launching a critique and initiating reform. In South Africa, its reformism was welcome, but its message was not locally appropriate for a couple of reasons. The Arya Samaj had been developed in North India, and, in that context, it urged people to use Hindi rather than the English taught by foreigners, and especially by missionaries. It developed not only an anti-Christian tone but also an anti-Muslim one, and focused much of its energy on a program to reconvert Christians and Muslims to Hinduism. Both the emphases on language and reconversion had to be modified in the context of South Africa. There they found that the majority of the Indians were from South India and were not interested in learning Hindi, and that the Muslims were businessmen who played a major leadership role in the Indian community. When Bhai Paramanand came to South Africa on a lecture tour in 1905, he was hailed as an honored professor from India. When, however, he found himself working primarily with the educated Tamil youth in the cities of Durban and Pietermaritzburg, he wisely dropped the usual Arya Samaj insistence on learning Hindi and getting rid of temple images. What he was able to do for these Tamil youth was to help them see how some urban Hindu identity was important, and it was under his inspiration that they started the Hindu Young Men's Associations in their respective cities. When Swami Shankarananda arrived in 1908, he too was given a warm welcome because he was the first visiting *swāmi* to come to South Africa. Although Gandhi initially had to rebuke him for his anti-Muslim comments, he gradually became quite involved in the Gandhian endeavor. He eventually decided not to establish Arya Samaj temples and instead started organizations called Veda Dharma Sabhas that served both political and religious functions. The Veda Dharma Sabha, which still operates in Pietermaritzburg, proudly claims to have

given Gandhi active support in the first decade of the twentieth century and Nelson Mandela equally active support in his fight against apartheid (Kumar 2000).

The eventual founder of the formal Arya Samaj movement was Bhavani Dayal Sanyasi, who was born in South Africa in 1892. After eight years studying in India, he returned to South Africa in 1912 and was immediately imprisoned along with Gandhi. He tried to get South African Hindus more involved in the freedom struggle in India and was keen to establish Hindi language schools in South Africa. After his wife died, he became more directly involved with religious matters and went back to India to take *sanyāsin* vows. In 1925, he came back to South Africa as a missionary on behalf of the Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha and started the official Arya Samaj movement in South Africa that same year. The movement bought property for a headquarters on Carlisle Street just north of the Indian business district on Grey Street and just beside the newly opened Bethesda Temple (which will be described

FIGURE 4.10. Carlisle Street headquarters of the Arya Samaj, Durban.

next) in 1936 (figure 4.10), and finally built a grand Aryan Temple there in 1975 (personal visit 1996). Bhavani Dayal himself continued to be active politically, and served as the President of the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) in 1938.

In some ways, the more traditional Hindus' reaction to the Arya Samaj in South Africa was similar to that in other places, and there is a Sanātana organization that criticizes them for disparaging the worship of images or *mūrtis*. The situation in South Africa is different, however, because the North Indian numbers are relatively small and their Hindu traditions are not well established. Gujarati temples are well financed and very traditional, so they tend to just ignore the Arya Samaj teachers. The Tamil majority among Hindus showed an early interest in the Arya Samaj reforms, but when it became clear that teaching Hindi was central to the Arya Samaj program the Tamils largely lost interest. The Sarvasdeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha is no longer a controversial reform movement in South Africa, but an established religious body with small temple communities known for their well-educated members and trained clergy (half a dozen personal visits 1996). Its success in demonstrating that South African Hindus are attracted to nontraditional worship forms has led in more recent times to a flood of other new forms of Hindu worship. At a later point in our discussion, we will show how the Divine Life Society, the Ramakrishna Centre, the Hari Kṛṣṇas, and the Satya Sai Babas are all indebted to the Arya Samaj for establishing the pattern of Reformism within the Hindu community of South Africa (Naidoo 1992).

Radically different from the traditional reform message of the Arya Samaj was the new religious direction taken by the uniquely South African pentecostal Christian movement known as the Bethesda Movement. For the urbanized laborers of South Indian origin, the period of the 1920s and 1930s was somewhat more unsettling than for other Indians in South Africa. They were not as well educated or as well-off as the other Indians, and they were less sure of how they would look for opportunities in education, business, or politics. For at least some of them, the "Sanskritization" of the previous era had left them uneasy, because they knew that their families were not originally of high caste and the new emphasis in the community, which associated respect with high-caste status and Sanskrit ritualism, had a hollow ring to it. It was in this situation that a highly unusual Christian movement became very popular in the South Indian section of the Indian community.

The Bethesda Temple movement can be traced to the dramatic religious experience of a 16-year-old English boy named J. F. Rowlands who was worshipping in the shop of his South Indian neighbors in Pietermaritzburg in 1925 (Oosthuizen 1975a, 1975b). Rowlands' family had been active Quakers in

FIGURE 4.11. Carlisle Street headquarters of the Bethesda Movement, Durban.

England and had moved to Pietermaritzburg to open a grain mill. They were not, however, missionaries or trained Christian clergy in any sense. J. F. Rowlands' religious temperament seems to have come from his association with his South Indian neighbors, who practiced a Christian version of the asceticism, healing, and delivery from evil spirits that was central to the South Indian goddess traditions. Rowlands' contribution to this mix was an audacious willingness to preach on the street and in the Hindu Young Men's Association hall, which the group rented in Pietermaritzburg. They were soon baptizing thousands of South Indians in the local river (a Black African custom). In 1930, they moved their headquarters to the northern end of Grey Street in Durban, and then to Carlisle street in 1936, where their Bethesda Temple became the home base of a dramatic new pentecostal movement (personal visits to Pietermaritzburg in 2000 and Bethesda Temple in 1996 and 2000) (figure 4.11).

The Bethesda Movement has since grown to include almost a hundred congregations and many thousands of members. The membership is almost completely Indian, and the rules include strict adherence to South Indian canons of dress and behavior. The "vows" people take, the long periods of fasting and prayer, and the ecstatic healing and exorcism experiences are similar to those one sees in the context of Māriyammaṉ worship.

This Christian "temple" movement continues to provide South Indians with a religious option that feels at the same time very "Indian" and very "modern." It allows the warmth of the South Indian village religion to be practiced in a setting that uses modern buildings (including renting city hall, local theatres, and a stadium for special occasions), print media, and the latest technology to bring its message to the urban society in which it is set. For the descendants of the indentured workers from South India, this kind of radical "reform" seemed to give them a leap ahead within the Indian community, but in an odd way it limited their political options. By defining their religious identity in a culturally Indian way they limited the ties they could forge with non-Indian Christians in the culturally divided society. On the other hand, because they had an indirect religious tie with their White urban neighbors in Pietermaritzburg and Durban, they did not find it easy to join with the Muslim, Hindu, and Communist leaders in the Indian community when that leadership urged the Indian community to join enthusiastically in the ANC fight against the racist and colonial system of apartheid. In this last regard, Bethesda was initially like its Hindu neighbors in that it was cautious about its political involvement, but it did strongly object to the dislocation caused to Indians by the Group Areas Act of the 1960s and enthusiastically supported the final push against the apartheid regime that brought the nation democratic reform in 1994. It was in the new Indian areas of Phoenix and Chatsworth, created by the Group Areas Act in the 1960s, that the Bethesda congregations grew most rapidly.

Partly in response to the challenge posed by the Christian "temples" started by J. F. Rowlands and the Bethesda Movement, a more conservative South Indian reform movement was started in 1937 called the Saiva Siddhanta Sangha. Because the name of this organization echoes the name of the main Śaiva philosophical school of South India, many people think of it as a branch of that philosophical school and not a local reform movement at all. In fact, it is a very well-organized local movement with a headquarters near those of the Arya Samaj and the Bethesda Temple. The founder, Subramaniya Swamikal, was not born in South Africa, but he arrived there as an infant and never left. He did manage to get a reasonable education in the classical Tamil scriptures of Śaivism, but he was in no way a traditionally trained Indian scholar. He very

self-consciously responded to the challenges of the Arya Samaj and the Bethesda Christians and developed a style of worship that moved away from image worship and introduced a rigid congregational prayer routine. He wrote a detailed prayer book for the branches of the Sangha to follow and insisted that the worship should be a one-hour service held at exactly nine o'clock on Sunday mornings. In the temples of the Sangha both a Śiva Linga and a Śiva Naṭarāja are placed on the altar, and the priest-like *Guru* lights lamps and reads the prayers from the Prayer Book, but the *linga* and Naṭarāja are not considered images. The teaching of the Sangha strongly criticizes image worship and even "religion," and it interprets its service as "teaching" a form of meditation on the higher "reality" manifest in Śiva (half a dozen personal visits 1996).

The initial growth of the movement to twenty branches took place very quickly, but the "spiritual heads" of the movement who followed Subramaniya have not been able to realize much further growth. In an odd twist, the movement seems to many South African Hindus as more traditional than even their most "Sanskritic" temples, and they do not see it in terms of its original promise as a modern way of being Hindu.

By the 1940s, these three reform movements were operating out of headquarters almost beside one another, and the reforming spirit of the well-educated Indian community was evident on many fronts. On the other hand, trouble was brewing, and precisely because of the progress the community was making in education and business, the bitter conflict with the White community of Durban was about to erupt again.

During the depression of the 1930s, hundreds of properties in Durban once owned by Whites had been sold to Indians. For the most part Indians continued to live in the suburbs around the city, and the ownership of city property was primarily for investment. Nevertheless the trend was worrisome to the Whites running the city council, and they began to seek ways to curb what they called "Indian penetration." With the provincial and the national government conducting inquiries and proposing solutions, the issue got both national and international attention. The first encounter occurred when the long-standing leaders of the Natal Indian Congress, A. I. Kajee and P. R. Pather, met with the Prime Minister, still Jan Smuts, and proposed a gentleman's agreement that was called the Pretoria Agreement. According to this agreement, the Indians would voluntarily refrain from moving to previously owned White properties and would seek a license to do so if the occasion arose. In return for this agreement, there was to be no legislation making this de facto segregation legally binding.

Both sides to this agreement badly misjudged the communities for which they were hoping to speak. The Whites of Durban realized how weak their

economic position was, but for the time being they had almost a political monopoly, so they responded to the Agreement by loudly insisting on legislation to guarantee their property rights. They were desperately hoping that the winds of political change could be brushed aside and that a strong stand on property issues would keep their political monopoly intact. On the other hand, Smuts, who thought of himself as the author of compromise, felt that if he gave into White pressure on the property issue, he had to open the door a crack on political representation for Indians. In 1946, he proposed the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act that upheld the segregation of Durban, but at the same time offered the Indians the same indirect representation in parliament that the Blacks already had through Whites who could speak for them. The Indians immediately labeled the bill the "Ghetto Act" and launched their opposition.

On the Indian side, a new generation of British-educated leaders looked beyond the property issue and took a longer-term view of the Indians' problem in South Africa. They claimed that the property matter could never be properly settled if the Indians did not enjoy real political rights in South Africa. In retrospect, one can see that they were questioning their political confinement to the English-speaking urban world of Natal and were wondering if they should be allied politically with the Black community, which was just beginning to fight for its rights elsewhere in the country. The older leadership in the Natal Indian community tried to hold on to power as long as it could, because it felt that the Indian community had come a long way relying on the goodwill of people like Smuts. Nevertheless, the young professionals in the Indian community forced a major debate about the future, and, after a long-delayed election, the new group took over leadership of the Natal Indian Congress in 1945 (Bagwandeen 1991; Bhana 1997).

The new president of the Natal Indian Congress was a medical practitioner named Dr. G. M. (Monty) Naicker of a South Indian background. His grandfather had come to South Africa on his own to look for work, and his father ran a prosperous fruit market in Durban. When he was born in 1910, his family could dream of sending him abroad for an education. He eventually went to Edinburgh to study medicine and returned to begin his practice in 1934. Over the next decade, he was often asked to address religious and cultural celebrations and took an active role in the Liberal Study Group of Indians and Whites meeting at the time. He adhered to Gandhian principles of nonviolent action throughout his career and spent many years in jail, and many more "banned" from all public meetings. His close ally throughout his career was Dr. Yusuf Dadoo who started a medical practice in Johannesburg at about the same time after a longer time abroad both in India at Aligarh University and in Britain.

Dr. Dadoo's Muslim background and Johannesburg setting gave him extensive contacts outside the Indian community, and he became a major leader in the South African Communist Party and later on in the ANC, even while he continued as President of the Transvaal Indian Congress. A third doctor in this new political team was the first lady doctor among the Indians of South Africa, Dr. K. Goonam. In her insightful autobiography entitled *Coolie Doctor* (1991), mentioned earlier, she describes how her father had come to South Africa on his own as an ambitious Tamil teen, and how her mother, who was from a distinguished Tamil family in Mauritius, had come to the prestigious St. Aiden's girls school in Durban in the late nineteenth century. Her childhood home was frequented by Gandhi and other political figures, and her years in Britain made her profoundly uneasy with the pervasive racism of South Africa by the time she returned to practice in 1936 (Bhana 1997).

As soon as the Smuts government passed the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act in 1946, the Indian community rose as one, and the Passive Resistance Council of the Natal Indian Congress sent out group after group to defy the legislation and court arrest. Over the next two years, hundreds were imprisoned and thousands greeted each one released. By 1947, the newly independent Indian government took the issue to the United Nations, and Smuts, who had been a major architect of the UN Constitution, was rebuked by that body for legislating segregation. Perhaps most important of all, Nelson Mandela and the younger leadership of the ANC realized that it was this kind of leadership that was needed to deal with the entrenched racism of their country, and they offered their support for the Indian cause and began the planning of joint campaigns in the future. What none of the parties realized at the time was that Smuts had blown his last chance, and that in 1948 the Afrikaner-led Nationalist Party would come to power and the battle would be fought once again at a higher temperature.

The Modern Period

As just noted, the fight that the Natal Indians made against the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act did not go unnoticed by others in the South African community. In his autobiography, Nelson Mandela (1994, pp. 90–91) says this about the Indian reaction to that legislation:

> The Indian community was outraged and launched a concerted, two-year campaign of passive resistance to oppose the measures. Led by Drs. Dadoo and G. M. Naicker, president of the Natal Indian

> Congress, the Indian community conducted a mass campaign that impressed us with its organization and dedication. . . . They reminded us that the freedom struggle was not merely a question of making speeches, holding meetings, passing resolutions, and sending deputations, but of meticulous organization, militant mass action, and, above all, the willingness to suffer and sacrifice.

In the years to come, the leadership of the African National Congress and the Indian organizations (Transvaal Indian Congress [TIC], Natal Indian Congress [NIC], and South African Indian Congress [SAIC]) would work closely together in the fight against apartheid. Mandela provides detailed accounts of the important role Indian friends played in convincing him the Communist Party could be a good ally, in hiding him when underground, and in giving him good company during the long years in prison. There were, throughout that struggle, Africans who wanted to have only Black leadership in the movement, and while Mandela personally sympathized with that view at one point, the ANC fought long and hard after 1948 to resist the Pan-Africanist Congress's (PAC) arguments in that direction and staunchly insisted on a multiracial effort (Mandela 1994).

The Indians themselves were slow to adopt a multiracial vision. For years, the circumstance of fighting for survival by challenging the local British view that Durban should remain an "English" city had occupied the attention of the Indians settled in Natal. The Natal Indians had little contact with the Colored in the Western Cape, the Blacks in the rest of the country, or even the Afrikaners in the rural areas of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. In the Cape, the situation of the Indians was different. Dr. Abdul Abdurrahman had organized the African Peoples Organization (APO) as early as 1901. He spoke for both the Indians and the Coloreds in the Cape Town City Council, where he sat from 1904 to 1940, and in the Cape Provincial Council, where he also sat from 1914 until his death in 1940. He made determined efforts to convince the Natal Indians of his vision and in 1927 called together the nationwide Non-European United Front conference (NEUF, later NEUM). His daughter, Cissy Gool, took over the leadership of this movement during the 1930s and 1940s. In 1946, she brought her political experience to the Natal Indian community when she joined in providing leadership for the Passive Resistance Movement at that crucial moment (Goonam 1991). In addition to bringing Cissy Gool from the Cape, the Passive Resistance Movement also brought the Indian leadership into closer contact with the Transvaal leaders such as Dr. Yusaf Dadoo, who was even at that time linked with Black leaders in the ANC and White radicals in the Communist Party. Indians came out of the

1940s deeply committed to joining with others across the country in the struggle to achieve a truly democratic and multiracial South Africa (Goonam 1991).

No sooner had this multiracial vision taken shape than the Afrikaner-led Nationalist government came to power in 1948 and began to set in place its vicious apartheid legislation. This new government brazenly distinguished what it called the four racial groups in the society (White, Indian, Colored, and Black) and put in place one legislative scheme after another to separate those four groups in housing, schooling, political rights, and personal life. In some ways, the Indians were at the center of this conceptual scheme in that it was their fight for property rights in Durban that had stimulated the first Nationalist Prime Minister, Daniel Malan, to think that legislating separation was a noble goal and the only way of protecting the White minority. As the apartheid scheme evolved, the Blacks were promised their so-called homelands, and most of the Coloreds were restricted to their traditional area in the Western Cape, but the Indians were an important part of every city in the country and that was something the Nationalists were determined to change. Using the brutal Group Areas Act, the little enclaves where Indians lived were literally bulldozed, and Indians were moved to totally new settlements well out of the cities. The Indian fury at this brutal treatment made them implacable foes of the Nationalists, and, when the state decided to use police violence to crush the ANC and other organizations, the Indian commitment to the multiracial democratic struggle proved to be of great value to the ANC leadership (Mandela 1994; Cassidy 1995; Bhana 1997).

When the dust had settled in 1994, and the ANC was chosen as the democratically elected government, the Indians woke up to reflect on the cultural scene into which events had brought them. Nelson Mandela, as the new Prime Minister, hailed the multiracial nature of the society and placed a significant number of Indians in prominent cabinet positions. Cities, schools, and businesses quickly became multiracial. On the one hand, because of their educational advantage, this meant that Indians found themselves invited to be editors of newspapers and managers of banks where only Whites had served before. On the other hand, they nervously watched as their children climbed onto school buses where the majority of the children were Black. Because of an educational advantage, many Indians are now personally doing quite well in the new situation, but the larger cultural and political patterns have not yet taken a final shape.

During this period of political turmoil the patterns of religion and culture within the Indian community evolved in important ways, even though the attention of the community was directed elsewhere. One of the odd side effects

of the Group Areas Act was that when Indians were herded to new areas, those areas suddenly became major centers of Indian cultural life. Lenasia, thirty miles south of Johannesburg, quickly sprouted temples, mosques, and churches within its neat rows of houses, and then put up a vast shopping mall, which now serves not only the Indians but the nearby Black population of Soweto as well. Phoenix, twenty miles from Durban, and the much larger Chatsworth, almost forty miles away, had to accommodate the large Indian population of Natal. They quickly became crowded cities in their own right, with their own busy temples, mosques, and churches and their seemingly endless malls. This was a strictly suburban phenomenon, however, and while the Group Areas Act disappeared in 1994 when the Nationalist government was overthrown, it is not yet clear what the housing pattern of the Indian community will be in the future. Many of the historic temples, mosques, and churches remain in the cities of Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Johannesburg, and Cape Town, and both Indians and Blacks now pursue their business or professional life in those cities, so only time will tell what new social patterns will emerge.

While the apartheid policies and the multiracial society established after 1994 have given the Indians a suburban settlement pattern and new social opportunities, the leadership in the community is still undecided as to what kind of initiatives it should take in these externally defined settings. While the majority of the Indians continue to identify themselves as Hindus, it is the orthodox Hindu leaders who are most worried about the future. As the Hindu leaders see the last fifty or sixty years, the Indian Muslims and Indian Christians have had a variety of cultural and religious options, and it was the Hindu leadership that was suddenly alone in being concerned about the survival of Indian culture in South Africa. Coming out of the Passive Resistance Movement of 1946–47 as a united community and sensing the admiration of the Black leadership of the ANC, the leadership of the Indian community plunged into the struggle against apartheid solidly committed to the ANC leadership. Although the Indians were deeply bitter about the bulldozing of their houses that came with the Group Areas Act of the 1960s, life in the new Indian areas had proved culturally stimulating. While the community remained publicly supportive of the leadership policy of support for the ANC, a few Hindu leaders were intrigued by the option of cultural separation. The toughest test came in 1984 when the Nationalist government tried to separate the Colored and Indian population from the Blacks by offering them seats in a White–Colored–Indian parliament (the Blacks were to be moved to their "homelands"). Amichand Rajbansi felt the Indians should take advantage of this opportunity even though it was offered by the apartheid regime, and he formed an Indian-based

National People's Party to contest the election. On the other hand, most of the Indian leadership joined the United Democratic Front (UDF) established to urge a boycott of those elections, and in the end only 16 percent of the eligible Indians voted in the election. One of the Hindu leaders who served in that parliament was Ram Pillay. He grew up in a Māriyammaṉ temple tradition and was performing healings and exorcisms in Lenasia when he decided to serve in the segregated parliament. When I met him in 1996, he was back in the business of performing healings and exorcisms from a small temple at the rear of his property. He was still bitter that the position of the Hindus in the new society was not politically secure (personal interview 1996), but most of his neighbors were highly critical of his cooperation with the apartheid regime and his seemed to be a very lonely voice.

A much more ambiguous example of cooperation with the apartheid regime was the development of a single segregated university for Indians. Because of the early urbanization of the Indian population in South Africa, opportunities for education locally were generally more available than they were in other indenture-based societies, and a significant number of South African Indians had a good education and many were able to go abroad for higher education. During the apartheid era, a new situation arose when the government tried to manipulate the social situation through its education policy. Established universities such as Fort Hare in Cape Town, Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, and University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg, which had always had integrated student bodies, were declared to be White universities, and new universities were proposed for the other groups. The Indians had for a time been encouraged to operate a university in the old buildings on Salisbury Island, where the indentured laborers had been quarantined when they first landed, but that setting was unsatisfactory. In an effort to win Indian support in the 1980s, the government had provided an impressive mountain-top campus for the "Indian" University of Durban-Westville to the northwest of the city of Durban. Conservative Hindu businessmen recognized the opportunity in this situation, and they got permission to build a monumental Hindu temple on the university campus at the edge of the mountain where it could be seen for miles around. They also insisted on the establishment of departments for the study of Sanskrit, Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil, and Telegu. Had this development taken place in the 1930s rather than the 1980s, it might have had a significant academic impact. By the 1980s, the thousands of Indian students flocking to the university were focused on the fight against apartheid and attending a Hindu temple and studying an Indian language was not why they went to university. After 1994, the university was quickly integrated, and its name was changed to University of KwaZulu-Natal. By 2000, the

majority of the students were no longer Indian, and the language programs could no longer be justified. Some Hindus still dream that the largely Indian faculty and the elegant temple will continue to make an Indian contribution to South African culture, but, with the new student body resentful of those vestiges of a segregated past, it is not clear if even that kind of historical contribution will continue to be welcome (visits in 1996 and 2000).

Religious Developments

When political uncertainty destabilized the society in the period after 1948, one of the reactions of the Hindus was to turn to those who offered a new example of religious reform. There were a number of major religious initiatives taken in this context, and each has had some measure of success in its own way.

One of the typically South African-initiated reform movements took on the revered name of Ramakrishna even though its links with the Ramakrishna Mission based in India are very tenuous. The Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa (note the difference in the name) was started in 1942 by a South African with a South Indian background named D. C. Naidoo (figure 4.12). At the time of its origin, the Centre was nothing but a study group started by an enthusiastic

FIGURE 4.12. Altar of Ramakrishna Centre temple, Durban.

17 year old. A few years later, a *swāmi* from the prestigious Ramakrishna Mission's order of monks in India visited to see what was going on and arranged for Naidoo to go to India to study. Always the rebel, Naidoo soon left the Calcutta headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission and went to the Himalaya mountains where he was ordained as Swami Niscalananda by a recluse who had at one time been part of the Ramakrishna Mission. Returning to South Africa in 1953, he plunged into the antiapartheid politics of the day, and started a whirlwind movement that included hundreds of children's clubs, women's circles, food and medical aid for Blacks, and interreligious dialogues. He established *āśrāmas* in a half dozen places in the country and began to build the major center in Avoca just north of Durban. Suddenly the organization started to fall apart as quickly as it had been built up, and Niscalananda apparently committed suicide in 1965. The disciples he had ordained took over, and, under their leadership, the organization has prospered and become a conservative Hindu option appealing to intellectuals in the Indian community who have little contact with the older temple traditions (personal visit 1996).

Somewhat closer to the conservative Hindu leadership than the Ramakrishna Centre is the Divine Life Society of South Africa. Once again, the initiative was taken by a South African with a South Indian background named V. Srinivasan. As a self-educated schoolmaster, he became well read in Hindu literature and went to India in 1948 and 1956 and was ordained as Swami Sahajananda by Swami Sivananda, the founder of the Divine Life Society. After coming back to South Africa, he established a rigorous monastic routine in his *āśrāma* near the university in Reservoir Hills. He also reached out to the society around by providing a flood of popular religious literature to the temples throughout South Africa and by urging his disciples to establish schools and food-distribution centers for the dislocated Black children (personal visit 1996).

By the 1970s, the reform efforts of the Ramakrishna Centre and the Divine Life Society were strongly supported by the conservative Hindu business interests that put up the temple at the university, but the location of the headquarters of these movements was to the north of Durban where only an elite community of Indians had been able to locate, and they had little direct contact with the large Indian populations in Phoenix and Chatsworth. By contrast, two very different Hindu movements arrived in South Africa during the 1970s, and they suddenly got a foothold in the turbulent cultural scene, primarily in the newly established Indian suburb called Chatsworth. For a variety of reasons they even attracted attention outside the Indian community.

A couple of American and British members of the Hari Kṛṣṇas visited South Africa in the early 1970s, and convinced Swami Prabhupada, the

FIGURE 4.13. Hari Kṛṣṇa temple, Chatsworth, South Africa.

founder of the movement, to make a trip to South Africa in 1975. After that trip, the Hari Kṛṣṇa movement in South Africa grew quickly, and in 1985 they opened one of the most spectacular temples anywhere on a hill beside the huge Chatsworth mall (figure 4.13). From the temple kitchen, they now feed a major stream of clients and send out thousands of meals for a variety of social service programs all over the area. The worship is led by a multiracial community of Blacks, Whites, and Indians, and the very public location of the temple makes it possible for even the marginally curious to experience Hindu worship. Even more public than the temple is the Chariot Festival the Hari Kṛṣṇas hold on the world-famous public waterfront of Durban each year (personal visits in 1996 and 2000).

While the Hari Kṛṣṇas, with their ultramodern architecture and Westernized style of worship and service, might be thought of as offering Hinduism to South Africa in a Western form, the even more pervasive and recent Hindu form now popular in South Africa is the miracle working of Satya Sai Baba. While there were hundreds of small teaching centers of Sai Baba spread around South Africa for some time, after the end of apartheid in 1994, the opportunity to travel to India and experience Sai Baba first hand became part of a restless need to locate South Africa on the map of world culture. While most of the devotees of Sai Baba in South Africa are of Indian background, there are

enough White and Black South Africans that are also devotees that it is a religious phenomenon that all would consider "open" and something that might be considered part of a hybrid culture.

Analysis

The Indian community in South Africa has evolved in a situation very different from those the other indentured societies faced. The situation was like the others initially in that it was colonial, but then it became quasi-colonial for a long period of time, before it shifted dramatically in 1994 and finally became an open postcolonial society. Even the colonial period was, however, different both in the way the internal divisions within the Indian community took shape, and in the way in which the diverse and large society the Indians were a part of gradually evolved. Perhaps most unique of all was the fact that both the internal composition of the Indian community and the contours of the larger society were not well-defined aspects of the situation, but were vaguely outlined parts of an arena of action. In this situation, the patterns of Hindu behavior cannot be read as straightforward efforts at cultural survival in a predetermined circumstance. The Hindu practices developed in South Africa must rather be seen as initiatives taken by human persons determined to define themselves and their dreams, well aware that everyone around them was doing much the same thing.

M. K. Gandhi set the pattern for this dreaming when he demanded that the Muslims, Hindus, and Christians within the Indian community speak the same language about "truth," "nonviolence," "sacrifice," and "action," and then brazenly asked the other members of the society to acknowledge that the "justice" and "human rights" this 5 percent of the population asked for would provide a sound basis for a universal civil order. Put another way, he did not ask for the protection of a minority, or for an opportunity to practice one's religion in private. For the Hindus coming off the plantations, Gandhi's summons meant that they would have to reform the goddess traditions they were practicing and address not only the question of personal survival, but also the challenge of demonstrating how self-discipline and ethical behavior lead to a pattern of action that defines both truth and a civil society. For the Muslim businessmen with whom he worked most closely, the challenge was not imagining a universal truth and the need for a civil society (issues that the foundations of their faith already addressed), but recognizing that if those things were to be established in the local situation they would have to learn to trust that others were seeking the same goals and they would have to reach out and build a just society together. In the situation as Gandhi envisaged it,

Indian Christians too found that they belonged in the discussion to a degree they never have in India or in other indentured societies, and they too were challenged to imagine how to reform themselves in order to help define what constituted truth in this situation (Balia 1991).

After the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, and Gandhi won some rights for Indians in 1914, some of the most basic questions seemed answered, and Indians began to busy themselves with getting their children a good education and taking advantage of the economic opportunities in the various urban settings of the country. During the next few decades, there were fewer temples and mosques constructed, and religious reform involved adapting to the educated and urbane outlook of the next generation. In this situation, there was less interest in the detail of temple practice and more in the meaning behind the teachings of the respective North Indian or South Indian traditions (in the form of the Arya Samaj or the Saiva Siddhanta Sangha). The one major new initiative of this period was the growth of the Bethesda Movement among South Indians who found that they could keep their healing and exorcism practices while at the same time reforming themselves into a Christian community that would give them a newer voice in addressing the still pending question of the Indian role in the formation of a just social order.

By the middle of the 1940s, the urban confines in which the Indians had been placed were no longer able to contain them, and newer questions about a just society began to loom on the horizon. By this time, the explicitly religious voices were not the primary ones. Muslim intellectuals in Cape Town and Johannesburg had long recognized the need for some form of solidarity with the Colored and Black population, and, by the 1940s, they took the initiative in forming multiracial groups committed to achieve justice under the banner of the Non-European United Movement (Dr. Abdurrahman) or the Communist Party of South Africa (Dr. Yusuf Dadoo). In Natal, where the great majority of the Indians still lived, the need for solidarity with others was not as obvious. Some of the Indian elite participated in the Liberal Study Group, which was made up of Whites and Indians and discussed various ways of bringing about a just society. The Natal Indian Congress headed up by Dr. G. M. Naicker, however, stayed closer to the Gandhian tradition and was dramatically successful during the Passive Resistance campaign of 1946–48 in engaging the entire Indian community and developing within it a courageous willingness to face imprisonment in order to stand for a just society.

Once the Passive Resistance Movement had made clear the Indian willingness to participate in the political struggle, the Indian community became a solid part of the ANC struggle against the apartheid regime. A few Indian leaders were tempted by the apartheid regime's offer of a relatively privileged

position for the Indian community, but for the vast majority of the Indians it was as if Gandhi was still calling on them to ignore religious and racial lines and join with their fellow citizens in an active pursuit of justice for all.

Once the democratic elections took place in 1994 and the ANC came to power, the world the Indians of South Africa were to live in was totally redefined. In some ways, this was like the experience of the Indians in Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, Fiji, and East Africa when those countries became independent and the postcolonial era was begun. In the first three countries, the Indians were a substantial part of the population and had a natural role in determining their destiny. In Fiji, they had large numbers but recognized the rights of the native Fijians, and, in East Africa, they controlled much of the economy but were an even smaller percentage of the population than in South Africa. In South Africa, Indians had from Gandhi's time been deeply involved in the political situation and over the years had taken many initiatives in defining their role in society. Now in the democratic setting in which they made up only 3 percent of the population, the role they were destined to assume was once again a mystery. The beginning was promising. Nelson Mandela as Prime Minister forcefully affirmed the multiracial policy the ANC had followed throughout, and he singled out the Indians as the most forceful leaders in forging ANC policy in the 1940s, and in sacrificing for the cause when the violent response of the apartheid regime threw many in jail. He appointed a disproportionate number of Indians to his first cabinet, and many of the leading government and private institutions followed his lead in appointing the well-educated Indians to prominent positions in the new South Africa.

In the new situation, the old call of Gandhi, repeated in the 1940s by G. M. Naicker, for Indian solidarity across religious lines did not seem as appropriate as it had in the past. Muslims were unusually prominent among the Indians given national recognition. Although most had come in the late nineteenth century along with the indentured workers, the national heritage taught in the schools included reference to their sixteenth-century roots in the Cape colony. This gave them a deeper bond with the local population than other Indians could claim, and they generally affirmed this bond and embraced the new multiracialism by quickly giving their mosques and businesses a multiracial character. Most Indian Christians found that their contacts with the Black population were limited by the Bethesda Movement's deep commitment to South Indian cultural styles and by the fact that so many lived in the primarily Indian cities of Chatsworth and Phoenix. On the other hand, the Black church leadership was prepared to welcome them and the theological colleges were keen to work for a multiracial church and even put Bethesda leaders on their faculty, so there seemed to be a number of roads into the future. Hindu leaders assessed their

options with much less assurance. The University in Durban-Westville had seemed a good place to invest in the 1980s, and the faculty and the temple on campus came to reflect the sophisticated, high-quality contribution Indians intended to make to the national culture. After the apartheid regime fell in 1994, however, no one could give even a weak argument in defense of a government-funded institution focusing on one of the subcultures of society, and the name of the university and its population base were quickly changed. Hindu culture had for generations been a highly respected part of life in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, but in the new situation it would need to redefine itself as a minority voice for the whole nation and that was a new challenge.

What the new South Africa was prepared to honor was its cultural diversity, and in this context the Indian community was certainly invited to celebrate its festivals and expect public recognition of its unusual worship traditions. For some of the early-twentieth-century temples, this meant getting new publicity for their festival, and winning back the respect for their traditional style of worship. For the Hari Kṛṣṇa movement, it was a golden opportunity for they could try to attract the Indian community to their worship system and at the same time invite the whole society to celebrate their festival. For the thoughtful leaders of the Arya Samaj, Saiva Siddhanta Sangha, Ramakrishna Centre, and Divine Life Society, it was a troubling time. They had carefully redefined Hinduism for the sophisticated Indian community of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s and had encouraged the courageous and ethical stance the community had taken in the difficult situation it faced over many decades. In the new social environment that developed after 1994, they were much less sure the Hindu community looked to them for leadership.

The situation the South African Hindu leaders now find themselves in is somewhat similar to that faced by Hindu leaders in the diasporas of Europe and North America. During the century-long fight for their basic rights, the South African Indians were a united community very similar to those fighting for survival in Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, and Fiji, except that, like East African Hindus, they were an urban community, and their political situation was more precarious. In the new South Africa, they have suddenly become a tiny minority mixed in with an aggressively self-conscious majority culture, and individual Indians have a multitude of strategies for dealing with their new situation. Indians have in some ways returned to the task of reexamining their cultural roots now that the political wars have subsided, and both traditional temples and reform teaching centers are once again busy. What remains to be seen is whether the amazing sense of community solidarity and intellectual inquiry, which characterized the South African Indian community throughout the last century, will find a new sense of purpose for the years ahead.

Story Five

Fiji: A Segregated Society

The nation of Fiji is made up of approximately 300 volcanic islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.[1] People from neighboring areas have been landing on the largest island of Viti Levu for centuries. Some found its tropical mountains and reef-lined coasts relatively easy places to hunt, fish, or garden in and settled down. Local legend describes the first arrivals as being at the village of Viseisi on the west coast of Viti Levu. They were no doubt from the islands to the west usually called Melanesia, and the people on this coast and in the mountains nearby still joke about how similar they are to Melanesians. Visitors also came from the Tonga islands to the south and east of Fiji. They tended to land first on the small islands of the Lau group, then move on to the island of Bau just off the east coast of Viti Levu, and, finally, land on the rain-swept southeast coast of Viti Levu itself. The settlers on the eastern side of Fiji have tended to maintain contact with their sea-going relatives in the widespread Polynesian world in the South Pacific east of Fiji (figure 5.1; Trumball 1977; Gravelle 1979; Scarr 1984).

Because of this settlement pattern and because of the barriers presented by the steep mountains and the forbidding mangrove swamps along the coast, the people of Fiji continue to reflect the pluralism of their cultural background, and were for centuries organized into numerous semi-independent units. Honoring this level of independent identity each unit was recognized as a *tikina* with its own chief, while at the same time an overarching civil order

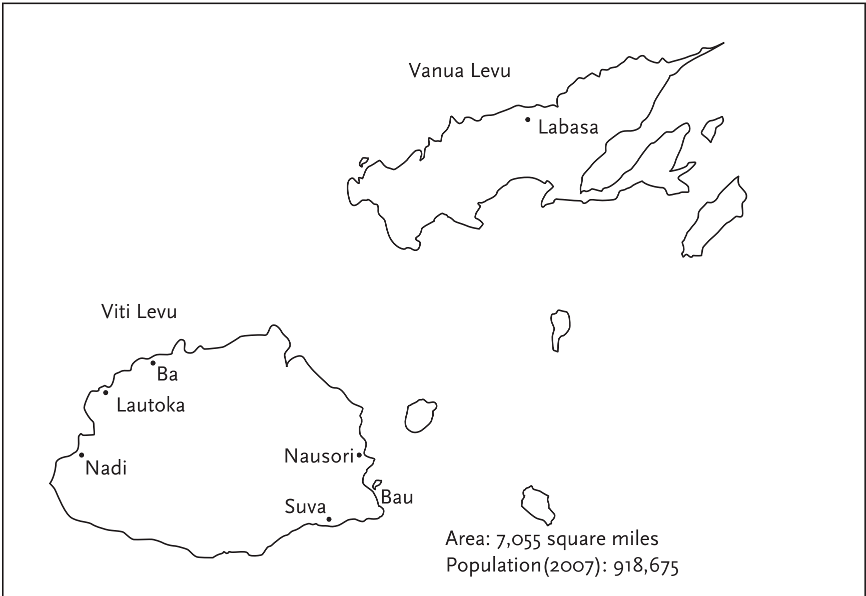

FIGURE 5.1. Map of Fiji.

or *vanua* for the whole region was sometimes invoked (Nayacakalou 1978). Occasionally, this *vanua* took concrete form, either as a loose network of chiefs who would assert their authority or *matanitu*, or, just as often, a collection of priests or *bete* would introduce some ceremonial rituals or *lota* that the semi-independent segments of the population agreed to use in order to establish a common political culture (Routledge 1985; Bayliss-Smith et al. 1988; Kaplan 1995). Neither the chiefs nor the priests had ties that reached across the whole region, political life was often quite unstable, and regional warfare was common.

The colonial era arrived in the islands of Fiji relatively late. Early European adventurers had made contact with the islands of Fiji, but the smaller islands to the east, such as Samoa, had made more hospitable stopping points, and Australia and New Zealand to the south provided vastly greater potential for future exploitation and settlement.

Long before British government officials began to show any interest in Fiji, the eastern islands in the territory had begun to hear of Christianity from their relatives from Tahiti, Samoa, and the Tonga islands (Garrett 1982, 1992, 1997). In each of those Polynesian island groups, chiefs and kings had embraced Christianity, and the ocean-going canoes arriving in the Lau islands and the island of Bau included local preachers eager to tell their friends in those places how they could become baptized Christians. When Methodist missionaries

arrived in Fiji from Britain in the 1830s, they found the widely respected Cakobau, future Chief of Bau, already well aware of the implications of Christian baptism (Waterhouse 1854; Garrett 1982; Scarr 1984; Routledge 1985). In 1854, he led his people into the Christian fold. He tried to then make the Methodist Church and the Christian *lota* or ritual ceremonial the religious underpinning for a new civil order or *vanua* and set about trying to bring other chiefs into an alliance based on this new *vanua* (Garrett 1982; Routledge 1985).

While the Methodist church provided some of the powerful chiefs on the eastern islands with a vehicle with which to try to unify the society and modernize the civil order, ships from Europe, North America, and Australia were stopping at dozens of different island locations and making direct contact with other chiefs. Many of these local chiefs were willing to trade timber or even land rights for exotic European goods and especially for armaments (Brewster 1922; Scarr 1984; Routledge 1985). Ancient patterns of warfare soon threatened to break out in new and more dangerous forms. In the battle at Nakorowaiwai village, for instance, the mountain Vatukaloko people from the north of Viti Levu, where the traditional priests came from, fought a pitched battle with a European-led army from Bau in a serious test of strength between the mountain people and the coastal chiefs led by Bau (Routledge 1985; Kaplan 1995). With war threatening to break out on a number of fronts, the chiefs of the eastern regions, led by the chief of Bau, formed themselves into a Council and offered to cede the whole territory to the British in 1874 (Scarr 1984; Routledge 1985).

British rule in Fiji lasted from 1874 to 1970 and was an odd kind of late-colonial paternalism. The British administrators, guided by J. B. Thurston, who had long served as advisor to the Chief of Bau, tried to stop the selling off of the best land, preserve some respect for the Council of Chiefs, which had ceded them power, and, at the same time, develop the economic potential of the country. They did feel they needed to continue to move in the direction of a plantation economy, but they hoped to avoid some of the mistakes made in other colonial locations by appointing as the first Governor the veteran administrator, Arthur Gordon, who had already served as governor on the islands of Mauritius and Trinidad (Gillion 1962; Scarr 1984).

Immigration

Arthur Gordon seems to have decided even before arriving in Fiji that it would be an ideal place to try an experiment in social engineering that would involve

the total segregation of two racial groups. His idea arose from the fact that he had found it difficult in both Mauritius and Trinidad to integrate the African and Indian laborers, who had been brought in different eras, in the work of the sugar plantations. He heard that the Fijian chiefs had already been alarmed by the brutal way some ship captains had brought in Solomon Island laborers to fell timber and clear land in parts of Fiji (Corris 1973). He was, however, sure that planting sugar was the only way to find the income to manage the territory, and he wanted to bring in Indian laborers immediately. Therefore, he just decided that, in Fiji, the Fijian villagers and the Indian labor to be imported to grow sugar would be kept in separate worlds. In the longer term, this experiment would prove hard to sustain and would lead to all sorts of artificial social and psychological difficulties. Introducing a second population group into these islands would have led to some social difficulties in any case, but insisting that they have little opportunity for interaction with one another for a whole century was bound to lead to serious complications when they eventually made the attempt to become a multiracial society after Independence. In any case, at the time, Governor Gordon knew that the Council of Chiefs, which had invited the British in, wanted to use traditional ways to control their people, and he was in a position to establish whatever arrangements he wanted to control Indian labor, so he decided on segregation and set about to make it work.

The surprising part of this colonial experiment with sugar plantations in Fiji is that the original land tenure arrangements could be made at all. On the one hand, land in Fiji is generally looked on as a communal resource and is not for personal use or for sale. On the other hand, the chiefs who were anxious to purchase foreign goods or make deals with government officials were not unwilling to bargain away the use of the land. The relatively small group of "major" chiefs in the east was crucial in starting this process, because their primary interest was in keeping their people under control within relatively small communally held territories. They did not have any experience in commercial agriculture, and did not see the land as valuable in itself. They were thinking in military terms when they saw the advantage of allowing colonial entrepreneurs to clear unused lands on the eastern half of Viti Levu. In their view, this use of the land actually provided them a buffer area, a form of protection from the feared warriors in the inland mountains (Brewster 1922).

The early plantations were established by European planters and were all in the eastern part of Viti Levu around the first sugar refinery at Nausori (Gillion 1962). Just as Fiji joined the sugar market in a big way, the world price for sugar dropped, and many of the early planters were forced to sell to the big sugar companies. The strongest of these companies, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company of Australia, eventually held a near monopoly in the sugar

industry of Fiji. With its vast resources, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (known locally as the CSR) was later able to open up the great plateau in the middle of the second island or Vanua Levu by establishing a second refinery there at Labasa. Later still, it developed a third refinery in Ba on the northwest coast of Viti Levu, and, finally, the largest refinery of all at Lautoka on the western end of Viti Levu (Ali 1980; Scarr 1984; Lal 2000, 2001). Because the sugar industry of Fiji was run by this one offshore company, and because the country was almost totally dependent on this one industry, the Company was in a very strong position. While indenture contracts could be defined in terms of hours worked or "tasks" completed, one of the reasons the Company took over other plantations when the sugar market dropped in 1880 was that it laid on heavy "tasks" that most workers found hard to complete in a day, and the Company was then free to cut their pay below the required one shilling per day. Over time, this Company–worker conflict took on many forms and eventually led to major labor strikes, but almost from the very beginning it framed the immigrants' life in their new homeland as a bitter struggle with a powerful enemy.

At the end of the contracted five years living in the hated "lines" or housing, workers were declared "free men," but it would be five more years before they would be eligible for a free trip back to India. The Company was eager for more sugar to be produced and, with the help of the government, arranged for the traditional units of Fijian society to offer individual farmers long-term leases of small plots (of about ten acres) where they could grow sugarcane on their own. It was especially in the central plain of Vanua Levu and in western Viti Levu, where the sugar industry was later concentrated, that the complicated ninety-nine-year leases were worked out between Indian farmers and the government representatives of the Native-Fijians (Mishra 1979; Ali 1980). These leases allowed the "free" Indians or the Indian laborers that had finished their indentureship to live as seemingly independent farmers, even though they were bound by agreements to sell their cane at fixed prices to the refinery, and by rental agreements with the Fijian tribal communities to eventually give the land back. Because they were obliged by these new agreements to live in a scattered pattern in the countryside, rather than in village clusters as they did in India, or in Mauritius and Trinidad, the creation of social networks in this geographical situation was not easy.

In 1879, when the recruitment of Indian laborers for the sugar plantations of Fiji began, the wider recruitment for half a dozen other spots around the world was already at its peak. Many laborers who ended up in Fiji were surprised to find that they were in the middle of the Pacific Ocean rather than in one of the other locations. They had heard stories about the other

places, and some even thought they would have relatives waiting for them there. It became a standard joke among Indians in Fiji that they did not know where they were (Lal 2000). As in most of the other locations (except South Africa), in Fiji too there were a majority of North Indians, but starting in 1903, a significant number came from South India. Because all the South Indians arrived at the same time, they were able to settle near one another on the western end of Viti Levu around the last refinery to be built in Lautoka. In the end, 45,000 of the 60,000 came from the port of Calcutta. As in other locations, there was the problem of finding the 40 percent of women that the recruiters were supposed to provide for each ship, but, in Fiji, the rule that movement away from the plantation was forbidden made that imbalance a more serious matter. In Fiji, the gender imbalance was seen as the primary cause of serious social problems, and it was at the time blamed for an exceptionally high suicide rate among the new male arrivals (Mishra 1979; Lal 1998).

What made the situation in Fiji different from the other locations where Indians went as indentured laborers was that the "lines" or the plantation housing became a prison in Fiji. The colonial authorities honored their agreement with the Fijian chiefs by never employing Fijians on the plantations and by severely punishing any Indian who ventured off the plantation. As a result of this segregation policy, there were two features of the Fijian Indian experience that clearly distinguish it from the experience in other locations.

One of these unique features was that the Indians were able to keep their native languages. This was at the time a natural by-product of their isolated life, but it later on took on a great deal of symbolic meaning. On the one hand, it gave Fijian Indians a misleading sense that they had not lost the culture of the homeland.[2] The passionate need to reinvent their religious tradition, which Guyana Indians felt as they found themselves blending in with the Afro-Guyanese around them, never seemed an urgent matter to the Fijian Indians of the first two generations. Looked at from the outside by the Native-Fijians, the Indian preference for speaking their own languages seemed like an ever-present statement that they had no long-term interest in the local culture or society. The Indo-Fijian political leadership now challenges both of these interpretations of the linguistic facts, and likes to argue that Indo-Fijians have both a rich cultural heritage and a deep and long-term engagement in local culture. Individual Indo-Fijians, however, regularly move from a discussion of language to an uneasy reflection on just how deep the Indo-Fijian community's local roots are. Although education has now drawn both communities into a common public domain, where English is the medium of communication, the Native-Fijians retreat into their own language when

among themselves, and it is expected that Indo-Fijians too will maintain their language for use in similar settings.

The second distinctive feature of the Indian experience of Fiji is the bitter hatred people developed for the prison atmosphere of the "lines." Some of the social problems associated with the life of indentureship, such as gender inequality and overseer brutality, were built into the arrangements of the system and were found in each of the locations where indentured workers were taken. In Fiji, however, because the world the laborers lived in was closed off from the surrounding world, these problems led to a much more intense sense of suffering and disorientation than they did in other locations. Complaints about this bitter Fijian experience is what led to the abolition of indentureship in 1917, and stories about that bitter memory continue to echo in the political rhetoric of the Indo-Fijians to the present day (Lal 1998, 2000, 2004).

By the turn of the century, the number of "free" Indians working on leased farms was equal to those on the plantations. With the community settling down and realizing that it would be in this location for some time, a blunt reassessment of the painful experience of indentureship in Fiji began and soon became a central part of the political debates heating up at the time in India and Britain. The painful experience of indentureship in Fiji was the result of a whole series of colonial decisions that had closed off the kind of cultural opportunities indentureship had led to in other places. By the turn of the century, the segregation of the Fijians and the Indians was a cultural fact. Neither community particularly wanted to maintain the separation. Once Indian farmers scattered about and Indian shopkeepers began to serve the needs of both communities in the towns, physical isolation was no longer as complete as it had been at the beginning, but the colonial plan had become part of the cultural arrangement by which everyone continued to abide. The sugar industry had also developed dramatically over the years, but once again the monopoly of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company had limited any new role for Indians, and they felt almost as enslaved on their leased land as they had been under indentureship. Most important of all, the missionary decision to honor the government's segregation policy meant that nobody had offered the Indian children any significant educational opportunities for two generations (Burton and Deane 1936).[3] This was a devastating blow to the cultural life of the Indian community. Not only had it not provided the children with an education, but it meant that those children largely grew up on their own while their mothers tried to deal with the demands of the labor-short Company and the women-short housing barracks. European observers and Indian males both saw the women as at fault for this period of social and cultural chaos, but the arrangements were initially in the hands of the all-powerful government

and the Company. It was their shortsightedness that had placed the Indians in an inhumane prison with almost every door to cultural development firmly locked.

Local Indian leadership might have eventually been able to address this network of problems, but opportunities for taking leadership were not naturally available. Neither the government nor the Company provided opportunities for leadership, and the geographical and social distance between those living in the "lines" and those scattered on small farms made community organization difficult as well. What eventually happened was that some of the serious social problems that the indentureship in Fiji entailed were described to the outside world, and political initiatives taken in India responded to those stories by having the whole system of indentured labor closed down in 1917 (Naidu 1979).

The two storytellers who separately informed the world about conditions in Fiji in the later half of the first decade of the twentieth century were idiosyncratic individuals who had known one another in Fiji. J. W. Burton was a missionary who arrived in Fiji in 1902 and was surprised to find that, while all the Native-Fijians were happily worshipping within the Methodist Church, there was virtually no missionary work among the Indians. He worked hard at starting an Indian mission during his short stay, and he and his wife opened a number of schools and orphanages, but what he became known for was his detailed account of the social conditions of the Indians living in the plantation housing. When he left Fiji in 1910, he wrote a book entitled *The Fiji of Today*, which was published in London (Lal 2000) and stirred up quite a controversy. Totaram Sanadhya was a Brāhman who had gone to Fiji in 1893 as an indentured worker, and after his five years on the plantation he became a self-taught priest and then a somewhat learned *pandit*. When he returned to India in 1914, he wrote an account of his years in Fiji (in Hindi), which was called *My Twenty-One Years in the Fiji Islands* (Sanadhya 1991 [1914]; Kelly and Singh 1991; Lal 1998, 2000).[4] Both these men had a lot to say about the religious practices of the "lines" that we will examine shortly, but at the time it was their assessments of the social conditions in which the people were expected to live that caught the attention of the public in Britain and India.

Totaram Sanadhya had sent a petition to Gandhi while still in Fiji asking for legal help for the Indian community of Fiji, and he met Gandhi soon after his return to India. C. F. Andrews, who was an Anglican minister and a close associate of Gandhi's, had already read Burton's book, and when Totaram began stirring up the leaders of India, he agreed to undertake an inquiry into the social conditions on the plantations in Fiji. He visited Fiji in 1915 and again in 1917, and in moral outrage condemned what he saw there (Lal 1998). The

Company, desperate for the supply of cheap labor to continue, challenged each point he made, but the British government realized it had many issues to address regarding its Indian colony, and it acted quickly and ordered the whole system of recruitment for indentureship closed down.

The picture of the religious practices during the indentureship years is difficult to reconstruct. Totaram, Burton, and Andrews were all interested in matters of religion, but they were also caught up in the immediate political question of whether the indentureship should be allowed to continue and what they tell us about religious practice is often indirectly addressing that political question. Burton's description of a carnivalesque atmosphere outside the plantation housing or "lines" on a Sunday, and what he considered the "hideous music" and "painted faces" of the religious specialists, is helpful only if we forget his missionary bias and somehow reimagine what he saw. In the prison atmosphere of the plantation, clinging to emotional forms of religion and enjoying some traditional music on the one day off from the oppressive colonial arrangements of the workweek made some sense. Andrews in his paternalistic way added to this disapproving missionary picture by suggesting that maybe the government should arrange to bring in religious teachers from India, or at least encourage the Company to set aside some land for temples (Lal 1998). What these stray comments tell us is that the segregation the government had imposed created a very artificial cultural situation, and the rigid rules of plantation life made it exceedingly difficult for forms of community to develop and religious practices to evolve.

Totaram Sanadhya's account gives us a detailed story from inside the Indian community as to what religious practices did actually develop during this period. Totaram was himself a Brāhman and was assigned during indentureship to an otherwise unused barrack that he called the "haunted lines." His relative isolation did allow him to spend long hours reading the *Bhagavad Gītā* he had carried with him, and he soon attracted disciples who at first listened as he explained the verses of the *Gītā*, and later begged him to set up a simple worship altar in his room. Eventually he advertised himself as a *pandit* who could recite whole texts. Writing about this experience later on after he had returned to India to join the Gandhian fight against indentureship, he did not give it the positive interpretation one might have expected as one who had been by all accounts an influential religious leader. Looking back on his experience, what he recalled was the social chaos of the time as the oppressive arrangements of the "lines" led to the breakdown of family life and the encouragement of religious teachers he remembered as charlatans. What he says about the religious scene is that it was dominated by itinerant sectarian teachers who kept arriving from India. Most of them then scandalized the local Hindus by

marrying young girls, and then they disappeared again (Lal 1998, 2000). Both the quiet devotional life he led and the sectarian controversies he wrote about would continue in the years ahead, but the social setting would change radically as the crowded plantations would be replaced by the lonely family farm.

The Post-Indenture Period

With the end of the indenture arrangements, the Indian community in Fiji had a new opportunity to figure out "where it was." The fight against indentureship had swirled around the Fijian Indian community, but in the end it had been handled primarily by people in India and Britain. The situation was unlike South Africa where a whole generation of leaders of all sorts had worked closely with Gandhi, and they knew what their goals were when he left. In Fiji, the community would have to begin defining its goals, but it did have a sense based on the debates around the closing of indenture that issues needed to be tackled and that they were the ones who would have to take the initiative.

There were two related problems with the current social structure. The first was the odd social framework in which the community had been placed by the policies of the government and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. The second was the near total absence of appropriate institutions to give the community an identity within this segregated society.

When the country was defined as a segregated society, the government made clear that it would work with the Council of Chiefs and the Methodist Church to provide the Native-Fijians with special political institutions and special schools and other institutions. The government and Company arranged for leases of land for the sole purpose of growing sugarcane, but the Indians were provided with no schools and had no clear title to land on which they might establish their own temples or other institutions. After indenture there were limited public contacts with Native-Fijians in the local retail shops, but Indo-Fijians and Native-Fijians had totally different kinds of contact with government. There was almost no basis for claiming a common creole culture with the Native-Fijians, and therefore little basis for a shared struggle against colonial rule such as the Indians in Mauritius, Guyana, and Trinidad were soon to engage in (Mayer 1961; Gillion 1977).

In the circumstance, the bold political initiative the Indians took was to ask for a common electoral roll with the Europeans. This was considered an audacious request at the time and would have given the Indians a dominant political position immediately, so the government quickly hid behind the need to protect the rights of the Council of Chiefs. Nevertheless, the Indians had

made their point that at the end of indenture they had been declared "free" citizens of the British Empire, and it was far from clear what the rights of that citizenship were in this situation. In 1916, the Government had recognized that it was time to provide the Indians with some representation and had "appointed" the conservative schoolteacher Badri Maharaj to the Legislative Council. The Indian community, which was quickly finding its voice in this new situation, openly argued that the choice of representation should have been theirs, and that their choice would have been the lawyer Manilal Maganlal Doctor. Manilal Doctor had worked with Gandhi in South Africa and had then spent some years in Mauritius before arriving in Fiji in 1911. Even as the controversial decision to end indenture was being made in India and Britain, he was looking ahead within the Fijian context. He almost certainly understood the audaciousness of the claim for a common role with the Europeans, but he also understood the leverage the Indians had as the sole producers of sugarcane for the Company. It was that leverage he intended to use as he planned for the cane workers strike of 1920.

The end of the indenture system proved a major problem for the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. Because of the Company's brutal style of plantation management, none of the workers had been renewing their contracts, as they were in Mauritius, Guyana, and Trinidad. The Company quickly responded to the new situation by dividing its plantation holdings into ten-acre plots and making them available for leases in much the same way native lands had been leased for some time. What this new arrangement meant was that the Indians formed their own work gangs to meet the deadlines for planting and harvest, and the Company could only wield its authority by getting the government's backing for maintaining its monopoly over the refining process and the establishment of the price it would pay for the cane. Once this arrangement had been in place for a couple of years, labor units in the different regions began to serve as the primary basis for Indian community formation. In 1920, a bitter strike pitted the Indian community against the Company and the government, and at the end of it, the government made Manilal Maganlal Doctor's leadership efforts the scapegoat and had him deported. When the strike was organized once again in 1921, another visiting figure, Sadhu Bashishth Muni, took the lead and taught the people more careful Gandhian techniques of nonviolence, so that this time the community remained united and more effective in its endeavor. As time went on, the cane growers formed a national organization called the Kisan Sabha led by trained lawyers from Gujarat, and that organization became the central organizational core of the Indian community and the base for the political party most Indians supported at the time of Independence.

Creating internal networks within the Indian community proved somewhat more difficult than finding ways to challenge the government and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. One important complication in the post-indenture situation was that new subgroups of Indians began to be added to the community. We have already mentioned the fact that the 15,000 South Indian indentured workers had come in between 1903 and 1911, so that just as indenture came to an end they constituted a significant part of the community, especially in the western end of Viti Levu around the last refinery in Lautoka opened in 1901. Once steamships were in service and made regular trips past Fiji on their way to Australia, Gujarati business people and Sikh farmers also began to arrive on their own, and each of them became important segments in the Indian community with fewer ties to the bitter experience of indentureship. In general, travel back and forth between India and Fiji played a bigger role in community development than it did in any of the other indenture-based societies, and "leaders" in religion, commerce, or politics often seemed to come from outside Fiji and to be given recognition without much objection from within the local Indian community.

What we can reasonably assume is that as indenture ceased and the "lines" were no longer available for carnival-style religious activities, most of the itinerant religious figures Totaram Sanadhya described so disparagingly either returned to India or settled down to a quieter lifestyle. In the new situation, what we find is that many families developed their own household routine of worship on their farm. As time went on, some of the prosperous farmers invited others for festival celebrations or lectures by religious teachers, and, in some cases, small temples were set up and maintained on family property. The anthropologist Chandra Jayawardena (1980) argues that Fiji Indians were the diametrical opposites of their Guyana counterparts in this respect. While in Guyana, the Indians desperately needed a very public form of Hindu worship in order to counter the Christian churches of the Afro-Guyanese in the village setting they shared; in Fiji, a more private form of worship seemed sufficient because Indian culture operated only within its section of the segregated society. While in distant Guyana the religious leaders had no choice but to creatively invent a new religious tradition, in Fiji weak links with India seemed to continue through language and occasional visitors, and people at the time did not feel the need for public forms of worship that would make a statement in the context of a shared Fijian culture.[5] In the 1920s, Indians in Fiji were just beginning to figure out how much they had in common with one another. Jayawardena is right that the family farm was the base from which the temples and even the schools evolved, and

divisions within the Indian community had not yet been papered over in an effort to find a common Indian culture (Jayawardena 1980).

The first group among the Indians that seemed to recognize the need for their own institutions was made up of those from South India. This is a bit odd because they were late arrivals and were only a quarter of the worker population. On the other hand, they were concentrated in the western end of Viti Levu, and they had distinct religious traditions that they had been keen to preserve in each of the other indenture locations. The primary pattern of South Indian worship in Fiji would seem to be the worship of goddesses, as it was in the other indentured locations where South Indian workers went. We do not hear of temples built on the Company-owned plantations of Fiji, and with South Indians arriving only after 1903 it seems likely that the little temples one now sees on private properties were the earliest efforts at South Indian-style temple-building in Fiji. When I was conducting research in 2000, I was taken to numerous goddess temples attached to family properties in the countryside near the Lautoka sugar refinery. Each family claimed their temple was established by their grandparents, but, in 2000, neighbors were sharing in the worship and many of the neighbors were not of South Indian background. Unlike the rigid South Indian traditions of Guyana and Trinidad, these examples of temple worship had clearly evolved locally and showed considerable variation. Each family thought of its own tradition as unique and was proud to explain how each deity image and each part of the ritual had been introduced into the tradition (figure 5.2).[6] None of the families interviewed in 2000 would admit to still doing animal sacrifices, but it seemed to be a tradition they were familiar with. They were proud of the possession states many of them experienced at festival time, but the leadership even at festival time was described as located in the family and the *pūjaris* were both male and female family members who had assumed that responsibility.

What is distinctive about the South Indian traditions of Fiji is that these family-based goddess temples have been complimented from the beginning by a very different tradition of Brāhmanical temple worship. The Murukaṉ temple in the town of Nadi has since indenture time represented a Brāhmanical tradition of temple worship that has grown increasingly into a public tradition. The founder of this temple was Ramaswamy Pillai who was an indentured worker, but came from the Vēlāla landlord caste in the Salem district of Tamil Nadu. In his home district, we know that Vēlālas often manage temples in which the elaborate ritual is performed by Brāhmans, and we also know that as a youth Pillai had been indentured in South Africa, where, as we have already seen, Brāhmanical temples were being built around Durban at the turn of the century. In 1906, Pillai signed up once again to serve a second indenture in

FIGURE 5.2. Village deities, Fiji.

Fiji, perhaps with an idea of eventually building a temple there. In any case, he served his five years in the Lautoka area, but then moved to the town of Nadi, which was gradually becoming the shopping center of the South Indian community. There, he put up a thatch hut on an empty plot of land and began to worship Murukaṉ in 1914. With the help of the prominent businessman, M. N. Naidu, and other South Indians in the community, he was eventually able to lease the land his temple stood on and then build a proper brick temple. He personally led the worship in the temple until 1934, when he left for India. At that point, the management of the temple was taken over by the TISI Sangam that had been formed in the meantime.

The story of the Then India Sanmarga Ikya (TISI) Sangam begins with another important leader in the South Indian community named Kuppu Swami Naidu, who arrived as an indentured worker in 1912. He had been influenced by the Ramakrishna Mission as a youth, and after his indentureship he took a vow of celibacy and traveled all over Fiji looking for ways to start schools and temples for the South Indians. At his suggestion, all the South Indian leaders gathered at the Nadi temple in 1926 on Swami Vivekananda's birthday and founded the TISI Sangam, of which he remained the president until his death in 1956 (figure 5.3). In 1934, when Ramaswamy Pillai decided to return to India, the Sangam bought the temple site in Nadi and it has supervised the management of the temple ever since and uses the temple as

FIGURE 5.3. Samadhi or gravesite of Kuppu Swami Naidu, Nadi, Fiji.

the symbolic center of its activity. The TISI has generally concentrated its activity on building schools and only informally has maintained contact with the owners of the family-based South Indian-style temples. In 1936, Swami Avishananda of the Madras Ramakrishna Mission was invited to Fiji, and he studied the needs of the Sangam and sent trained Tamil and Telegu teachers from India to become the headteachers of the newly crowded South Indian schools. With twenty primary schools, five secondary schools, and a carefully designed curriculum, the system of schools run by the TISI was soon the best organized in all of Fiji (figure 5.4; personal visit to Nadi high school and Sangam headquarters 2000).

The much larger North Indian community of Fiji found it harder to develop its own institutional structure than did its South Indian counterpart. One of the reasons for this difficulty was that the North Indian community

FIGURE 5.4. Schoolchildren in South Indian Sangam School, Nadi, Fiji.

included many subgroups. Leaders in business and in politics were often Gujaratis or Sikhs who had come on their own. Muslims made up a sufficiently large number that people were not sure how they might respond to a religious initiative. Festivals could be shared by all, but it was not obvious at first what should be done about temples or schools.

As it turned out, one of the groups that Totaram Sanadhya had disparagingly called a "sect" was the Arya Samaj, and it was one of the first identifiable groups to step forward with organizational initiatives within the North Indian segment of Fijian Indian society. As was the case in the other indentured societies, its strong views were often not acceptable to the majority and one controversy after another seemed to set the Arya Samaj in opposition to the majority of the Hindu community (Billimoria 1985; Kelly 1992). The first Arya Samaj missionaries arrived in Fiji in 1902 and quickly opened a school, but, as Totaram reported, the first two principals each married young girls and had to flee back to India. Badri Maharaj tried to keep the school going, but, when he was asked by the Governor to be the sole Indian member of the Legislative Council in 1916, the majority of the Indian community condemned the choice. The brilliant and popular Gujarati lawyer, Manilal Maganlal Doctor, that they wanted to represent them also once had Arya Samaj connections, but he had won a reputation in South Africa and then in Mauritius for shrewd political

moves, and the colonial authorities knew about his political reputation and tried to limit his role in that area (Ali 1980; Kelly 1992).

It was only in 1927 that the Arya Samaj undertook serious missionary work in Fiji. Krishna Sharma, a trained missionary or *upadesak,* arrived from India and toured the whole of Fiji holding public meetings on behalf of an umbrella organization called the Hindu Mahasabha. He called for reforms among Hindus, but was at his most militant in condemning Christian missionaries and, in accord with Arya Samaj teaching, calling for the reconversion of Christian and Muslim Indians. Alarmed, the Fiji Muslim League became organized in all parts of Fiji and brought about an important split in the Indian community that had not been there before. When the Fiji Muslim League joined with the Indian Reform League, which was an urban and largely Indian Christian organization, in protesting to the government against these efforts at reconversion, a major religious controversy developed. Conservative Hindus too began to feel they needed to organize themselves in opposition to the Arya Samaj, and they condemned the "Hindu Mahasabha," which the Arya Samaj was using as an umbrella organization. Local Hindus then asked the Sanātana organization in India to send its representatives to Fiji to counter the efforts of the Arya Samaj. When Krishna Sharma went on a trip to India, the government announced that he would not be allowed to return.

With the Indian community in the middle of this tangled religious controversy, the election for the first three "Indian" communal seats in the Legislative Council took place in 1929. Many Indians were not sure they wanted this limited form of representation, and, before anyone had noticed, the candidates supported by the well-organized Arya Samaj won all three seats. Vishnu Deo, who had been born in Fiji and was now the firebrand editor of the Arya Samaj newspaper, *Fiji Samachar,* had run against John Grant, the senior Indian Christian leader, and had soundly defeated him. Vishnu Deo immediately overplayed his hand, however. He announced that the three elected Indian members would not continue to sit in the Council unless his motion granting Indians a "common franchise" with Europeans was passed. When the motion was defeated, the three Indians walked out of the Council, and Indians lost the toehold of political representation they had been offered (Ali 1980; Kelly 1992; Lal 1998).[7]

The conservative Hindu majority's effort to get help from the Sanātana movement in India initially produced new tensions. Pandit Muralilal Sastri, who was the first Sanātanist to tour the country, took a very polemical view against the Arya Samaj. In 1930, however, Ram Chandra Sharma arrived and he tried to be more constructive. His popular lectures put the focus on the already popular Tulsīdās *Rāmcharitmānas* and he set forth the traditional

emphasis on the divinity of Rāma. Christian missionaries and governmental officials joined the complex debates on the nature of deity that followed, but it was Vishnu Deo, the outspoken editor of the Arya Samaj newspaper and former member of the Legislative Council, who forced himself into the center of the debate and caught himself in a strange trap. In order to make his point that Rāma could not be divine, he had insisted in his writings on presenting lurid descriptions of the sexual life of the heroes and heroines of the epic story. Finally, in 1932, the government found it expedient to intervene in the debate and charged Vishnu Deo with obscenity. The controversies Vishnu Deo dragged the Arya Samaj into in the late 1920s and early 1930s not only damaged the political credibility of the Arya Samaj, but also made it difficult for the Indian community to find a way to participate in the political process (Kelly 1992).

What the Arya Samaj was able to do effectively was to figure out how to start schools with a reasonable amount of Hindu content in the curriculum. In 1925, Gopendra Narayan Pathik and his wife arrived from India and insisted on starting schools exclusively for girls. A short time later, Pandit Amichandra Vidyalankar arrived and objected to the creolized Hindi being used in the schools. He produced an extensive set of Hindi grammars and graded readers, and these gradually became the standard texts used in all the different Indian sectarian schools of Fiji. Today, the Arya Samaj manages more than a dozen schools, and, while it has only a few temples, it has a respected leadership role in the Indian community with new ideas on curriculum, marriage ritual, and worship routines, and it also serves as the Indian leader of the interfaith conversations with the Christian majority (Billimoria 1985; Kelly 1992; personal conversation with General Secretary Bhawan Dutt 2000).

Under the leadership of Pandit Ram Chandra Sharma, the Hindu majority began to claim its leadership role during the 1930s, and a period of calm and relative prosperity ensued. Ram Chandra's teachings centered on the *Rāmcharitmānas* of Tulsīdās, but he tried to bring all kinds of religious positions together, encouraged the building of schools, and helped with the organizing of the Kisan Sabha, an activity he had experience of in India (Guha and Spivak 1988). Most of the schools were established and maintained by local committees, and it was not until 1956 that a Sanātana school board was established to help with the management of those that needed help.

The school system that eventually developed within the Indian community looked like a set of competing sectarian schools in that schools of the TISI, Arya Samaj, Sanātana Dharma, Muslim League, and Sikhs (Gajraj Singh 1973) were scattered all over the country. The way the system actually worked, however, was deeply rooted in local initiative. Prominent local families

constituted the management board of the school, and students often attended the nearest school regardless of its nominal religious affiliation. Because neither the missionaries nor the government had provided schools for the Indians, the establishment of this school system became the core of the Indian social network. With prominent families gaining experience in management and new graduates returning as teachers, the school system provided a large number of positions for community leadership. Moreover, because this activity took place in a fairly secular way and emphasized self-help within the community, it gave the Indian community an ethos of unity and self-reliance, which would serve it well in the political struggles to come. In some districts, temples were linked to these sectarian schools, but the schools tended to be the primary institutional structure of the community. Where family-built temples became exceptionally popular, such as the North Indian temple of the snake outside Labasa or the South Indian temple of Nadi, they were seen as belonging to the whole community, but in general religious institutions played a somewhat less central role in defining the cultural identity of the Indian community in Fiji than they did in the other indentured societies (Jayawardena 1980).

When C. F. Andrews revisited the islands in 1937, he found a prosperous and well-organized community with almost half of the Indian children in school learning a sophisticated version of Hindi. The farms were neat and prosperous and the retail outlets in the towns were owned by Gujarati and Sikh (Gajraj Singh 1973) businessmen. All this had been accomplished without any help from the government or the Company, and Fijian Indian culture existed for the moment in an island of its own. It had received help from India at crucial points along the way, but the deep social and moral chaos in which the community was born ensured that it was not a “Little India” transplanted to the Pacific. It was a rural culture to be sure in that it was founded upon the hard work that individual families could accomplish on the land, but its rural base was unlike the crowded village scene of the Indian plains. Individual initiative was at the heart of success in Fiji, and well-run schools maintained with pooled resources became the institutional symbols of what the culture could achieve. The religious foundations of the culture were carried on as people determined how much of the horoscope mattered in the new situation and how effective marriage rituals and death rituals were in giving stability to the family. What mattered the most, however, was that families had survived, prospered, and won the respect of their peers. The community was at last strong and looked around at its “new homeland” with confidence. It had established not so much a new religious tradition as a new moral order that it was deeply proud of. It was as if the world around had forgotten about this island of Indian culture, and as Andrews discovered, it had rebuilt itself against great odds (Andrews 1937).

While the Indian community was developing its identity internally, the political atmosphere in which they lived was slowly awakening. In 1936, the census indicated that the Native-Fijian percentage of the population had fallen to 49.22 percent and the Indians already made up 42.85 percent. The colonial government and its regulations was no longer the central political issue, because the Native-Fijian community slowly began to realize that it would soon be defining its own future and the Indians would somehow be involved. In the cane areas, the Native-Fijians shopped in the Indian stores, but even there they did not go to common schools, share any religious institutions (even Indian Christians had their own churches), or share any government services. Most of the sophisticated native leaders lived on the smaller offshore islands and did not have even occasional contact with Indians. With the 1936 census, native leaders suddenly realized that the Indians were not temporary laborers, and it was only a matter of time before the Native-Fijians would be a minority in their own islands (Lal 1986).[8]

Soon after the 1936 census, the Council of Chiefs asked the colonial government for protection. In 1944, the brilliant Cambridge scholar with chiefly rank, Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, was made Secretary for Fijian Affairs. Under his leadership, the Fijian Affairs Board began to propose legislation to protect Fijian interests, as these were understood by the Council of Chiefs. In particular, he directed his attention to the thousands of leases that defined the relationships between the Native-Fijians and the Indians. Suddenly, the unresolved issues about the Indians' political situation took on a new urgency. If new legislation could dramatically affect the lives of the Indians, how could they address those issues if they had no parliamentary representation?

With World War II on the horizon, the segregation of the two communities on the Fiji Islands became a widening gulf. With Japan moving dramatically around the Pacific, the British government was occupied with the threat of war. Although the islands themselves had not seen military action for some time, the British had cultivated the Fijian tradition of chiefly sons as military officers and had engaged them in military schools and in service with the British army. Now, with the threat from Japan, some were also trained to serve in special guerilla units in the secret service. On the other hand, the Indians had been kept far away from any kind of government service and especially from the military. As war approached and the Indians in Fiji needed to address the question of their role, Gandhi called for the British to "Quit India" and for the people in India to boycott the British war effort. In India, many were already serving in the British army and Gandhi's political stance raised complications, but, in Fiji, the Indians were totally removed from the much talked about Native-Fijian war effort. As the war wore on, the Company tried to take

advantage of the politically disadvantaged Indians, but the bitter strike of 1943 found the community more united than ever before and left the cane growers' unions as the political voice of the whole Indian community.

With the end of the war, Fiji went into a period of peace and prosperity that hid from sight the turmoil that was to come. Lala Sukuna was developing a reasonable structure for dealing with the leases, but the Council of Chiefs, which had learned almost nothing about ruling during the period of British rule, quietly hoped that the British would just carry on. The Indians had developed a solid pattern of community organization, were united behind the cane workers' union, and were making headway in commerce and in the professions with a newly well-educated generation. The lack of political rights was a problem, but there did not seem to be much that they could do about that until the colonial era would come to its promised end.

Independence

By the 1960s, the colonial authorities thought it was time for Fijian independence. The Council of Chiefs had become accustomed to the sheltered position it had in the colonial system, and it initially did not welcome a situation where even with constitutional protection it would have to take the measure of the Indo-Fijian community that had grown up around it. The Native-Fijians had actually not had much experience in politics. The Indians had from the time of Indenture had political leaders arriving from outside, and they were regularly asking the colonial government for representation and challenging the Colonial Sugar Refining Company for a fair deal. The Native-Fijians noted what they called the "pushiness" of the Indians, but they themselves sought the protection and even favoritism of the colonial government by letting the Council of Chiefs speak for them. Chief Lala Sukuna brilliantly fought for native rights from within the government after 1944, but when he died in 1958 this era of protected care started to unravel.

With the Native-Fijian society forced into the political arena, the limitations of the Council of Chiefs as the voice of the native people began to become evident (Ravuvu 1988). As long as the colonial government could call the Council together to serve a few functions and administer the rest of the country on its own, the political effectiveness of the Chiefs was never tested. The three traditional chiefly confederacies were all based in the east where there was very little Indo-Fijian settlement. Kubuna was based on Bau Island, Tovata was based offshore in the Lau island group, and Burebasaga was based in Rewa in the southeast of Viti Levu. In western Viti Levu and on the second island of

Vanua Levu, the two areas where sugarcane planting was concentrated and where Indian population was greatest, there were no "high" chiefs from these confederacies. The chiefs in the sugar-growing areas actually had extensive contact with the Indian farmers who leased the traditionally held lands of the native lineage groups or *mataquali*. Realizing that the control of the land was the difficult point of interaction between the Indians and the Native-Fijians, Chief Sukuna had set up the Native Land Trust Board to regulate the granting of leases. This Board and the Council of Chiefs were the two institutions Native-Fijians looked to for protection of their interests.

From the 1940s on, a *taukei* or indigenous-peoples'-movement began to grow among the Native-Fijians as they realized that the colonial power would soon depart and that they would have to work out their future with the Indo-Fijians they felt they did not understand. Because both the Native-Fijians and the Indo-Fijians had their own reasons for claiming a peace-loving reputation, the everyday relationships were a strange form of "live and let live," with each group using its own language and its own cultural institutions. As contacts became necessary in the areas of commerce and politics, anxiety began to grow. Only occasionally did a small group of Native-Fijians raise a call for the protection of *taukei* or native rights, but when they did it usually included some ominous rhetoric about expelling all Indians from the islands.

With the arrival of Independence in 1970, those native institutions and attitudes suddenly found that they had to achieve their goals by forming workable political parties and learning the procedures of parliamentary government. They were now going to have to face up politically to the long-ignored presence of Indians within Fijian society. At first it looked as if Fiji might be able to develop reasonably balanced multiethnic political parties. The person destined to be the first Prime Minister, Chief Kamisese Mara, was the high chief of Lau and the head of the Tovata confederacy, and his wife was the heir to the Bau chief's position in the Kubuna confederacy. He was not only a traditional leader of great stature, but a well-educated world statesman. Just before Independence, he insisted that the newly formed Fijian Association he had agreed to head align itself with as many Indian groups as possible and redefine itself as a multiracial political party called the Alliance Party. He surprised both sides with this initiative, but in a superficial sense he got his way. In the meantime, A. D. Patel, who was the highly respected leader of the cane farmers, hurriedly organized the North Indian Hindu majority among the Indians into the National Federation Party (NFP) and started to look for native Fijian allies. He, however, died before Independence arrived, and the Indian role in the initial government after Independence was quite unclear. In any case, Mara knew more about the Indians than Patel and other NFP leaders at the time did

about forming alliances with the native people. As it turned out, Mara was successful in winning support for the Alliance from leaders of all the Indian minority groups, including the South Indians, the Arya Samaj followers, and the Muslims, and the era of Independence started quietly.

The 1970 constitution gave formal recognition to the ethnic duality of Fiji. Voters were required to register as either "Fijian," "Indian," or "General Elector" (Europeans and all others). Twenty-seven of the fifty-two seats in the lower house were called communal seats and only "Fijian," "Indian," or "General Elector" voters could vote for one of their own group in those seats. There were twelve "Fijian" seats, twelve "Indian" seats, and three "General Elector" seats. The other twenty-five seats were called "national" because in those seats all the voters could vote, but the candidates were still communal with "Fijians" running in ten of those, "Indians" in ten others, and "General Electors" in five more. Because of Mara's stature, his careful cultivation of the Indian minorities, and the "General Electors" blind loyalty to his party, the Alliance won the early elections handily (Lal 1986).

It was not long, however, before the extreme communal voices that were to haunt the native community's politics for years to come began to show up. In April 1977, Sakiasi Butadroka, who had been till then an assistant minister in the Alliance, suddenly called for the repatriation of all Indians. When he was dismissed from the government, he formed the Fijian Nationalist Party and in the ensuing election won 25 percent of the vote. That was enough to destroy the Alliance's careful political arrangements, and the ruling party suffered a crushing defeat. The Indian-dominated National Federation Party won the majority of the seats, but, ironically, it was not prepared to govern both because it did not yet have Fijian allies and because even among party members there was considerable dissatisfaction with the leadership of S. M. Koya, who had taken over after the death of A. D. Patel in 1969. After a lot of political shuffling, a new election had to be called in September 1977, and once again the Alliance won handily (Lal 1986).

Although the Alliance was back in power, the divisions within the Native-Fijian community continued to grow. By the time of the 1982 election, the chiefs in the western part of Viti Levu challenged Prime Minister Mara's handling of the pine forest contracts in their area, and they established their own political base when they formed the Western United Front. In 1982, the new Western United Front contested the election in alliance with the National Federation Party, but the Alliance once again was returned to power.

For the 1987 election, a new Labour Party was formed by the labor movement. Emphasizing its multiethnic and urban character, this new party was able to attract a new constituency, including wide support among the

Indo-Fijians. For the election, the Labour Party formed a Coalition with the Native-Fijians in the Western United Front, and this Coalition received a solid majority in the parliament. While the new Prime Minister was a Native-Fijian, Timoci Bavadra, his credentials were suspect in the eyes of the traditional Fijian elite. Because he was not of high chiefly rank, was from western Viti Levu, and received substantial support from the Indo-Fijians, the communal leadership among the Native-Fijians was concerned. A month after the election, the third-ranking military officer, Lt. Colonel Rabuka, seized control of Fiji in a coup, and insisted that a new constitution be written guaranteeing native Fijian control of government under any circumstance. He was eventually able to work the situation to his advantage and became an elected civilian Prime Minister with his own party (Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei, SVT). Nevertheless, pressure for a more just electoral system continued inside and outside the country, and a new constitution was approved in 1997 with a different mix of communal and national seats. In 1999, the Labour Party-led coalition again won, and the first Indian Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhry, was put in office. This time, it was a year later to the day that a coup once again seized parliament, and, in the name of protecting Native-Fijian rights, military control was set in place and an interim government was appointed (Durutalo 1986; Ravuvu 1991; Lal and Larmour 1997; Robertson and Sutherland 2001).[9]

The two coups in 1987 and 2000 had a devastating effect on the morale of the Indian community in Fiji, and many left the country for destinations such as Australia and Canada. The majority of the Indo-Fijians, however, did not have the option of leaving and settled down to examine how it was that they might begin to build a shared social order. The segregated world the British insisted on for a century was slowly disappearing, and the first nervous reactions of the Native-Fijians to the democratic process were showing signs of moderating and a deeper commitment to democratic reform seemed to be slowly developing. What the Indo-Fijians who remained realized was that in spite of the odd way in which they were taken to these Pacific islands and left there without direction, they were generally able to live at peace with the Native-Fijians (Cottrell 2000). They had little challenge to their dominant economic position, and their language and culture had survived and even prospered in the cultural isolation they had experienced for much of their time on these islands. There were things they liked about their new homeland, and they seemed determined to make it work.

One of the interesting reactions to the Indo-Fijians' plight after 1987 was the awareness that not giving a public profile to their Hindu identity had proved to be unwise in the long run. In the postcolonial cultural situation

Indo-Fijians were trying to develop a shared culture with the Native-Fijians, but the Native-Fijians had few opportunities to know what Indo-Fijian culture was like. What the new situation seemed to call for were major symbols of Indo-Fijian cultural life, and the temples built in Lautoka and Nadi in the next few years were truly monumental and "public" in the sense that they served the public passing by as much as the worshippers entering in. The Nadi temple was even chosen by the government tourist bureau as one of the most prominent symbols of Fiji for the flood of tourists that regularly visit the islands.

The first of these two temples that were rebuilt as public monuments was the one in Lautoka. Lautoka is in the west of the main island and has the largest cane mill in the country and the highest percentage of Indians in any city. There had long been a prominent mosque in the center of the city, but Hindu worship was focused primarily in the small, almost family-based, temples in the residential neighborhoods. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) joined with local folk in the 1980s to rebuild a lovely Viṣṇu temple right near the cane mill. The central deity in this temple is the form of Kṛṣṇa dancing on Kāliya or the snake. While the snake imagery picked up a classical religious theme in Hinduism, it also addressed the central role the snake symbol plays in native Fijian ritual. This theme had been picked up earlier by the popular Hindu temple of Labasa on the island of Vanua Levu, but in the monumental temple of Lautoka it became something that had political as well as cultural significance for all Fijians.

The busy commercial city of Nadi a bit south of Lautoka had long been the center of South Indian business and cultural life. As we have already seen, Ramaswamy Pillai had built a small Brāhmanical temple where he could worship Murukaṉ in the river valley north of the city in 1914. A short time later Kuppa Swami Naidu (later known as Ratnam Sadhu Kuppaswamy) founded the TISI Sangam there in 1926. The Sangam had taken over responsibility for managing the temple in 1934 when Ramaswamy Pillai returned to India, and from the beginning in 1914 full ten-day festivals in the Brāhmanical tradition had been held in this small temple during Tai Pūcam and Skandha Sāsta. Nevertheless, for decades only members of the Indian community who had a South Indian background realized that this temple was special. After the temple was largely destroyed by a hurricane in 1983, plans for a new temple were begun. In an odd twist of communal logic, it was a group that had fled to Canada after the 1987 Coup that argued most strongly that what Indo-Fijian culture needed at this point was a truly monumental temple because that would make the point that Indo-Fijian culture was now part of the Fijian heritage.

Although this temple tradition had deep local roots, in the context of the 1980s it was clear that the local community would need help with the finances,

the architecture, and the ritual training of the priests if the kind of temple they dreamed of was going to be built. Dr. Ponnu Swami Gounder had studied abroad, and he used his wide connections to arrange for international help. As early as 1984, he arranged that the Tamil Nadu state government of India would send T. S. Mahalingam Gurukul to serve as the head priest of the temporary temple for three years so that he would be able to introduce the local priests to the detail of Brāhmanical ritual. After the 1987 Coup, the internationally renowned head of the Śaiva *matam* in Hawaii, Gurudeva Sivaya Subramuniya Svamigal, visited Fiji, and he offered to help with the temple project and give the young Fiji priests more training in Hawaii. The world-renowned temple architect, V. Ganapati Sthapati from India, agreed to design the temple, and the group of former Indo-Fijians who had settled in Vancouver, Canada, took the

FIGURE 5.5. Flagstaff supplied for Nadi temple by Fijians who had moved to Vancouver, Canada.

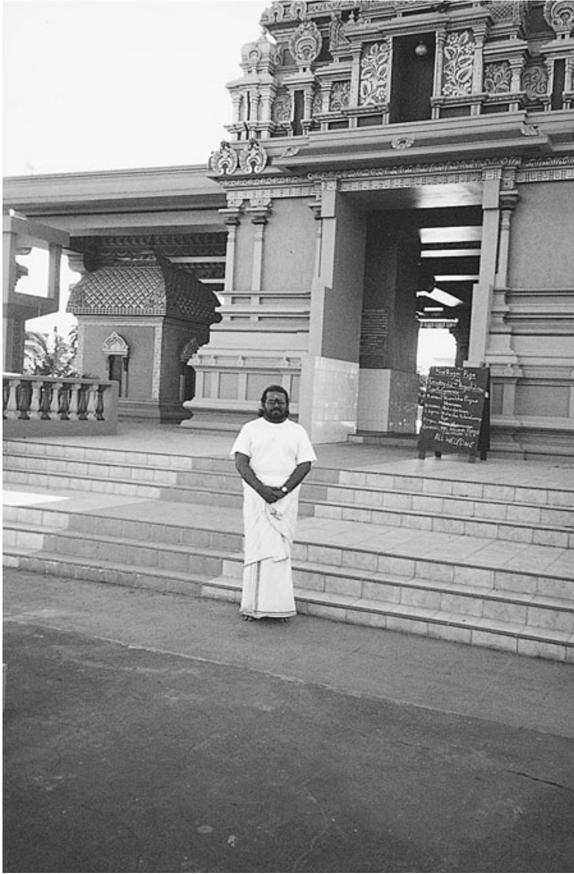

FIGURE 5.6. Nadi temple priest trained in Hawaii.

primary initiative in raising funds and providing the massive wooden flagpole for the temple (figure 5.5).

In 1994, the new Sri Siva Subramaniya Swami Temple was opened on the southern edge of Nadi (figures 5.6 and 5.7). It preserved the local tradition by re-interning the remains of the revered Sadhu Kuppaswamy on the property, moving the Vināyakar (Ganeśa) deity from the old temple site to the front entrance of the new site, appointing local non-Brāhman priests, and having a managing committee appointed by the Sangam. On the other hand, the priests had been trained in the most elaborate Brāhmanical rituals, and the Indian architect had designed a truly magnificent monument that the brochures boasted was the "largest Hindu temple in the southern hemisphere" (Souvenir Programme 1994; extended personal visit 2000).

FIGURE 5.7. Sri Siva Subramaniya Swami Temple, Nadi, Fiji.

These two new temples bring a public posture to the Fiji Hindu experience that was not present earlier in the history of Indo-Fijian life.[10] As Jayawardena pointed out long ago in his anthropological comparison of the practice of Hinduism in Guyana and Fiji, the Indo-Fijians were not expected to participate in the public cultural arena and did not experience the vibrant and competitive religious atmosphere found in the crowded settlements of Guyana (Jayawardena 1980). The recent building of these new temples is a belated statement that Indo-Fijians recognize that they are now in a new political environment. In this new setting, they need to indicate that they feel at home in Fiji, and they intend to make their culture available for the whole community to recognize and appreciate as the two communities move beyond their segregation and grow together. While, in the realm of religion, the cultural sharing might

remain a matter of recognizing plurality, in many other areas hybrid institutions and values are beginning to evolve (Naidu 1992).

With the arrival of Independence the process of cultural integration began on many fronts in spite of the long history of separation. Government action quickly brought about the integration of institutions such as banks, police services, and government offices. Schools were a more serious challenge, but there are now Native-Fijian children in even the Indian-managed schools. The opening of a modern university designed to serve the two local communities equally, as well as Pacific islanders from other islands, was an important integrative agent. The Indian community was especially benefited by the establishment of the university because the Indian schools had begun turning out exceptionally well-educated graduates and many of them had studied abroad and were ready to serve in faculty positions as soon as the university was opened. The army had old traditions that would be hard to break, but it gradually accepted the fact that multicultural institutions such as the Citizens Constitutional Forum rightly had considerable political influence in a democratic society and that as people became increasingly educated society would eventually become fully integrated. It was only the Council of Chiefs that was unable to find a role in the multicultural world, and, while they had been very careful politically, it was their continued role that made it possible for unhappy Native-Fijian elements to reimagine a time when they would not have to share their islands with the energetic Indian community (Sutherland 1992).

Analysis

Life has been more nerve-racking for the descendants of the indentured Indian laborers in Fiji than in any of the other locations to which Indian laborers were taken. James Michener's comment (Michener 1956) that "it is possible for a traveler to spend a week in Fiji without even seeing an Indian smile" is certainly a superficial observation of a short-term visitor. It does, however, point out the puzzling situation in which the Indo-Fijians found themselves, and the stubborn resolve they made to fight for their rights within the limited frameworks offered to them (Subramani 1979).

The initial framework was the colonial government's housing lines and the prison atmosphere they entailed, because of the strict insistence that the Indian workers be segregated from the Native-Fijians. Similar housing arrangements established earlier in Mauritius, Guyana, and Trinidad had been tolerated at the time. When they were reproduced in Fiji late in the nineteenth century, and made more insulting with the segregation rules, the social and

moral conditions among the Indian laborers became a living *narak* or "hell." The breakdown in family life that was so often commented on at the time was a direct result of the shortage of women, the Company's insistence that women work full hours, and the total absence of schools. In addition, the shallow sectarian Hindu preachers that Totaram Sanadhya and J. W. Burton criticized so mercilessly were really part of the entertainment the community enjoyed on its one day off work each week. Fortunately, observers from all sides recognized the human rights issues involved, and, after a host of inquiries, the whole indentureship system was closed down. For the Indians of Fiji, the memory of this experience gave a profound depth to their identity as a community and left them with the moral courage to define their own future in terms that they themselves could control.

With the indenture contracts no longer defining the situation, the colonial authorities chose to essentially leave the Indians to their own devices as long as they continued to produce cane for the mills. Instead of being driven hither and thither by the rules of the colonial hell, Indians were suddenly without educational opportunities for their children, without patterns of social or religious behavior, without markets, and without political rights. While the last issue bothered them and seemed most strange just as colonized people in India and other places were being given their first tastes of political responsibility, they realized from their earlier experience of "hell" that they did not have much leverage. Remarkably, this realization eventually proved helpful, because it allowed the Indian community to develop its own social patterns within its own little world. The spectacular network of high quality schools and efficient retail outlets are the institutional framework of what they developed during this period, but even more important are the moral qualities of industry, cooperation, and pride that came to characterize the Fiji Indian personality. Temples and religious teachers were not as prominent as they were in the other indentured societies during this second-generation period of community development, but because most temples were established by families, the religious values underlying the qualities of industry, self-reliance, and cooperative endeavor were simple and practical and deeply embedded in the personality of the people. By the end of this period, a European such as Michener might well complain that the Indians of Fiji were not fun-loving, and the Native-Fijians might complain that they were "pushy," but they had come a long way since the indenture system had been closed down in 1917, and that did not happen without a united effort from the whole community.

Unfortunately for the Indo-Fijian population, the third era of Independence meant that the freedom they had when they were left in isolation would not continue, and the new challenge of cultural integration would begin. The

bullies of the late colonial period were finally gone, but the partners in the new dance seemed almost like strangers. In one sense, the Indians and the Native-Fijians were like neighbors who had watched one another walk back and forth each day and were prepared to shop together, farm together, and build each other houses. On the other hand, the colonial era had given one group the monopoly of the army and government positions, and the other political training only within the context of a labor union or a Gandhi-style protest. The question was could the two communities develop enough cultural trust in the artificially shortened postcolonial era so that they would be able to overcome the crises political change was almost certain to bring?

The political crises of 1987 and 2000 were indeed severe. The arrangements of the 1970 constitution had seemed brilliant at the time because each of the two communities had a certain number of guaranteed seats in parliament and the clever Prime Minister Kamisese Mara could buy time and act as if there was no competition between the communities. Those years were valuable because institutional and cultural integration did make headway during that period, and some of the damage caused by a century of segregation was overcome. What the crises of 1987 and 2000 showed, however, were three weaknesses in the inexperienced political culture. One was that the Native-Fijian sense of how to use democratic strategies had been slow to develop and their loyalties became divided when there was no immediate crisis. The second was that the Indian community had found it almost too easy to gain a parliamentary majority both in 1987 and 1999 once it developed a good party strategy. The third was that, although in both cases the coup leaders acted in the expectation that they had a *taukei* or nativistic movement behind them, in both cases it quickly became obvious that *taukei* anxiety did not translate into any plan for Native-Fijian control of the political process. While some Fiji Indians concluded that the coups were an ominous sign and quickly emigrated to Australia or Canada, the Indo-Fijian leaders I interviewed in 2000 were confidently looking to the future.

Although a century of government segregation had made it difficult for Native-Fijians and Indo-Fijians to integrate socially, they lived close enough to one another that they could recognize and respect one another's social institutions and values. When the two monumental temples were built on the western end of Viti Levu at the end of the twentieth century, they confirmed the fact that the nation of Fiji had long been a multicultural society and its constitution and public policy were now prepared to give that fact public recognition. Although the coups of 1987 and 2000 were troubling, a consensus seemed to develop in both cases that the political culture would soon mature and follow the better-integrated civic culture and economic culture of

the country. People would just have to work harder and be patient as a proper set of postcolonial political skills were developed. Like the African majorities in East Africa and South Africa, the Native-Fijians did have primordial attachments to the land. On the other hand, for a half century there had been an equal number of Indo-Fijians in the society and it was they who had taken the major initiatives in giving Fiji a modern economy and a modern social structure. The quiet pride the Indo-Fijians had manifested when they built their own school system and produced their first generation of well-educated youth had slowly become a community characteristic. Indo-Fijians are now proudly working in the university, the law courts, and the government offices to make their new homeland into a model society.

Story Six

East Africa: Caste Religion

The Arrival

The story of the development of Hinduism in East Africa is a complex one. The sailboats or *dhows* of the Indian Ocean could go back and forth between India and East Africa with relative ease, and the contact along the East African coast was an old one that involved both Indian and Arab traders interacting with the local population. There are few specifics known about the earlier centuries of contact except that writers who visited the area, such as Periplus in the first century and Vasco da Gama in the fifteenth, did meet Indian traders (Gregory 1993). We also know that many of the Arab traders, and at least some of the Indian ones, settled down with African women living near the coast, and the coastal population, called the Swahili, are a mixture of the three groups. It is the language of this region, also called Swahili, that all the countries of East Africa have adopted as their national language (figure 6.1).

The story of the contact between India and East Africa becomes somewhat better known in the nineteenth century when the Sultan of Oman, who had long had a major role in East African trade, moved his headquarters to the island of Zanzibar (later part of Tanzania) and appointed the Hindu family of Bhatias as his custom collectors. The British were well established in India by this time, and the Sultan saw the opportunity to expand his traditional trade, which involved mostly slaves and ivory, and use the Indian connection

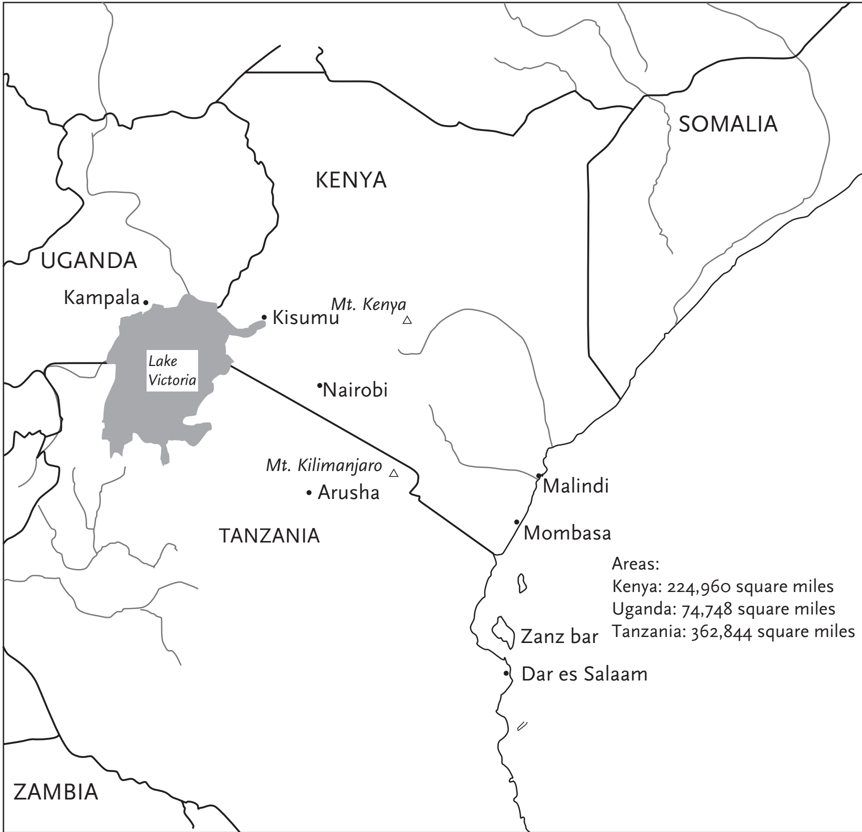

FIGURE 6.1. Map of East Africa.

to tie it in with the widespread European trade patterns. As a result, the overall volume of trade along the East African coast began to expand rapidly (Gregory 1993).

The Indians who were in Zanzibar in the largest numbers in the mid-nineteenth century were the Ismaili Muslim converts from the Lohana caste of Kutch. These Muslim converts were uncomfortable living among their former caste fellows in Kutch, and, unlike the Bhatia Hindus, they took their families with them when they moved to Zanzibar. Having been a distinct religious minority, which derived its authority from the line of living *imams* or Aga Khans, the community, even in India, tended to be very tight-knit and to keep its religious practice secret. In the context of the vast hinterland of East Africa, the whole of which they saw as their market, this tiny community worked out very careful arrangements to give one another social and economic support even when trade contacts took individuals far afield. It was not long before the

community had developed a distinctive hierarchical set of trade activities. The big trading firms of Zanzibar acted as the international traders and bankers (at one point Tharia Topan, an Ismaili, even took over the post of collector of customs). The sponsors of caravans to the interior controlled the wholesale market, and the dispersed shopkeepers looked after the retail trade. This interdependent three-part arrangement gave them a monopoly-like control of the trade patterns, which even present-day Africans complain it is impossible to break into (Walji 1974).

By the 1880s, the European powers felt that they wanted more influence in this part of the world. The British took over the "protection" of present-day Uganda and Kenya, and the Germans took over the "protection" of Tanganyika (later part of Tanzania) to the south. Although this colonial arrangement brought some regulation of the Indian trade patterns, it also increased the volume of trade manyfold and opened up other employment opportunities for Indians, who had grown accustomed to working with the British colonial authorities in India. Families from many different communities on the west coast of India soon arrived on the scene, and by the turn of the century, East Africa had significant numbers of Goan Christians, Gujarati Jains, Bohra Muslims (who were only theologically different from the Ismailis), and a variety of Gujarati Hindu communities (Mangat 1969; Bhatia 1972; Salvadori 1983).[1]

Just before the end of the nineteenth century, the British changed the mix of immigrants again when they decided to use the indentured Indian labor system in order to build the railway they wanted from the coast inland to Uganda. They brought in 37,747 workers, mostly Punjabis from northwest India, where a great deal of railroad building had already taken place, and while many of the first wave of laborers went back, Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus from the Punjab all came to settle in East Africa in significant numbers. Laborers from Gujarat as well as Punjab gradually came to recognize the opportunities in East Africa, and a big new influx of workers in trades and textiles arrived in East Africa even as the colonial period wound down in the 1950s. By Independence in the early 1960s, there were 366,013 "Asians" in East Africa (Gregory 1993).[2]

The fact that the "Asians" of East Africa came from Gujarat and Punjab on the west coast of India, and not from Calcutta and Madras as the "Indians" in the other indentured societies did, is important in many ways. It is important in that it provided a different mix of religions. Three separate communities of Shi'a Muslims, some Jains, and some Goan Christians were mixed in with the Gujarati Hindus, and an equal number of Sikhs and a few Sunni Muslims were mixed in with the Punjabi Hindus. It is also important that the majority of

the immigrants arrived on their own initiative, and thought of themselves as free to come and live as a group, to bring their culture with them, and to return to India at any time. The move to East Africa eventually resulted in much more culture change than the immigrants intended it would, but in the beginning, at least, they did not think of it as necessary to redefine their culture totally as the indentured workers in other locations did.

The Social Pattern

Because the first Asian contact with the East African mainland was made by Ismaili shopkeepers and caravans going far inland from Dar es Salaam, the social pattern that was developed was profoundly affected by the style of the tight-knit Ismaili community with its secretive ritual. Africans were apparently quite hospitable and happy to see the exotic textiles and hardware the Ismailis brought, and they were accepting of the Ismailis' clear determination not to get involved in cultural or social interaction. Because the traders' life involved traveling great distances and not involving oneself in direct production from the land, the first Asians in the area were rightly in awe of the vastness of the geography and the unfamiliar population. Although when they arrived later, the other communities of Asians did not have the same religious need to remain such a tight-knit community as the Ismailis had, they too began to keep more careful track of their caste fellows than they ordinarily would in India. Because they also moved far inland quickly, they recognized that in the far-flung environment of East Africa providing newcomers with economic and social support could be important. It was only a matter of time before a community felt large enough to provide a community center in the major cities of Mombasa, Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, and Kisumu in order to look after caste fellows visiting from more remote locations. Those community centers soon began to provide not only housing and social support, but also the basic rituals associated with marriage and death, and later other religious needs as well. It was within the context of these community centers that the highly unusual caste-based temple system of East Africa would eventually develop (Younger 1999).

The self-segregation that became characteristic of the Asian communities in East Africa is different in a number of ways from the segregation the colonial authorities imposed on the Indians in Fiji. This pattern of self-segregation began before the colonial system was in place in East Africa, and it probably followed the social expectations of both the African tribal groups and the Indian caste groups of the day. While these two civilizations were prepared and even

eager to meet in the domain of commerce, their traditions of subgroup separation into tribes and castes respectively were still intact at the time, and the "Asians" were at least partly honoring African custom when they decided to stay within their own social and cultural groups.[3] The Swahili community along the coast was, of course, an exception in that it had long encouraged the women to marry Arab traders, but many of the Indians moving in did not settle in this area and in any case had their own reasons for maintaining their caste endogamy and establishing their own community centers. By the time of Independence, the pattern of cultural separation was reassessed somewhat differently, and Africans looked on it as a way for the Asians to use a racial divide to maintain economic dominance.

The additional segregation of one Asian group from another is harder to explain than the separation of the Africans and the Asians. Once again, it seems to be initially a by-product of the Ismaili custom of isolating themselves so that they could carry on their secret ritual practices. That early pattern quickly became reinforced in East Africa as each arriving group was given a niche in the rapidly developing colonial arrangements, and, with most Asians living in the cities and towns, people could live within their caste-group enclave without jeopardizing their chances for employment. As the arrangement became more common, it led to the transforming of each caste group into an elaborate commune, quite unlike anything one would find in India (Figure 6.2).

The caste-based temple style of East Africa is so unlike the pattern that one finds in Hindu India that there seems to have been some hesitation on the part of Hindus before it began to develop. It was the smaller communities of Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, and Goan Christians that tended to go ahead and build their caste-based worship places earlier. The Bohras and Ithnasheris are Shi'a Muslims like the Ismailis, and although they are not as secretive about their ritual, they quickly rivaled their fellow religionists, the Ismailis,[4] when they included mosques right within their fort-like community centers built in Mombasa and Dar es Salaam on the coast as early as the turn of the century (Salvadori 1983; personal visits 1995).[5] The Jaamie Mosque Association of Nairobi was formed in 1903 to create a Sunni mosque for the indentured railway workers. The Sikhs built *gurudwaras* even as they built the railway, with a couple in Nairobi by 1911 and one in Kisumu on inland Lake Victoria by 1913 (personal visits 1995). The Jains had temples in Mombasa very early, and a beautiful one in Nairobi by 1927 (figure 6.3; personal visit 1995). The Sikh and Jain places of worship are for specific castes within those communities (figures 6.4 and 6.5),[6] even though they both speak against caste in certain ways. The Goan Catholics made up the core of the civil service from the 1890s and started clubs, libraries, and churches wherever they went.

FIGURE 6.2. Old Ismaili mosque, Nairobi, Kenya.

Their distinctive religious activities were the celebration of the feast of St. Francis in early December and the use of an image of the Virgin Mary, which was taken from one family to another for the celebration of a *ladainha* or prayer. Early Roman Catholic churches in the cities were primarily Goan, but in 1933 the church of St. Francis was built in the wealthy Nairobi suburb of Parklands in order to use specifically Goan liturgical traditions (personal visit 1995).

In the case of the Hindus there were a few tentative efforts early on to develop places of worship that were not confined to the caste-based community centers. Lala Prasad was a Brāhman engaged in the business of making sweets, and his early temple was built right next to his wholesale business in the bazaar of Nairobi in 1898. It reminds one of similar temples in the cities of India in that it is essentially a private temple, sheltered by a magnificent sacred *nigroda* tree, but it is open to the public. It was said to have been popular because it was

FIGURE 6.3. Old Jain temple, Nairobi, Kenya.

FIGURE 6.4. Jat Sikh gurudwara, Nairobi, Kenya.

FIGURE 6.5. Ramgarhia Sikh gurudwara, Nairobi, Kenya.

associated with the legend that it was the power of that deity that controlled the deadly snakes that had harassed the early caravans into the region (personal visit 1995). Another early example of shared if not public worship places are the Hindu Unions of all the major cities, which were set up when it became necessary to buy land for cremation sites. Once the adjacent halls were built to serve as transient accommodation and meeting halls, small shrines were soon added. In Nairobi, however, disagreements on the proper temple ritual led to a split between the Gujaratis and Punjabis in 1921, and the old hall became the Cutch Gujarati Hindu Union Temple and a new Hindu Union and Sanātana Temple went up next door for the Punjabis (personal visits 1995). The Hindu Union buildings continue to function as the community cremation grounds, but for most people caste temples have long replaced the worship routines of the Hindu Unions. Punjabis were less restricted by caste or even religious lines than were Gujaratis, but they too tended to follow the segregated pattern in East Africa. The Punjab-based Arya Samaj reform movement and its Muslim counterpart, the Ahmadiya, both arrived in East Africa early and preached against caste and in favor of reform, but even these two movements have developed their following exclusively within the small circle of educated Punjabi families that first brought them to East Africa, and as a result they too have

FIGURE 6.6. Lohana hall, Nairobi, Kenya.

evolved closer to caste-like associations than they would like to believe (personal visits 1995).

Among the earliest of the Hindu caste groups to include ritual activity in its very energetically run community centers was the Lohana caste, the Hindu branch of the community from amongst whom the Ismaili and Bohra Muslim converts had come (figure 6.6). Organized into Mahajan Mandal associations in Mombasa, Nairobi, Kisumu, and especially Uganda, the *mandals* established libraries and student hostels, and organized major *Rāmāyana* recitations and religious song festivals within their community halls (personal visits 1995).

While the Lohanas, as one of the largest of the Hindu caste groups, made some effort to invite other Hindus to their religious functions and to encourage their members to participate in the activities of the various Hindu Unions, the Gujarati castes of the specific trades developed virtually closed community centers, which included temples with very specific forms of worship. The Limbachias or barber/priests had their own center with a distinctive ritual around a goddess called Limbachia Mātāji in both Mombasa and Nairobi as early as 1918 (personal visit 1995). The somewhat more numerous Wanzas or weavers developed their centers in quite a number of cities starting in 1925, and, in those temples, priestesses lead the worship of Hinglaj Mātāji, who is particularly involved in childbirth and healing (personal visit 1995). The

FIGURE 6.7. Prajapati hall, Nairobi, Kenya.

Visvakarmas or carpenters also started their own temples in most cities around 1925, as did the leatherworkers, blacksmiths, and others. Among the most enthusiastic caste communities is the Prajāpati or low-caste potter community, which has since 1930 been worshipping at its temple in Nairobi (figure 6.7). This temple worships Shrī Bai Mātāji, who became a caste heroine because she recited the *Rāmāyana* even though the king forbade potters to recite it (personal visit 1995). Even communities that for some generations blended into the larger Hindu world have more recently felt obliged to try to develop their own centers. The Pattni or goldsmith community, for instance, formed a "brotherhood" in the 1950s, but finally built a large community hall with a temple to the goddess Wagheshvarī or Durgā, with a full time priest from India in 1985 (personal visit 1995).

By far the busiest of the Hindu temples in East Africa are those of the Swaminarayan faith. These are not exactly caste-based temples in the sense that some of those described above are, in that the Swaminarayan sect of Hinduism was formed around the teacher–saint Swami Narayan who died in 1830, and their distinctive temples are found in Gujarat in India and in many other parts of the world. In East Africa, however, these worshipping communities are made up primarily of the Leva Patel caste of construction workers, who marry primarily among themselves, and they have temples that are

FIGURE 6.8. First Swaminarayan temple built in 1945, Nairobi, Kenya.

formidably closed halls, most notable for their heavy and elaborately carved wooden doors (figure 6.8). The four branches of the faith trace their roots to regional and theological distinctions in India, but as soon as the first temple was built in Nairobi in 1945, the three others followed almost immediately, as each distinction from India became a totally separate subcaste community in East Africa.[7] Following the pattern of the other Hindu communities in East Africa, the different Swaminarayan communities are now in the process of developing their own housing and distinct ritual patterns, and both their worship and community activity more and more take place within that sub-community (personal visits 1995).

In Tanzania, the social pattern was a bit different because the Muslims were there early and remained the distinct majority throughout, and there were no indentured workers and very few Punjabis. In this setting, most of the Hindus were Lohana traders and all shared the single sprawling Sanātana

FIGURE 6.9. Sanatana temple, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Hindu Mandir established in Dar es Salaam in 1927 (figure 6.9; personal visit 1995). There were wings built on the structure at different times for new deities and for women's organizations and sports activity. A separate temple for Rām, a specific Lohana favorite, was built just across the street in 1936. By 1958, the Leva Patel caste of construction workers was becoming sufficiently numerous that they built the first Swaminarayan temple in Tanzania, and the separate Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Sanstha (BAPS) Swaminarayan Mission temple was built in 1977 (personal visits 1995).

Worship Patterns

Because of the pattern of settlement and the commitment to concentrate on trade and administration, it was obvious very early in its evolution that the Hindu community of East Africa was destined to be an urban phenomenon. Some of the romantic stories of the Asian beginnings in East Africa picture the small shop of an Ismaili trader far inland along the caravan route out of Zanzibar. While those small shops were the beginning, and did establish an initial link with the African population, it was the formidable community halls that provided the setting for defining new ritual traditions. Because some of the immigrants were involved in international trade and all could go back and

forth to India for marriages and ritual needs, it is sometimes thought that the ritual traditions were carried on exactly as they had been in India. That is not really true. In India, the worship patterns were profoundly rural in character, with celebrations of the agricultural seasons and with offerings of flowers, fruits, animals, and special condiments. The castes had interlocking ritual roles, and, at festival time, they all participated in the shared community experience. In the other settings where indentured workers were taken, festivals still had this shared community character and often involved the non-Indian population as well. In East Africa, the shared festival experience was not prominent, and even the rural offerings of flowers, fruits, and animals were rarely seen and were replaced by the cash offerings more natural to the urban setting (Younger 1999).

Although the Asian community centers were urban and in that setting did not even have naturalistic ties with one another, people were always traveling and the larger geographical environment of East Africa became deeply embedded in the Asian experience. The coastal cities of Mombasa and Dar es Salaam were colorful places in themselves, but the Asian community followed the railway inland to Kisumu and the legendary Lake Victoria, and the majority settled in the inland cities of Nairobi or Kampala. Mount Kenya and Mount Kilimanjaro were already designated holy places by the African population so the caravan routes respectfully passed by them, but the temples of Nyeri and Arusha respectively, from where the mountains were in full view, faced toward the holy mountains. Asians raised in East Africa now living in North America like to boast about their "African" childhood and the trips to these exciting scenes, and they tend to give the whole setting a mythological character (Vassanji 1994).

In addition to giving the community an urban character, the community-center arrangement meant that the object of worship in these settings became a symbolized form of the community itself and specifically its revered founding figures. Durkheim (1915) has shown that there is often a tendency for symbols of the divine to be a reflection of the worshipping community, but, in these hermetically sealed community centers, that tendency became totally transparent. In the crowded centers of the lower-caste communities, such as the barbers, potters, and weavers, the reverence for the community and the ignoring of the images and their altar was evident in the architecture of the community hall/temple itself. I had passed the Limbachia barber/priests temple many times and always found it closed until one day when a wedding party was going on in the temple. The bride's brother turned out to be someone I had met in his role as a hired priest in the downtown Jain temple of Nairobi, where he performed quite elaborate rituals. In his own caste temple he was an

eager host for some time before I asked where the deities were. He had to think for a minute before he was able to take me to the corner closet where the two *mūrtis* were housed. In the potters' temple, they were eager to tell me that their deities were among the first installed in Nairobi, but they were embarrassed that worship was now only possible in the hallway between the dining hall and their new kitchen. I looked around the weavers' big hall for deities in vain because the priestess was not available to take me to the secluded side room where the goddess was housed (personal visits 1995).

In the larger caste centers, it is not so much the limits of the architecture that give away the immediate focus of worship as it is the style of the community worship. In a traditional temple in India, a cosmic pattern defined by the *mandala* underlying the temple determines the layout, and the subsidiary deities are arranged so that the worshipper starts with Ganeśa and is then taken clockwise around the cosmos to other points and finally to the central deity who is facing east in the center of the cosmos. In a community-center temple, there is no cosmic pattern and subsidiary images are not set on a *mandala* pattern. There are usually a number of images, but, without a pattern and without *vāhanas* or vehicles, they are often hard to identify. Eventually we learn that some are images of living teachers and others teachers of teachers, and only perhaps one of a recognized Hindu deity. A priest sometimes does a proper *pūja* before the community gathers for worship, but the community worship itself is often a long string of announcements and a repetitious group prayer using prayer beads passed around so that everyone recites the prayer or does the circumambulating of the images as one communal unit.

In addition to the general reverence for the caste community, there is a more focused reverence for individual leaders of the community, and this is often explicitly brought into the worship. Outside of the worship setting, there is a general acknowledgement of "great men" in the Asian society of East Africa, which might possibly be a borrowing from the African environment. There is, of course, a "great man" or *mahātma* tradition in India, where a person before or after death (often an ascetic) is recognized as a "realized" being and is available to serve as a semidivine inspiration for those who revere him. In the African context, a "great man" is identified when the spirit of the dead person is celebrated with an expensive funeral paid for by his community of "age mates,"[8] his picture and a recitation of his accomplishments appears in many publications, and his spirit is said to have passed into a grandchild or other community member dedicated to carrying on his cause. The pictures of deceased Asians are now as common as those of Africans in the public press of East Asia, but what is more important to our story is the way founding fathers are revered in each of the caste halls, and the community is defined as

dedicated to carrying on their cause. While in the Muslim halls, it might be the Aga Khan inspiring the Ismailis or the incredibly wealthy A. M. Jeevanjee who inspires the Bohras, in the Hindu halls, statuettes or pictures of humans are often revered along with those of the classical Hindu deities.

The Bhatia family, as the original customs collectors of East Africa, has a host of ritual activities commemorating its family members as the founding members of the whole Asian community of East Africa. The Śiva temple on the Hindu Union grounds of Mombasa is actually named Jadavesher Mahadeva after Jadeweji, the first customs collector (Salvadori 1983). The barber/priest's altar has the *mūrtis* of the goddess Limbachia, who rides a horse and seems to have been a legendary heroine, and of Shan Bhagad, who legend says was the barber of the king. The potters' primary object of reverence is Shrī Bai, who, although addressed as "Mātājī" or goddess, is recognized as a potter girl who defied the king and who miraculously protected her cat while firing a pile of pots. The weavers worship the Mātāji Hinglaj, who has a temple in the remote area of what is now Pakistan, and the priestesses of East Africa still go into the traditional trances she is known to produce. In their ritual, however, they emphasize that they do not perform the animal sacrifices characteristic of the temple in Pakistan because as a subcaste they accepted the teaching of a South Indian guru named Guru Gopalal, whose image now shares the altar with that of Hinglaj (Salvadori 1983).

In the larger of the Gujarati castes, this process of elevating human teachers of the community to divine status has evolved even a bit further. One of the earliest Lohana immigrants to East Africa was Hirjibapa Ghelebhai Gokana who arrived in 1890. He worked as a cook in Nakura until the gatherings in his house to chant the name of Rām began to take up much of his life, and he moved to Nairobi and set up a series of Hari Satsang Mandals, which still meet in his name. An even older Lohana tradition involves the religious activity around the nineteenth-century saint–deity Jellaram and his wife Virbhai, who were from their caste. He was known for giving away all he possessed, and in India his *āśrāma* still gives away thousands of meals each day. In Nairobi, the worship of Jellaram and Virbhai is zealously carried on in a number of Lohana family shrines in the well-off suburb of Parklands. In Kisumu, the temple within the Lohana Hall has recently been remodeled to give the Jellaram and Virbhai *mūrtis* the central place, and only Ganeśa at the entrance still makes it a traditional Hindu setting (figure 6.10; personal visit 1995).

In the case of the Swaminarayan community, it is well known that its founding involved the gradual elevation of the teacher Neelkanth (1781–1830) into the divine being "Swami Narayana." In East Africa, the general theology of

FIGURE 6.10. Jellaram image, Kisumu, Kenya.

the community follows the established Indian pattern, but the four subcommunities into which they are divided each have caste compositions and current teachers who are included in the ritual ceremony. These four Swaminarayan communities are the most zealous and active caste-like communities in East Africa and give one a strong sense of being "closed" communities. Morning and evening, the temples are busy as many of the members rush to the temple for a fixed number of prostrations before, and circumambulations around, the image of Swami Narayana and the bench of the current teacher. On Sundays, the separate halls for men and women are packed, as more prostrations and circumambulations are done; rosaries are passed out for the saying of prayers; senior members of the community rehearse the moral code for the young; and members of the community make announcements about business matters, community trips to India, and local community functions of various kinds. In the temple built in 1945 at the back of the Cutch Gujarat Hindu Union grounds, every worshipper can tell you that this was the first Swami Narayana temple outside of India. At the Gadi temple built right on Kirinyaga Road opposite the compound of row houses in which the community lives, worship centers on the seat and image of the current "teacher" of this branch of the movement who is considered divine, and worshippers are careful to point out that here they will not even allow images of Ganeśa or Kṛṣṇa anywhere in the

building. Two doors away, a third group defines its community as made up of Kutchi-speaking Patels rather than Gujarati-speaking Patels, and as the backs of dozens of pickup trucks driven by temple members fill with African laborers each morning in the block beside the temple, one realizes that the nerve center of the construction business of Nairobi is concentrated in this temple. Finally, in the suburban temple of the BAPS branch of the movement, the atmosphere is only marginally different, as the fortress-like atmosphere of the three downtown temples is replaced by a modern version of a traditional Hindu style of temple where this essentially professional class of Patels now worships. In the three downtown temples, very few of the worshippers can speak English, and every aspect of the community life, especially for the women, takes place in Gujarati or Kutchi. As one young man, who had been in India for his first 15 years, said: "In India my family was 'Hindu,' and went primarily to a Mātāji temple, but here all our community goes strictly to this temple. Because I work for people from this temple and had my marriage in this temple, I now do too" (personal visits 1995).

With each caste community determined to develop its own religious tradition, it is fortunate that the wealth of the Asian community in East Africa multiplied dramatically as the community grew. Each caste had built itself a place of worship by the 1930s, and then often a more elaborate one in the 1950s, and in some cases still another one more recently. Because members of each subcommunity were obliged to support the community's effort, there were a great many Hindu temples built in East Africa. Many involved great expense as each community sought to make a good impression. Festival celebrations sometimes involved inviting others to one's temple, but seldom was there an event that was primarily "Hindu" in character without a clear caste focus.

Charting a Course

By the 1930s, the Asians living in East Africa realized that they were prospering and putting down roots. Unlike their parents, they intended to spend their life there and had no plans to go back to the dusty villages from which their parents had come. While the women usually spoke their ancestral language and wore saris in the secluded enclaves where they spent most of their time, the men had adopted the Western dress of the city and used a lot of English in their daily work. Immigrants were still arriving, particularly for the administrative jobs the British administration kept creating, but Asians already made up a large proportion of the urban population, and it was time they came to see themselves as a political as well as an economic community.

The political choices at the time were wide open. The British had given dominion status to the Union of South Africa in 1910 and were in the process of making some kind of deal with the White population of Rhodesia, so the Whites of East Africa were hoping to move toward their own version of self-government. The Indians in East Africa never made a move to establish an Indian colony there, but that option was discussed by the Whites of East Africa and by interested parties in London and New Delhi. The Africans seemed at the time a long way from self-rule, but the option of holding the territories in a trusteeship to be handed to the Africans eventually was the language of the League of Nations. The political facts of the moment were that the Whites and the "Asians" had since 1920 held seats in the Legislative Council and the Executive Council, and the Africans had none. In that situation, the Asians had little time for long-term dreams as they set about mounting a fierce opposition to White self-rule and began to present the Africans' grievances as best they could (Gregory 1993).

Embryonic Indian political organization had been there from the beginning. As early as 1900 the massively wealthy A. M. Jeevanjee had called together others in Mombasa and started the Mombasa Indian Association, and, in 1914, he again took the lead in forming the East African Indian National Congress. These organizations were modeled on those of India and South Africa and tended to reinforce the pattern already in place of keeping a significant distance between Indian and African society and culture. Once Asians were placed on the Legislative Council in 1920, however, they immediately realized that they had to speak for African interests as well. All the Indian members of Council were individuals with a keen understanding of this role. V. V. Phadke was a lawyer and immediately demanded African representation on the Council. Shamsud Deen had been an employee of the railways until World War I, when he volunteered for the Indian army and won two medals and a hero's reputation. Appointed to the Council, he would become the spokesperson of the East African Muslims. J. B. Pandya was a Brāhman immigrant in the customs department of Mombasa but was also very successful in business. The most revered, and the one who established the linkup with the Africans that would continue, was Manilal Ambalal Desai. He was a Brāhman and only arrived in East Africa in 1915 to edit the *East African Chronicle* for A. M. Jeevanjee. Based in Nairobi, he immediately formed a bond with the young Kikuyu leader Harry Thuku and also published his paper, which was called *Tangazo*. In the Council, he insisted that there be civil service examinations open to all races. After Thuku was arrested, Desai cared for his family and helped with the formation of the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) in 1924. Although he died young in 1926, the pattern

Desai set of lending solid Indian support to the causes of the Africans would continue within the Council (Gregory 1993).

In 1927, A. M. Jeevanjee did the cause of African rights another service when he brought the brilliant Bengali Isher Dass from London to serve as his secretary. Within months, Dass was working closely with Jomo Kenyatta, who had become the General Secretary of the KCA, and, in 1929, they were back in London laying a petition from the Kikuyus before the Joint Committee of Parliament on the future of East Africa. When the formal hearings of the Committee were held in 1931, the more moderate voices of the long-standing Council member Phadke and A. B. Patel, who was at the time Chair of the East African Indian Congress, represented the Asian voice. They were, nevertheless, abundantly clear that Asians "wholeheartedly supported the paramountcy of Native interests, and the principle that the relation of His Majesty's Government to the African population is one of a trusteeship that cannot be devolved." They urged the Committee to remove African crop restrictions, to remove the hated *kipande* or identity card Africans were required to carry, and to give Africans representation in the Legislative Council. In the end, the Joint Committee did make the important decision that there would be no further move toward White self-rule, and most of the credit for that decision goes to the fierce opposition of the Asian representation. In spite of that decision, the White settlers did not go away, and the tangle of political issues would continue for another thirty years (Gregory 1993).

In spite of the close bonds of the Asian and African political leadership, the two communities were not able to grow any closer together. The colonial treatment of African rights was oppressive in the extreme. The Kikuyu love of their sacred agricultural land adjacent to Mount Kenya is legendary. When the railway cut between their lands and those of the cattle-raising Masai, with whom they occasionally intermarry, it was mildly disruptive, but when Whites began settling on the best land and the Kikuyu were moved to a reserve and told to carry identity papers wherever they went, they were clearly made slaves in their own homeland. The Asians were not agents of that oppression, but they built and now ran the railway through the area, and, in the booming city of Nairobi just beside the Kikuyu lands, they all seemed to prosper. When prices for all agricultural products fell in the mid-1930s, the African producers suffered the most, and it was the Asian shopkeepers who were the ones who had to give them the bad news. As the Africans learned how to create cooperatives and market some of their produce, Asian shopkeepers in the more remote areas retreated into the urban areas (Kenyatta 1938).

While the Asian community never seemed to have any doubt that it was right to fight White self-government, it was much less unanimous about

supporting all of Dass' strategies. When he got back from London, he learned that the Indian National Congress had split and the Gujarati leadership in Mombasa was trying to form a separate congress. His faction won the resulting vote, but, throughout the 1930s, he seemed to many Asians to be more concerned with the African land rights issue than he was with the future of the Asian community. In 1942, he was assassinated in his office by three Sikhs. In spite of his brilliance, Dass had no family roots in East Africa and was neither a Gujarati nor a Punjabi. Both the Asian and African communities of the day were looking for new direction, and someone with the vision of a Gandhi or Mandela might have been able to draw the Asians and Africans closer together, in a way that Dass could not.

In dealing with day-to-day issues, the Asian community did have leaders who tried to benefit the African and Asian population equally. Makan Singh was a Sikh raised in East Africa and as a student became a well-educated Marxist. In 1935, he started the Labour Trade Union of East Africa and effectively organized unions in the civil service, the railway, and a host of industries. He had good ties with Africans and found able African leadership for most of the unions. The government sent him into exile during the five years of World War II, but, after a few more years of effective leadership after the war, he was imprisoned in 1950 as an undesirable alien and held for a decade. The other effective leader in a special area was G. L. Vidyarthi who ran a printing press in Nairobi from 1933 until Independence. He not only published the *Colonial Times*, which was the most important English paper of the day, but also a number of papers published in the tribal languages of the Kikuyu and Luo. He fought against separate electoral roles and all forms of racial discrimination, and was repeatedly imprisoned for stands that the colonial authorities took to be subversive of government (Gregory 1993; personal interview of Vidyarti family 1995).

While leaders such as Singh and Vidyarti went ahead and assumed a multiracial society had already been established, most leaders continued to try to figure out what they could do to benefit their own racial group. When the War broke out in 1940, the government gave its racially divided policy one last fling and conscripted 266,000 Africans to fight a European war. The Africans came back convinced that it was time they took charge of their own destiny.

Surviving in an African Society

When the Kikuyu returned from the war, they found the White settlers holding on to their land, even though the plan for White self-government had been

rejected almost two decades earlier. By arming themselves and setting up the much-feared Mau Mau rebellion, they scared the White settlers and convinced the government that it had little choice but to plan for Independence. In the postwar era, the urban areas of East Africa underwent a period of dramatic growth, and a new Asian influx occurred that more than doubled the Asian population. The new Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, praised the African struggle for independence (including the Mau Mau), and he and his dynamic envoy, Apa Pant, reminded the Asians of East Africa that they were "visitors" in this African land. The radical Pio Gama Pinto was a close ally of the first President Jomo Kenyatta throughout the struggle for independence in Kenya, but the majority of the Asian community felt left out of the story as the nations of Kenya, Tanganyika (later Tanzania), and Uganda came into being under African leadership in the early 1960s.

In all three countries, the new African leadership realized that while they had taken over political leadership on behalf of the large African majority, they would have to introduce government legislation of some sort to gain control of the economy from the experienced Asian community. In Kenya, the important role the private sector held in the economy was recognized, and the government restricted itself to measures to encourage African entrepreneurs and measures to ensure that all those who held positions in business also held citizenship in Kenya. In Tanzania, President Nyerere adopted a rigorous socialist system and ended up nationalizing many of the businesses long held by the Asians. It ended up, however, that the most dramatic events were to take place in Uganda. The new President, Milton Obote, had first experimented with government intervention in the economy, but his party was bankrolled by the Asian Mehta and Madhvani families that owned much of the industry in the country. He then decided to offer the Asians citizenship and even give them a government-recognized role in the economy. When Idi Amin led a coup in 1971, part of his concern was the unresolved role of the Asians in the economy, and, by 1972, in frustration, he ordered all 80,000 Asians out of the country. Suddenly the Asian exodus, already underway in all three countries, became a major international incident.

While half of the 366,000 Asians in East Africa in 1962 had gone elsewhere in the next two decades, it is almost as if they remain part of the East African homeland. In many cases, joint families now live in both Britain and East Africa or in both North America and East Africa, and, because many of those who left were exceedingly wealthy, they have become international entrepreneurs with roots in East Africa. Within East Africa itself, the Asian communities continue,[9] and both their business activity and their religious activity have taken on new directions that one might not have anticipated.

FIGURE 6.11. Jain temple built in 1984 in Ngara, Nairobi, Kenya.

One of the things that seems at first surprising is that some new and very expensive temples have been built. Some subcommunities among the Asians seem to be much more confident about a future in East Africa than others. The various Swaminarayan communities, for instance, have seen some of their members move abroad, but, as relative latecomers to East Africa primarily involved in the construction business, they are still very busy and look as if they intend to stay. They built new temples in 1960 and 1970, and totally remodeled their first temple and reopened it in 1984. Very recently they have also reopened their temple in Kampala. Among the subcommunities that seem to be even less inclined to leave are the Jains. Just as Asians were being expelled from Uganda, the Oshwal Jains started their new community center in the suburban Ngara area of Nairobi in 1973. It now includes a number of schools, housing for most of the community, a public hospital, and, in 1984, they opened the most expensive and ornate temple in all of Africa (figure 6.11; personal visit 1995). Many members of this community are now back working in Uganda, and, in 1995, they were planning a community center for Kampala (interview 1995). Just a half mile away from the Oshwal temple in Nairobi, the smaller community of Digambara Jains also finished their substantial temple in 1984 (personal visit 1995).

Even in the subcommunities where numbers have declined substantially, people seem to want to either complete old plans or leave some kind of temple

monument for East Africa. Even where a temple might represent the continuation of older plans, a new vision also seems to be involved, and the new temple is visible to the public and includes signs that make it a public statement about the subcommunity as a part of the new multiracial society.[10] The elegant little Gayatri temple of the Brāhman community in Nairobi, which was opened in 1984, was built by a dwindling community and seems especially for the blessing of the public. The Pattni or goldsmith temple opened in 1985 is in the middle of a new suburb and is centered on the community's traditional goddess, but it too has clear signs and does not have a guard at the door as traditional community temples still do (personal visit 1995).

The most "open" of all the new temples would seem to be the new Sanātana Temple built on five acres of land well outside the city of Nairobi during the 1990s (figure 6.12). It is a beautiful white monument with three notable North Indian-style towering *śikharas* and has a big parking lot much like some of the new North American Hindu temples. It would seem perfect for tourist visits or to make Africans feel welcome as they drive by or come for a visit. Inside, however, some of the main features of the specific Hindu tradition of East Africa are evident. It is impossible to imagine any cosmic plan in the layout of the essentially round sanctuary. Ganeśa is on the right, rather than the left, as the worshippers enter so they tend to go in the

FIGURE 6.12. Sanatana temple built in 1994 in Nairobi suburbs.

counterclockwise direction forbidden in India. Prominent offering boxes are in front of each of the twelve deities, and there are no offerings of fruits or flowers. While the priest from the Punjab did a brief *pūja* as people were entering when I was there in 1995, the major service was a memorial service for Mr. Mani, who chaired the committee that built the Sanātana Union temple downtown in 1921. The priest gave a long dissertation on death in Hindi, much to the irritation of the majority of worshippers, and especially Mani's three daughters from London, who thought it was time for everything to be in English. The Punjabi Hindu community may have suffered the greatest population loss of any subcommunity in East Africa, but this monumental temple still speaks to the heroism of people like Mani, who built the first temple, and G. L. Vidyarthi, who provided both the Asians and Africans with their own newspapers through the troubled years before Independence.

In addition to these older temple projects, a totally new Hindu voice has been raised in East Africa in the years since Independence. The three Hindu missionary movements of the Ananda Margis, the Brahma Kumāris, and the Hari Kṛṣṇas have all started work among the African population of East Africa. While they have moved completely away from the self-imposed segregation in which the Asians lived for a century and work primarily among Africans, they have been able to get generous financial support from the Asian business community and see themselves as a continuation of the Asian presence.

The Ananda Marg is a social movement within the Hindu world started in 1955 in Bihar by a Bengali, who now takes the name Anandamurti and is known within the movement as "Bhaba." The social work they carry out is organized by monks, called Avadhutas, and nuns, called Didis (figure 6.13). While their Indian base was attacked by mobs in the 1960s and 1970s, and the police charged them with numerous crimes, the Indian courts have generally upheld their claims of innocence. Formed into a worldwide network of subgroups and regional administrations all managed in English, they run thousands of schools and orphanages and engage in social confrontations on many fronts. Although they were founded in East Africa in 1967, all the monks were expelled for a time, and the schools they now operate were opened after their return in 1979. They now operate more than fifty schools for African children in the underdeveloped village areas of East Africa, and their headquarters in Buru Buru, some distance from Nairobi, is the headquarters of the movement for all of sub-Saharan Africa (figure 6.14). In 1995, they were rushing some monks to Rwanda after the massacre there (personal interviews 1995).

FIGURE 6.13. Ananda Marg monk, Nairobi suburb.

The Brahma Kumāris are a community of women, started in Mount Abu in Rajasthan in 1950, who run Raja Yoga meditation centers throughout the world. The movement was brought to East Africa in 1977 by a local Lohana girl who had been studying abroad, and today has a lovely property in the Parklands section of Nairobi. The Nairobi Center is responsible for spreading the ideas to all of Africa, and they organized an African Peace Tour all over the continent in the 1980s. In addition to a unique meditation daily at 5.15 a.m., the members spend their time creating dramas and publishing materials on their unusual ideas. While there are male members, all the leadership is in the hands of women, and ethnic identity is almost totally set aside in this teaching system, which now has 1,500 meditation centers worldwide (personal interview 1995).

The Hari Kṛṣṇas arrived in East Africa in 1970, and quickly bought property in Mombasa and Nairobi and had lovely temples built by 1986. As

FIGURE 6.14. Ananda Marg school, Nairobi suburb.

they have been elsewhere, they were successful in bridging the racial barriers of East Africa and in 1995 had numerous White adherents and an African priest from Nigeria in the Nairobi temple (figure 6.15). Over 2,000 of the local Asian population have become members, and they have had no trouble raising money for their elegant temples, but the conservative Kenyan Hindu Society has refused to grant them membership. Only time will tell if they become more than just a novelty to the local African population.

While the loss of over half its population base made it very difficult for the Asian community to visualize its future in East Africa during the past generation, the decision to stay seems to have been made.[11] Unlike the crisis in Guyana, where the majority of the population could not afford to move and the religious traditions were firmly embedded in the life of the society, in East Africa it did seem within the realm of possibility for a time that all Asians might be expelled or decide to leave. By moving forward on so many fronts to invest in temples, hospitals, schools, and community centers, the community has since indicated to all its desire to stay. To some extent this forward movement indicates an unwillingness to return to India (and most who did leave went on to Britain or North America), but it also indicates a deep sense of "home," a deep sense that a new identity had been forged during the turbulent years in East Africa and it would not be given up easily.

FIGURE 6.15. Hari Kṛṣṇa temple entrance, Nairobi; Nigerian priest greeting worshippers.

Analysis

The Hindu traditions of East Africa are not easy to analyze. Unlike the other post-indenture societies, there is not a self-conscious effort to promote the local traditions as unique, and there are no locally defined clergy as there are in places such as Guyana and Trinidad. On the other hand, the amount of time and money spent on religious activity among East Africa Hindus must be among the highest per capita anywhere, including India.

Part of the uniqueness of the Hindu experience in East Africa has to do with the fact that the immigrants came from two areas of the west coast of India. Gujarat was divided into numerous principalities, and many of them housed subcommunities defined by language, religion, or both. The Gujarat immigrants to East Africa came as small groups who thought they were leaving

a crowded and unstable situation in their homeland. They saw East Africa as an expansive geographical frontier within which their group would try to find a niche with greater potential. Because of a pent-up need for their trading skills, many quickly found the niche they had chosen profitable beyond their wildest dreams. Punjab, by contrast, had long served as the Central Asian gateway to India, and people there were not afraid to take advantage of new opportunities. The Sikhs especially had found the British Army a good way to find opportunities to adventure, and retired army personnel were prominent among those who at the beginning of the twentieth century headed off to East Africa. The Punjabis initially were mostly indentured workers and came to East Africa as individuals, but they too soon adopted the local social arrangements and functioned as small groups much like the Gujarati caste groups that were already there.

While in the other indentured societies religious developments began when individual workers looked to their religious heritage for consolation when confronted with illness, death, or the brutality of social oppression, in East Africa questions about religion arose when each subcommunity decided it needed a ritual reflection of its group identity and a way to give thanks for its prosperity.[12] In Guyana, the lower-class South Indians dealt with their personal anguish by getting the *pūjari* to go into a trance and identify the evil spirit that was troubling them, and the North Indians listened to the *Rāmcharitmānas* to find out how Rām and Sītā had dealt with their long exile. In East Africa, even the lowest castes built themselves worship centers and gave up the animal sacrifices by which they had warded off evil spirits in India. The higher-caste Lohanas celebrated Rām and Sītā not as exiles but as the parents of Lāva from whom the "Lāvanas" or Lohanas trace their ancestry. When Rām is celebrated within the Lohana Hall, he is not portrayed as the distant monotheistic deity he became in Guyana, but as a human ancestor of the local caste community.

The most distinctive feature of the Hindu worship traditions of East Africa might be described as their "humanization." This feature does not have a clear parallel in other settings and needs to be explained at some length. The theoretical frameworks that are sometimes used to describe social and religious change within Hinduism are not really appropriate in this case. Agehananda Bharati, for instance, spoke of East African Hinduism as "Sanskritized" (1972). He was right in that one does not see animal sacrifice or the exorcism of evil spirits, but he was wrong if he meant that in East Africa temples were built on Brāhmanical plans or that distinguished Brāhman priests did elaborate rituals. The Brāhmanical style is not prominent in East Africa, and most temple ritual is carried out by priests from within the caste community that developed the temple. Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988) speak of the

"Protestantization" of Buddhist traditions in Śrī Lanka when in the nineteenth century they underwent a reform that ensured that customs and rituals borrowed from popular Hinduism were put aside and the religious leaders returned to the original texts of the tradition. In a similar vein, there is indeed something "Protestant" about the new religious style among Hindus in East Africa[13] in that some of the local village customs and cosmological mythology of India were set aside, and the tone of the worship came to focus on everyday ethics and community life. On the other hand, one would not use the language of "reform" to describe the overall attitude of Hindus in East Africa,[14] and there was certainly no call for a return to texts.

What was involved in the "humanization" of the worship traditions of East Africa was ritual respect being shown to human founding figures, more or less on a par with traditional Hindu deities; ethical teachings with regard to the proper ways to show respect and care for other members of one's subcommunity; and a recognition of this-worldly values, in particular the role of wealth, in the social order. The theoretical framework that comes closest to explaining this phenomenon is that of Max Weber who argued that it was the Protestant religious teachings of Calvinist theology that had led to the "this-worldly asceticism" that encouraged the spirit of capitalism (Weber 1905). On the other hand, Weber's ideas will have to be reexamined carefully, because he also assumed that the Indian tradition was embedded in a cosmology that was totally pessimistic about life in the world, and that the individual's only hope was to escape the *karma* that bound one to the world (Weber 1958). One would have to agree with Weber that East African Hindus followed a different theological path than the European Calvinists that interested him, but they seem to have ended up having a similar sense of "this-worldly asceticism" and a deep trust that the reinvestment of wealth was an end in itself. We will have to trace out how those ideas developed in East Africa.

Like the Calvinists before them, the East African Hindus had developed their sense of "this-worldly asceticism" because of two related assumptions. One assumption was that there was something deeply troubling about the natural order of things, and the second was that the meaning of one's life was best expressed in the context of a group of like-minded persons. For the Calvinist, the first assumption was embedded in the doctrine of "original sin" and had many complicated permutations, but much the same practical consequences were developed in the mind of the Asian trader who found himself living on the edge of a great continental civilization he feared as a vast unknown. For the Asian trader, Africa was a great "world" he was there to exploit, but it was an area of darkness and a mystery of which he could not comfortably be a part. By contrast, the "group" with which he was destined to

share this adventure or "holy history" took on for him many of the characteristics of the Calvinist "church." It was in the context of this small community that the ritual set out the religiously established canons of behaviour, and the visions of the founding fathers became the basis for a rigidly followed system of ethics. In both cases, "asceticism" was expected because one could not enjoy the "pleasures" of a world of darkness, but it was appropriate that the group within which one shared ritualized behavior should act within "this world."

While the "humanization" of Hindu tradition that one sees in the ritual patterns the subcommunities of East African Hindus developed had some precedents in India, there was a new dimension to the way these groups developed their identity in East Africa. In general, the backdrop for religious life in India was cosmological, and individuals and groups saw themselves as sharing the ambiguities of that cosmic setting in accord with their *karma* heritage. The group had no particular identity as a righteous community obeying revealed truth as many Muslim or Christians groups see themselves having. For the caste-based groups that found themselves living in the East Asian context, however, that traditional Indian sense of group identity began to change. Part of the influence in the new setting came from the Ismaili community that had both its Islamic sense of a secret revealed truth and the leadership of a stream of living *imams* to give it a sense of historical purpose. Part also came from their sense of the African setting, because they tended to picture Africa as a "world" unto itself over against which their group developed its identity. In this sense the group had a history and would need to keep a clear record of its founders and their values if this story was to be given ritual form and turned into a "holy history."

As each of the caste groups that make up the Asian community of East Africa developed its sense of identity, it found itself addressing its destiny or future in a new way. The fatalistic tone one sometimes hears in Guyana, Trinidad, or Fiji, where the shock of the first arrival still provides the background for explaining the great accomplishments of the new tradition, is not appropriate in East Africa. In East Africa, the group is understood as having chosen this adventure, and it will now have to work out its destiny as a continuing social unit. That destiny is partly in one's own hands and partly in the hands of the unknown forces that define this mysterious world around, but it is no longer a reading of the cosmic calculations of *karma*. Even the group made up of those who were once lowly potters or Prajāpatis in India no longer have to worry about the *karma* of their ancestors. What they do need to worry about are what their employment prospects are in this or that area of the economy and how large or small their group is becoming. These questions are questions of a historical type and are quite different from the cosmological

questions asked by their ancestors in India. These are questions about the future rather than the past, and they involve asking about human visions and ethical norms and not about the exorcism of spirits and the admiring of mythological heroes.

As the pattern of caste group identity became well understood, and the corresponding move to a more historical and humanized religious vocabulary took place, the Hindu groups of East Africa slowly looked outside their own boundaries and asked what the future of the society as a whole might be. Individual Indians found ways to make their skills in labor organization, newspaper publishing, and law useful to the Africans struggling for their Independence, but the African "world" remained an unknown much as it had seemed to the early Asian traders generations earlier. As the Asian caste groups reexamined their destinies once again at the time of Independence, they had to add to their new sense of history an apocalyptic dimension. Unlike most of the other indentured sites where the postcolonial era started with a consensus that a pluralistic society was a good thing, East Africa became independent with a burst of African nationalism. In this context, the questions the Indians had were "apocalyptic" in the sense that they had to decide on their own destiny knowing that the "world" around them would be largely determined by others. The decisions of most caste groups to build new temples, schools, and hospitals during the first generation after Independence are an indication of just how determined the individual groups were to work out their destinies in this new homeland.

While one can speak of a distinctive caste-based setting for religious practice and a new history-based set of theological attitudes within the East African Hindu community, it is somewhat more difficult to describe the sectarian loyalties of the community. The small caste groups from the lower end of the Indian caste hierarchy continued to focus on goddesses, but they no longer practiced animal sacrifice or emphasized healing and exorcism. The castes higher in the traditional social scale included a number of images of deities and teachers on their altars, and tended to follow ritual emphases that they were proud to say had been introduced at some earlier point in their local history. Only the Swaminarayan groups (and the new missionary movements of the Ananda Marg, Brahma Kumāris, and Hari Kṛṣṇas) had traditions of clerical authority that tied them directly to patterns familiar in India. In most of the other caste-based temples, worship was led by members of the community, with women playing prominent roles. Where priests were hired, they followed the directions of the members of the community. In spite of the fact that India was not far away and the community could afford religious specialists, there was not a prominent role for

visiting priests or ascetics in the Hindu systems of East Africa, and the prevailing ideology was defined by the local members of the community. Because this religious system was largely managed by its lay members, it tended to have a conservative ritual style with worship times and festival arrangements carefully spelled out, but, as we have already seen, it also had a very open theological perspective and moved a long way toward a history-based understanding of one's religious obligations.

While the experience of the Hindus in East Africa was different from that of the other indentured societies in some ways, the structure of their experience was basically the same in that they had to deal with a difficult colonial period and then had to join with others in the building of a postcolonial society. Their experience was different in that they came from the nearby west coast of India, lived in subcommunity enclaves in the urban areas, and experienced real prosperity. On the other hand, like the other post-indenture Indians, they struggled with the odd injustices the colonial regime put in place and developed some rapport with those with whom they would eventually share in a multicultural society. Although their membership on the Legislative Council gave them a major political role in the years leading up to Independence, that experience was of no value in the postcolonial era and they had to begin again to find their place in the new postcolonial society.

While the caste-based social arrangements they put in place when they first arrived in East Africa have given the Indians a reputation for "aloofness," it would be hard for anyone to doubt the deep attachment Hindus in East Africa feel for their new "home". Their profound reexamination of traditional Hindu assumptions and their clear adoption of a new perspective on history are evident in a practical way in their willingness to invest in their adopted society. More clearly than Hindus in any other location, they have come to see themselves as world citizens who, while clinging to local customs, are committed to building societies that are pluralist in their cultural background and just to all their citizens. They developed these attitudes while watching the world evolve around them in ways that they barely understood, but they have grown to think that the risk was worth it and are increasingly proud of their new homeland.

Conclusion

The story of how Hindu persons who were transported to distant parts of the world were able to form themselves into new social units and to design religious traditions for themselves is quite remarkable. African slaves, who had been transported abroad a bit earlier, but under harsher circumstances, had been able to preserve much less of their heritage. What were the crucial factors that made it possible for the Hindus to establish their new traditions?

The Colonial Setting

One factor that indirectly helped the Hindus find their feet in these six situations was the weakness of the local colonial administration. The recruitment process used by the indenture system in India is sometimes faulted for its deceptive and coercive measures. On the other hand, the thoroughness that characterized the Indian colonial officers at the time was evident in the recruiting, and each worker was examined by a judicial officer and a medical officer before they boarded ship. At the other end of the trip, a Protector of Emigrants employed by the Indian colonial office oversaw the assignment of workers to plantations. It was from that point on that the local colonial authorities were in charge, and they were unable to produce any long-term plans. The Indians did not take long discovering that,

because of the colonial uncertainty, there was room for them to take the initiative and create their own social and cultural niches.

One of the weak points in the colonial system had to do with the plantation owners. The scheme had been worked out at the request of the Guyana plantation owners, and they certainly had the most efficient of the plantation systems. Even there, however, the plantation owners were not keen to live on the narrow strip of land that they had reclaimed from the ocean, and, by the time the Indian indentured workers were brought in to assist the former slaves working on the land, the owners were almost all living in Georgetown or back in Britain. The Indians living in the plantation barracks were free to begin filling the cultural vacuum in their own way from the moment of arrival, and it would be two generations before they would have to modify the social structural side of their new religious traditions when they moved into the settlements along with the Afro-Guyanese. The plantation owners of Mauritius and Trinidad were somewhat different in that they planned to stay on their tropical islands and had elitist cultural plans they hoped would leave them at the top of the social hierarchy they had been developing with their slave populations. In those situations, the shear number of Indian workers arriving overwhelmed the plantation owners' plans, and most Indians were soon living in their own villages. While in those two situations the hierarchical dreams of the plantation owners did survive in some form, it was the Indians living in their own villages who figured out how to adapt their Indian cultural traditions to the loosely defined island cultures the plantation owners had helped initiate. In South Africa and Fiji, there were no long-standing plantation traditions involved. In South Africa, colonial figures tried to put together a plantation system, but it broke down quickly, and the Indians went on to a new life in the cities. In Fiji, an overseas company took over management of the plantations early in the process, and it offered no cultural agenda and, indeed for a time, no cultural outlets of any kind. In South Africa, the Indians, with Gandhi's help, were able to quickly seize the cultural initiative. In Fiji, the oppressive nature of the Company's role and the overall colonial arrangements made it hard for the Indians to take cultural initiatives for a long time. In East Africa, the colonial activity the Indians were in contact with was strictly administrative, and it would eventually disappear, so that the Indians were largely free to focus on the building up of trade and commerce and develop their own social and cultural role without colonial interference.

The second dimension of the thoughtless colonial arrangements that indirectly opened up opportunities for the Indians to develop their own culture was that, in each of these six settings, the other population groups were almost as deeply disturbed by colonialism as the Indians were. Indians encountered

no host culture in these social settings, and the Indians' situation was similar to that of others in the society as they all tried to figure out how people with very different cultural and religious backgrounds would be able to live together. The other groups the Indians discovered in these settings were different in each case, and the amount of social space available was also different. In Guyana, the former slaves from West Africa had been in the colonized setting for some time when the Indians arrived, and they had developed a good rapport with the missionaries, who in this situation were not particularly colonial in their outlook. Although this community of former slaves had developed only an embryonic cultural outlook by the time the Indians arrived, space was limited, and the Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese had no choice but to develop a close social bond in the settlement communities beside the plantations. Because of this close social bond, the two Indian religious traditions of Guyana are richly hybrid in their style, and the little Afro-Guyanese churches provided the model that stimulated the development of the social forms the Indian traditions took on. In Mauritius and Trinidad, the former slaves continued under the thumb of the colonial settler population after the Indians arrived, but more social space was available so that Indians for some time lived in their own villages and ignored the other groups that made up the society. South Africa involved a multitude of older social groups, but, during the last years of the nineteenth century, they were all disturbed by the colonial wars. M. K. Gandhi's clearheaded insistence on Indian rights was one of the credible claims any group was able to articulate in the confusion, and it got the Indians well on their way to developing a cultural style that fit the situation. Fiji and East Africa involved Indians being placed among people long established in their homelands but defined by colonialism as unprepared to govern themselves. In both cases, the Indians took the initiative and challenged the smug assumptions of the colonial authorities, but as Indian confidence developed and the colonial power departed, the native population would, more or less for the first time, have to ask how cultural conversations were to proceed now that the Indians had become part of the natives' traditional environment.

In the end, the colonial experience of the indentured workers did not prove to be overly oppressive. Unlike the earlier experience of slavery, the plantation owners in this case had no long-term cultural agenda and barely managed to provide a stable work environment for the minimum five-year contract period. Unlike India, where the colonial arrangements went on for hundreds of years and involved aggressive challenges to Indian culture, the final days of colonialism were already in view when the indentured labor program got underway. While a long-term emigration was probably not often in the workers' minds as they were being recruited, they found a fairly open cultural situation in the

places they were taken to and by the end of their first five-year contract they chose to stay on there and make the best of this new opportunity.

Indian Initiatives

While the clumsiness of the colonial arrangements with regard to the plantations and the role of the other population groups left the Indians with social space and cultural freedom, it was the Indians who had the presence of mind to begin rebuilding their sense of culture at the first opportunity. There were two features of the initial travel arrangements that helped stimulate the urgency that characterized these efforts at cultural redevelopment. One was the fact that workers were generally recruited one at a time and, in the process of moving, had lost even the basic social forms such as family, ownership of property, and social hierarchy. To design even the simplest version of those social categories they would have to define their new social unit and agree on some basic cultural norms. The other aspect of the recruiting process that affected cultural redevelopment was the fact that the recruiting took place in specific regions, and the workers were able to use their home dialect and home language on the ship and with at least some of their fellow workers as soon as they arrived in their new land. If the individuality of the recruiting process left people with the shock of feeling they had lost all of their culture, the presence of others with whom they could talk about that loss gave them hope that some kind of culture could be rebuilt.

In addition to feeling a need to rebuild their culture and having a language base with which to start, the Indian workers also had a diverse and divisible set of traditions from among which they could look for the cultural memories they needed. Although the eastern half of the Gangetic plain and the dry land agricultural areas north and west of Madras, where most of the recruitment took place, were not prosperous areas in the mid-nineteenth century, they had been centers of classical Hindu culture a thousand years earlier. The later forms of that earlier cultural energy were still being practiced by segments in the society at the time of recruitment, even though there was little uniformity in the practice of different groups, and people were generally aware of a richer cultural heritage than their family or caste actually practiced. Because we have six different stories of how the construction of an Indian cultural tradition took place in a society of indentured people, we can observe how some of the important choices about culture were made.

One of the important variations in how Indian culture was reconstructed in these six locations is the interaction that took place between those who spoke

North Indian languages and those who spoke South Indian languages, or, in the case of East Africa, between those who spoke a language of Gujarat and those who spoke a language of Punjab. These language barriers were very important at the beginning, and even when the language barrier later on disappeared, the cultural and religious barriers based on language tended to continue or even to grow in importance.

Once again Guyana serves as a good example of how the language barrier worked because the limited geography in that location made the choices clearer. With ships arriving regularly from both Calcutta and Madras during the first generation, and workers being placed where needed, two language-based communities of Indians developed on most plantations. When the managers complained about the "Madras" workers and fewer ships from there arrived for a while, the North Indian workers became the majority, but the language-based social units remained separate, and each group developed its own distinctive religious tradition. When, two generations later, all the Indians moved into the settlements along with the Afro-Guyanese and began to use the common Creole language, the social distance between the two Indian communities was reduced, but the religious differences became even more important. This example from Guyana shows us that the creation of the social units happened early in the process. Among "Madrasis," for instance, the distinction between Telegu speakers and Tamil speakers was ignored from the beginning, and they built a religious tradition together and gradually increased the cultural distance between themselves and the North Indians. The North Indians, on the other hand, allowed the Brāhmans on the plantations to define a common caste-free social unit for them, and, when they later moved to the settlements, the religious expression of that social unit became the highly developed *mandir* (temple) tradition. In Guyana, it was almost as if the South Indian–North Indian divide established two competing Indian cultures within the society, each with its own strategy for dealing with the non-Indian sector of society. Given the dynamic nature of both religious traditions today, and the open way they both participate in the wider cultural and political life of Guyanese society, one might think of the early divide as a creative help in the culture-building process. On the other hand, it is important to recognize that both Guyana traditions were intensely focused on the needs of the local community. Although each have ritual traditions recognizably adapted from memories carried to Guyana from their region of India, they are narrowly focused traditions and there is a limited range of Indian ritual elements incorporated into these new traditions. To some extent this limitation is the result of the distance from India, but it is also related to the intensity of the focus on the local need. The goal in this case was the building of strong

local traditions, while the desire to preserve a cultural memory and cultural heritage was clearly secondary.

In none of the other locations was the divide between the two language groups so sharply focused at the beginning as it was in Guyana, and cultural development was initiated because of other factors. In Mauritius, and later in South Africa, the rich variety of the South Indian religious heritage was made available because middle-range caste persons were on the scene in addition to the lower-caste South Indian workers. As we have seen, the South Indian traditions arrived in Mauritius long before indentureship when Indian stone builders and Indian traders were engaged by the French colonial authorities in the eighteenth century. For the South Indian indentured workers who arrived later, the sense of cultural loss was not severe, and they tended to just carry on a variety of their higher-caste and lower-caste traditions. One side effect of this comfort level was that the workers who were Telegu speakers and those who were Tamil speakers never formed one social unit as they did in Guyana. For those of North Indian background, the experience of arriving in Mauritius was also not as big a shock as elsewhere because women were encouraged to concentrate on caring for their families and village life was quickly developed. A uniquely Mauritian style of caste hierarchy was set in place with some Indians becoming plantation owners and others gradually finding their place in an Indian-style social hierarchy. The cultural initiatives that took place in this situation amounted to a general overarching affirmation of Indian civilization that reconciled and supported the identity claims made by the many social units making up the large Indian majority in the society.

In South Africa, social class became more of a stimulus for cultural development than language did because everyone quickly moved into the urban areas and adopted English as their working language. Even as Gandhi initiated political change and insisted that Indians remain united across language, social, and religious barriers, the South Indians workers were making dramatic changes in their social identity by adopting middle-caste names and developing worship traditions that reflected those middle-caste positions. The linguistic and religious barriers did not totally disappear, however, and while the relatively secular Indian community generally pursued a unified political agenda in South Africa, the Gujarati Hindus and Muslims tended to cling to their religious heritages and the social status those heritages helped them maintain.

In Trinidad and Fiji, the South Indians were a small minority among the Indian workers and quickly joined the majority in speaking Hindi. In Trinidad, new cultural developments were delayed because the Indian villages were comfortable in their relative isolation and because the Canadian Presbyterian

school system educated each new generation of Indians without disturbing this isolation in a major way. By the time cultural initiatives were taken, memories of India had been passed down through three or four generations of life in Trinidad and had become a shared and mythologized sacred heritage. In Fiji, new cultural developments were delayed by the isolation forced on the community by the colonial government. This situation began to change slowly after the community itself developed networks of schools and began to introduce cultural initiatives through the school curriculum. Surprisingly, the members of the South Indian minority were well prepared to participate in this culture-building exercise in Fiji because they had all arrived late in the indentureship exercise, and, in spite of the loss of their language, they lived in one area and had an identity as a social unit with its own temple traditions and school system. Because of the isolation of the Indian community in Fiji, Hindi remained the basic community language, and business and religious leaders who arrived from India later on sometimes felt free to take a leadership role very quickly. On the other hand, the cultural identity the community imagined for itself was deeply rooted in the bitter memory of indentureship and the courageous climb out of that depth when families were leased land and developed their own self-reliant economic and cultural patterns.

Culture-building in the East African Indian community did not involve adapting memories of the Indian homeland in the same way as it did in the other indentured societies, which were so acutely conscious of the culture loss they had suffered. Because the Ismailis arrived first and had a ritual requirement that their social identity and their religious identity be exactly the same, the Hindu, Jain, and Sikh caste groups that arrived soon after also tended to identify themselves as autonomous social units with their own religious rituals. There was, of course, a certain conservative streak in these caste-based social arrangements of East African Indians, and there were continuing ties to India with regard to marriage arrangements and other things. That social conservatism should not, however, be allowed to mislead us into thinking that there were not far-reaching changes in the way the Hindu community was conceived and Hinduism was practiced in the East African setting. With each caste community conceived of as an agent of change in a rapidly changing situation, religious life within the community was very different from that in village India and became a locally defined focus on training in this-worldly values and ethics. In addition, as political responsibility became part of the "Asian" community's public role, the distinct caste communities also began to realize the extent to which this-worldly values and intergroup cooperation were characteristics the Asian communities of East Africa shared as a group and might be able to use in assisting with the development of the wider society of East Africa.

The Building of Tradition

While the first initiatives in the culture-making process were defined by groupings of indentured workers sharing their memories, and dealt with questions of how fragments of Indian tradition could be adapted to address local need, the more formal traditions put together by the second and third generations were carefully negotiated institutional structures that established long-term opportunities for Indian cultural life. In *Represented Communities* (2001), John Kelly and Martha Kaplan demonstrate that new cultural and political communities are not just "imagined" in the way so many admirers of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) seemed to think, but they are also built up by leaders who recognize the moments when important decisions need to be made.

In Guyana, the important decisions about Indian religious practice were made very early. Indians found that they had no employment opportunities other than to renew their contracts on the plantations and that their only realistic social outlet was to become part of the Creole-speaking communities the Afro-Guyanese had started at the edge of the plantations. Leaders such as the South Indian *pūjari* Bailappa accepted the move to the Creole-speaking communities, but insisted on a rigorously defined religious tradition being established at the same time. We have seen how his tradition was highly regarded by 1923. We also know that, by 1927, the North Indian *pandits* had not only established their tradition in all the settlements, but they had gone a step further and had been able to get government recognition of their Council of Pandits. In describing both the tradition established by Bailappa in the South Indian style and the one established by the *pandits* in the North Indian style, we have demonstrated how different they were from the similar traditions of India, or, if one prefers, how creatively original they were in addressing the local religious and political situation. In both cases, these firmly established new traditions were challenged a generation later by reformers who tried to imagine the Indian heritage leading to different religious practices. Starting in the 1950s, Kistama Rajagopaul tried to reform the South Indian tradition by arguing that they should stop performing animal sacrifices, and, from the 1940s on, the Arya Samaj tried to reform the North Indian tradition by asking it to get rid of image worship. In both cases, the failure of the reform argument served to strengthen the local tradition and show why it had been established in the way it had by earlier generations.

In contrast with Guyana, where the need to define one's religious identity arose early as Indian workers moved into the settlements along with the

Afro-Guyanese, on the islands of Mauritius and Trinidad Indians lived in their own villages and initially felt little threat from the loosely defined island cultures. For the huge Indian majority in Mauritius, one way the need to define their "Indianness" arose was when they were invited to participate in the cultural movement know as the "Mauritian entity" and its political party Action Libérale. Some Indians saw this as a grand opportunity and accepted the nomination of the Party for seats on the Legislative Council, but the consensus in the Indian community gradually came to be that it was a trick of the French elite to make their culture the official culture of the island and to diminish the role of Indian culture. Aunauth Beejadhur (1935) is modest in describing his own role in helping to form that consensus, but as one of the most prominent Indian plantation owners and the first Indian Minister of Education he was certainly one of the members of the Indian elite that the movement was trying to influence. His conclusion that "the Indo-Mauritian too is heir to a civilization" gently established the Indian expectation that it would be Indian cultural traditions that would be prominent as a truly democratic society gradually emerged on the island.

On the island of Trinidad, the majority of the Indians felt comfortable in their village setting, but a growing educated elite among the Indians anxiously looked for ways to take cultural leadership without losing the cultural identity already established in the rural setting. The Canadian Presbyterian school system designed exclusively for Indians provided an exceptional educational opportunity, but many Indians suspected that it would eventually undermine their cultural heritage. Educated Indian leaders started cultural and labor organizations and played a leading role in the Legislative Council for many years, but the concern about a state-supported Christian school system continued to fester. Finally, in 1952, Bhadase Maraj created a parallel school system run by the newly formed Hindu Mahasabha. Unless the imagined community of Hindus had been so comfortable in its rural setting for so long, and the need for a more organized self-expression had been articulated by others so often, this sudden organizational effort of Maraj would not have been as dramatically successful as it was. As things developed, the "Hindu" schools were only the initial part of a larger story of cultural revival, and an Indian-based political party and a host of new temples and new literature completed the building of a Trinidad Hindu identity prepared to play its role in the shared island culture.

In the colonially hostile settings of South Africa and Fiji, a fight for survival had to be negotiated even before Indians could start to imagine becoming a community. It was, of course, Gandhi who represented the South African Indian community to the colonial authorities both by leading acts of civil

disobedience and skillfully negotiating agreements, but he also simultaneously served as a catalyst helping the different groups of Indians to imagine themselves as a community. When the well-educated and economically skilled Indian community began to buy up the property of the White citizens of the city of Durban during the economic depression of the 1930s, the long-postponed question of whether Indians had citizenship rights in South Africa eventually came to a head. It was the mass protests led by Drs. Naicker and Goolam in 1946–47 that gave the South African Indian community the clear identity Gandhi had sought for it a half century earlier.

If Gandhi had initiated the fight for survival in South Africa, his friend Charles Andrews had done the same for the brutally oppressed Fijian Indian community, which was still largely confined to its indentureship barracks when he arrived early in the twentieth century. After Andrews' critical report led to the unexpected closing down of indentureship everywhere, the leaderless Indian community left in Fiji continued to be oppressed by the monopoly-holding Company and ignored by the government. Once they were no longer confined to the barracks, however, and began to live on plots of land leased to them in order to grow sugarcane, they found that, in spite of their continued economic servitude, they had opportunities to lay a foundation for community- and culture-building among themselves. In this new setting, the Indian laborers' hard work led to a new sense of self-worth, and it was not long before they had a network of schools and retail establishments in place and an identity that the Company and the Native-Fijian leadership could no longer ignore.

In East Africa, the colonial structure was a triangular arrangement in which from 1920 on the Indians found themselves speaking for the Africans who were excluded from the Legislative Council. What this political responsibility did was to turn the many different caste groups into one Indian community speaking with one voice in favor of an end to colonialism. In this context, the Indian voice became radically anticolonial even though it represented a community that was in many ways benefiting from the colonial economic arrangements. Because of the specialized nature of the skills required to address the political issues of the day, some of the best-known spokespersons of the community, such as M. A. Desai and Isher Dass, did not have family roots in the community. Those two leaders were, however, accepted as members of the East African Indian community because they were brought to East Africa as employees of A. M. Jeevanjee, the wealthiest and most prominent member of the community. Other leaders such as Makan Singh, G. L. Vidyarthi, and Pio Pinto had local family roots within the Sikh, Punjabi Hindu, and Goan Christian caste groups, but they too set forth a radical anticolonial position and were thought of as part of the voice of the Indian

community. By defining its community identity in this radical way, the Indian community of East Africa not only made it clear to the British and the Africans that they wanted a future in East Africa, but they also made it clear to their families still in India that they were forging a new identity.

The Postcolonial Experience

While the carelessness of the colonial arrangements gave the Indians space to initiate cultural change, and the memories of the Indian groups making up the embryonic society were the basis for the first cultural developments, it was the decisiveness of leaders in the second and third generations that enabled the Indian communities to form identifiable traditions in each of these locations. Although these traditions were well established, and in some cases had already defended themselves against would-be reformers before the colonial era ended, a major challenge to the new sense of religious identity occurred when the postcolonial era began. In each location, the new political issues developed in a unique way, and each of the indenture-based Indian traditions had to take major new initiatives in order to address the revamped social environment of the postcolonial era.

The buildup to Independence started very early in Mauritius. With a huge Indian majority in the population and the Labour Party already organized, the French elite, as early as 1948, began to fear what Independence would bring. When their initial appeal for the island to remain part of Britain looked like it would go nowhere, the battle focused on provisions within the constitution to protect the minorities. Because Dr. Ramgoolam, who would be the first Prime Minister, was so patient with this process, it eventually became clear that the Hindu majority understood that its cultural initiatives would have to work within the framework of a Mauritian cultural style. When Independence finally came in 1968, the Hindus carefully began to speak of their new homeland as a "Hindu nation," but even the Śivarātri celebration, which is now a kind of national holiday, is carried out with a playful simplicity that all Mauritians seem to enjoy.

The run-up to Independence in Guyana did not look as if it would be a challenge to the two Hindu traditions of the region. Both traditions had developed as Protestant-style sectarian voices within society, and they were comfortable with the secular political arrangements of the Indian leader, Cheddi Jagan, as he led the development of the new political institutions. Just as Independence was about to dawn, however, the U.S. government panicked on the news that a "Marxist" was about to lead this new country,

and the British first postponed Independence and then handed power to Jagan's one-time Afro-Guyanese ally Forbes Burnham in 1966. In spite of the deep social integration of the Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese at the local level, Burnham manipulated the race issue and clung to power until he died in 1985. During these years of political oppression, the economy collapsed, and many from within both the Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese communities moved to Britain and North America. We will look at the implications of this new migration later, but it is important to note that when democracy was fully restored in 1992, the comfortable integration of the Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese, with more or less equal numbers, continued. Observing the operations of the North Indian and South Indian Hindu communities in 1995, one would never have guessed that the society had just been through nineteen years of political chaos and that these two communities had suffered the loss of many of their members to emigration. The sectarian-style separation of the state from the religious institutions had served those institutions well during that difficult time, and the well-organized Hindu traditions were recognized by all as having given grass-root strength to the society throughout the crisis.

Unlike the story of Guyana, the Hindu identity of Trinidad only became a publicly acknowledged part of the community's life as Independence loomed on the horizon. Before 1952, the Indian village life on the island, described so brilliantly in novels such as V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961) and Rabindranath Maharaj's *A Perfect Pledge* (2006), had hardly any institutionalized Hindu structure. Suddenly, Bhadase Maraj decided that there had to be a Hindu school system, a Sanatana Dharma Maha Sabha to run it, and a Hindu political party to give the Maha Sabha a public voice. As the rapidly changing society moved through Independence in 1962, the black power revolution of 1970 and the oil boom of the late 1970s, the Hindu community built new temples, found new political allies, and took its place as the largest single community in the happily pluralist society. Unlike the situation in Mauritius, where the huge Indian majority had to be cautious about cultural initiatives, Trinidad Hindus are only a small majority, but they are part of a very "open" cultural scene. Trinidad Hinduism participates more fully in an open postcolonial scene than any of the other indenture-based communities because in a cultural sense Trinidad is fully integrated not only with the Caribbean but with the North American cultural world as well.

South Africa's colonial era was, of course, artificially extended by the Afrikaners' seizure of power in 1948. Nelson Mandela and other leaders of the African National Congress had been very impressed by the Indian protests of 1946–47, and after 1948 Indian leaders were an integral part of the ANC

fight for democracy and, like others, spent many years in prison. In 1994, when real democracy was introduced, Indians were given major roles in the new government and were involved in every aspect of the subsequent transformation of society. The Hindu institutional response to the new social setting was cautious. The university that the apartheid regime had established for Indians as part of its segregation policy quickly changed its role and began to serve the whole society. The temples, many of which were a hundred years old, were able to get priests from outside the country, and the social reform movements, for which the community was long known, expanded their activities. There was, however, a general secularization of society in the new political setting, and the Indians, as leaders in urban development, were also deeply involved in that process.

Because under colonial rule Fiji had been an officially segregated society, Independence involved major questions about how a properly integrated society might be achieved. The initial years after Independence, from 1970 to 1987, marked a period of steady achievement in that regard as integrated government institutions were put in place, and both the Native-Fijians and Indo-Fijians made a determined effort to think of themselves as a united nation with constitutional rules. The coups of 1987 and 2000 were relatively peaceful, but they did indicate that elements within the Native-Fijian society were not comfortable with the degree to which the constitution protected their rights. Some Fijian Hindus emigrated during this period of uncertainty, but those who stayed dramatically changed their style by building a number of publicly recognizable temples, including the spectacular Śaiva temple of Nadi. What the building of major temples did was to say to the whole Fijian society that the Hindus considered the period of segregation part of the colonial past and were prepared to share fully in the postcolonial cultural conversation. While it was a bit late in the social history for this kind of cultural conversation to begin, the situation was a bit like that in Trinidad a generation earlier when Hindus first began to bring their cultural heritage into the discussions of the new social environment and its values.

Unlike in Fiji, Indians in East Africa were deeply involved in the fight for Independence, but in spite of that, when it came in the early 1960s, there was a great deal of uncertainty whether Indians would even be given citizenship in the three new countries of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. After Idi Amin expelled the Indians from Uganda in the early 1970s, questions were raised once again, and a significant number of Indians emigrated. As it turned out, the caste-based social style and the "this-worldly asceticism" that characterized the value system of the Indians in East Africa allowed the majority to decide that, with a little adjustment in their style, they could still prosper in the

postcolonial environment. They were, however, not really deciding that they would share in an "open" cultural scene, such as one finds in a place such as Trinidad. That choice was not available in East Africa where the African majority was still struggling to figure out how its tribal traditions could be fit into the ethos of a modern nation state. What the Indian community within those modern East African states had to decide was whether or not they were interested in remaining in the role they had developed for themselves earlier on as a special community with its own cultural and religious integrity that was committed to serve the common good through investment. The decision to stay involves some risk in that in the postcolonial setting their fate is even more than before in the hands of others, but the decision fits with the sense of history and uncertainty surrounding their presence in this mysterious setting from the beginning. At least in the new environment they have more opportunity than they had before to define the terms of their participation and potentially more opportunity to feel that they are contributing to the common good.

Entering the Global World

The development of these indenture-based Hindu communities over the past century and a half is, in a way, the first step in the emergence of Hinduism as a "world religion." Prior to these developments, Hinduism had been a major religious tradition with rich traditions of philosophy and ritual practice, but it had developed almost exclusively within the cultural environment of the Indian subcontinent. As these six communities redefined their religious heritages and created their own local religious traditions, they also redefined Hinduism in a major way.

The great variety in the way the new religious traditions were defined in these six societies indicates how different the social structures were into which the Indians fit and how flexible the Hindu heritage proved to be in allowing traditions to be developed for each situation. In Mauritius, Fiji, and South Africa, Hindus think of themselves as having distinct "new homeland" traditions, but their conversations have been primarily about developments within their local society, and they have not had a major impact on discussions within the global Hindu community. The Mauritian ritual traditions feel most like those one remembers from India. Because as a majority community the Indians in Mauritius were not obliged to "fit in" and to develop one or two religious forms to achieve that goal, every little grouping of Indians continued with its favorite ritual practices. In the end, Mauritian Hindus think of themselves as

having established a very distinctive new homeland tradition, even though an outside observer might see the ritual variety as similar to that of India. Until recently, Fijian Hindu practice was designed for the home and had an even less distinctive stamp than that of Mauritius. That has now changed as the Hindus of Fiji have undertaken to make their ritual practice more public and to make it part of the publicly shared culture of their nation. The Hindu practice of South Africa is very unlike that practiced in India, but its reformist style was largely defined within the first period of the Indian participation in that society, and it is now an established part of that new homeland culture. Whether that will change again now that the Indians and Africans are so excitedly redefining their social and political agenda after democracy was restored, it is too early to say, but those are largely discussions taking place within that society, and interaction with Hindus elsewhere is not a significant issue at the present time.

In contrast with these three locations, where the Hindus are in discussions with non-Hindus in their own society about their future course, Hindus from Trinidad, Guyana, and East Africa are now explaining to Hindus all over the world the unique features of the new religious traditions they have developed. These discussions between Hindus from one of the indenture-based societies and Hindus from elsewhere are still in an early stage, and they have not been a central part of the present study. They are, however, now widely recognized as a part of the story of the developing Hindu communities in places such as Britain and North America, and, indeed, an interesting early view of what Hinduism as a "world religion" will be like.

The conversation between Trinidad Hindus and others Hindus might be said to have started on a sour note some years ago when V. S. Naipaul wrote *The Area of Darkness* (1964) and *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977). As a Trinidad Hindu, he not only felt cut off from India but also felt that India was incapable of a new conversation. As Hindus in Trinidad took a more prominent public role in the 1980s and 1990s, and tried to define their heritage in a way that was helpful to the pluralist society developing around them, their sense of identity as "new homeland Hindus" took on a more nuanced character. Many of those who emigrated to Britain and North America quickly entered into a wider discussion of "global" culture and its tantalizing swim back and forth between rich new forms of multiculturalism and a haunting fear of universal homelessness (Birbalsingh 1988). Like Naipaul before them, Trinidad Hindus in Britain or North America now find themselves uncomfortably searching all three of their homelands for a secure sense of identity. At the same time, others appreciate the Trinidad hybridity and look to them to represent all Hindus in interfaith discussions[1] and all immigrants in multicultural discussions.[2] Rabindranath Maharaj's novel *A Perfect Pledge* (2006) represents a thoughtful

new version of the personal and intellectual uncertainties of a Trinidad Hindu living in North America when he takes his North American readers deep into his childhood memory of Trinidad's village Hinduism.

If Trinidad Hindus bring some of the most intellectually interesting issues to the attention of their fellow Hindus in Britain and North America, Guyana Hindus present them with new traditions of Hindu practice. As we have seen earlier, Hindu practice in Guyana developed in the crowded settlements Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese shared at the end of each plantation. In that setting, the two different Hindu traditions, derived from South Indian and North Indian traditions respectively, developed sectarian congregational worship patterns modeled on those of the small Afro-Guyanese churches next door. In the South Indian tradition, the emphasis was on exorcism and healing carried out by persons possessed by the Goddess, and, in the North Indian tradition, the focus was on congregational music and the "sermon" of the *pandit* about the ethical expectations of worshipping the "monotheistic" god Rām. While Guyana Hindus were hesitant about establishing their own places of worship when they first moved to Britain and North America, where there were also many Hindus arriving direct from India, that hesitation did not last long and now both Guyana traditions are well established in the new settings. Hindus from India initially did not like the Guyana temples. They thought the ritual use of English, the congregational style, the exclusive focus on the *Rāmcharitmānas* and the exorcism rituals that characterized Guyana worship all took away from the Indian authenticity they cherished. In time, however, many of the children of immigrants from India expressed a preference for the style of the Guyana temples, and the discussions between the two styles of worship became complicated. Now that some second-generation Hindu temples are being built in these settings, it is evident that a compromise between the two styles is starting to develop. Guyanese priests are learning ritual detail from their Indian colleagues, and non-Guyanese temples are using more English, experimenting with congregational worship styles, monotheistic vocabulary, and even, in some cases, exorcist empowerment.

Hindus from East Africa have moved to Britain and North America in greater numbers than have those from Trinidad and Guyana, but they have joined the discussion with other Hindus in a somewhat different way. The confrontational style Naipaul introduced did accurately reflect the difficulties Hindus from Trinidad and Guyana have had in understanding their fellow Hindus from India, but East African Hindus tend to face the world from within their tight-knit caste community, and they generally avoid confrontation with others. While the East African Indians tend to absorb their caste fellows from India into their community life in the new settings of Britain or North

America, the patterns of social, economic, and ritual life they developed in East Africa are usually carried on in the new setting. The Ismaili and Ithnasari Muslim communities are perhaps the most distinctive in this regard, but many of the Hindu caste communities also remain socially distinct and have established multitask community centers for their members in the major cities of Britain and North America. These community centers include temples within them, but they are primarily intended for the caste-based community[3] and usually have folding walls that make it possible for large community events to include the temple setting for a portion of the time. Worship in these caste-based community temples includes the East African practice of showing reverence for human figures from the community's past, as well as for classical mythological deities, and the focus is on responsibility within the community and a recognition of the community's current this-worldly values. Because of the large numbers of Indians from East Africa that made the migration to Britain or North America, the East African traditions moved to the new location as a self-reliant cultural unit that had no interest in either challenging or becoming absorbed into Hindu traditions coming from anywhere else.[4] In spite of its self-reliant isolation, the East African Hindu tradition's focus on community solidarity and this-worldly values is widely recognized among other Hindus in Britain and North America as a useful way to deal with the challenges of "westernization" without losing one's Hindu identity.

New Homelands

Between 1838 and 1917, there were 1.1 million workers transported from India to Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, South Africa, Fiji, and East Africa. Ninety years later, in each of these locations, there are Hindu communities that have developed distinctive religious traditions. While persons from some of those communities have made subsequent migrations to Britain or North America, in each of the six original locations, a Hindu community carries on the distinctive religious tradition it developed in the midst of what is now a postcolonial and multicultural society.

In each of these locations, the Hindus found during the colonial era that there was no clear cultural pattern and that they would have to find a way to develop a cultural heritage for themselves if their social life was to have a civilized character. They did this first by sorting out what kind of social subgroups they could establish among themselves, then agreeing on the religious practices they would follow, and, finally, discussing with those who would be their fellow citizens in the postcolonial era what the implications of their

religious practices would be for the society as a whole. In the end, they participated in creating a "new homeland" for themselves and for others.

These six examples of postcolonial creativity at work give us a detailed picture of how human culture formation takes place. Because the geographical and social challenges were different in each case, we know something about how they understood their task, and, because the actors came from such similar backgrounds in most locations, we know how they creatively used their memories in establishing their new religious practices. Finally, because they had to interact with other social groups in each instance, and because those groups were made up so differently in each case, we know what kind of conversations were involved as the decisions were made about the kind of religious tradition that would fit that situation. Of course, the culture formation was the result of passionate persons facing desperate circumstances much of the time, and, in the end, they brought together religious ideas and religious practices that gave meaning to their lives and stability to the society of their new homeland.

In addition to meeting the cultural needs of those in their new homelands, the creativity of the Hindu communities in these locations also tells us a lot about religious traditions generally. Hinduism in particular has tended to be treated as a tradition rooted in primordial associations with geography and society, and it was not clear what impact radical social change would have on its practice. The dispersal or "diaspora" of Hindu persons from India during the last two centuries has now thrown those long-standing assumptions into doubt, and we now have a few early reports on how the persons involved have tried to reestablish traditions for themselves in the many places to which they have gone. What the story of the six communities originally established by the indentured worker system shows us is that Hindu tradition is far more adaptable than we might have thought. The primordial ties that there may have been with geography and society were totally broken, but religious practice found new foundations and with that new ideas and new ways of communicating with those with a different religious heritage. These pioneers in the Hindu "diaspora" process were able to establish new homelands for themselves, and because of that they now serve as a model for other Hindus struggling to find meaningful forms of worship in a new location.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. I realize that some students of religion might find the language of human agency unusual when describing the foundations of the religious traditions in these societies. In India when I would ask about the origins of a temple site or of a festival, I might be given good information about rebuilding projects or reforms that occurred during later periods of the history, but the origins themselves were often cloaked in mystery. In these postcolonial societies, the emphasis seems to be different and people tend to speak with enthusiasm about the role of revered ancestors in the establishment of religious practices.

The alternatives are a bit like those Kelly and Kaplan (2001) lay out in their insistence that nations be understood as "represented communities" where the human agency involved is fully transparent. They are highly critical of Benedict Anderson's portrayal of nations (1983) as "imagined communities" that are pulled into being as a social and political entity partly through things such as the print journalism that makes a larger community aware of itself for the first time. There were certainly difficult challenges in these indenture based societies before people could "imagine" themselves as a Hindu community, or, indeed, as a pluralist nation state. Like Kelly and Kaplan, I will be concentrating on the human actors who made important decisions about how they might help develop a Hindu community or a nation state, but we must also remember that it was the dreams of those who decided to stay in these distant places that made those actions feasible and determined that these places would be made into new homelands (Rushdie 1981).

2. I have tried to use the term "postcolonial" carefully, but I realize its usage raises big questions. In many contexts, I use the term literally to

describe the factual situation that all six of these societies ceased being colonies during the time period I am describing. I also recognize that the term has come to refer to a type of society and a type of cultural engagement and that my own thinking in these matters is deeply indebted to thinkers such as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. A volume such as *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism* edited by Gaurav Desai and Supriya Nair (2005) provides a good introduction to the wide range of usage.

3. The term "diaspora" is so widely used today that the Fiji born critic, Sudesh Mishra, has tried to bring order into the variety by treating the usage as a discipline with its own history, which he outlines in a volume entitled *Diaspora Criticism* (Mishra 2006). He associates scene one with the essays in the Gabriel Sheffer edited volume (Sheffer 1986) where it was assumed that diaspora groups are caught in a situation of "dual territoriality" where they long for a distant "homeland" even as they live in a "host land" or a state dominated by others. Scene two opened up when it became clear through a text such as Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (Gilroy 1993) that many diaspora groups do not recognize themselves as between two territories but as engaged in "situational laterality" as they seek to make their way through a host of potential homelands. And scene three he proposes will be based on "archival specificity" as we recognize that few diaspora experiences are the same and that even the original emphasis on the involuntary nature of the departure from the homeland and the effort to maintain ties with the homeland are not always clear.

The experience of the indentured workers dealt with in the present text is certainly one of the places where the term "diaspora" might be comfortably used, but I have tried to use a variety of other terms to describe the specific nature of the experience in each setting. My reason for minimizing the use of the term diaspora was to avoid misleading associations and to give myself a clean slate on which to paint the picture as I saw it. I certainly recognize that comparing the experience of the indentured workers with others (especially Indians) who have left their homeland in somewhat different cir cumstances is a task that will be necessary as our understanding of these different experiences grows. In that context, Mishra and others who are undertaking the effort to bring discipline to the use of the term "diaspora" are appreciated (see also Mishra 2002 and V. Mishra 2007).

4. There is a great deal of scholarly interest now in the Hindu diaspora to Europe and North America that started in the mid twentieth century. Prema Kurien's work (2007) is among those most talked about today.

5. While raised in the United States, and related in a variety of ways to some of the major temple builders in that country, I now live and work in Canada. As a result I have watched with great interest as in both countries the immigration of Hindu families begun in the 1960s has continued. As the two communities grow, one can now see some important differences emerging in the way the Hindu communities are devel oping in the two countries. In Canada, all the South Asian communities together make up a larger percentage of the overall population than they do in the United States, and, as a result, they are beginning to have a more prominent public profile and a more distinctive community personality. In this sense, the Canadian community reminds one

of the "new homeland" model of enculturation in certain ways that are not found in the Hindu community within the United States. In other ways, of course, Canada is very North American, and the Indian experience in Canada and the United States share many things in common (see the author's paper from the 2007 AAR meeting in San Diego).

6. The estimated population of Mauritius in 2007 was 1,250,882, and the Indians are said to constitute 68 percent of the total.

7. The population of Guyana in 2007 was estimated to be 769,095, of which over 50 percent are of Indian background and about 40 percent of African background.

8. The population of Trinidad in 2007 was estimated to be 1,055,763, of which 40 percent are thought to be of Indian background, 37 percent of African background and 20 percent mixed.

9. The population of South Africa in 2007 was estimated to be about 44 million and the Indian population 1,243,500 or 2.6 percent of the total. About half of the Indian numbers are found in the area around Durban.

10. The estimated population of Fiji for 2007 was 918,675. The Indian population had been in the majority from the late 1940s until the coup of 1987, but it is now estimated to be more around 40 percent.

11. Most Indians in East Africa came as traders, and, in the 1960s at Indepen dence, they numbered about 366,000 or about 1.5 percent. The percentage in the cities is much higher.

12. Caste based organization of religion is also characteristic of the Indian and Śrı Lankan Tamils settled in Malaysia (Ramanathan 1999). There are some similarities between the story of Indians in Malaysia and the stories of the post indenture societies we are presenting here, but there were also major differences. The colonial role in Malaysia was different, and the workers were not brought in on the same indenture system.

STORY ONE: MAURITIUS

1. In keeping with its inward looking sense of culture, Mauritius has always produced a regular stream of historical scholarship, and ordinary citizens are well informed about the general outlines of the "agreed upon" story. When Aunauth Beejadhur (the future Minister of Education) in 1935 wrote his history of the Indians in Mauritius to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first indentureship, he started his story by referring to the memoirs of the first French governor, Labourdonnais, in 1735, and Baron Grant's history of 1804 (Grant 1804).

Now the Mahatma Gandhi Institute on behalf of the government keeps close tabs on all sorts of cultural developments and publishes scholarly analyses of all the subcultures of the island and all the archival material available.

One of the most ambitious intellectual projects is the development of the concept of "coolitude" by the Mauritian poet Khal Torabully (Torabully 1992; 1999; Carter and Torabully 2002). In developing this concept he pictures writers throughout the indentured diaspora being able to move beyond the colonial, and even the early creole,

tendency to portray the Indian workers as marginal. Both Indians and others in those locations have begun to see the Indian role in the pluralism of those societies more clearly, and he feels that naming that new dimension "coolitude" will provide an opportunity to analyze it more carefully.

2. It is not clear when the European powers began taking slaves from Bengal. It may have been a practice that preceded the French takeover of Mauritius, because we know that in 1695 a slave revolt against the Dutch was led by "Anna and Esperance from Bengal" (Peerthum 1989).

3. The Bengal lady involved was Doya Kishto from Midnapore in Bengal. She arrived in Mauritius in 1852, and her husband died soon thereafter. The Tamil gentleman she married in 1859 was Songhor Itty who had been brought to Mauritius as a "sirdar" or estate manager in 1843 just as the government indentureship was beginning. Both of them worked in management capacities on the Clemencia estate, and the owner of the estate, Pierre Amourdaon Arlanda, was a witness at their wedding. In 1862, they built a temple to Aroul Migou Bala Dhandayouthabaniswami, and, in 1867, started a business in town and gave the temple to the Hindu community. Although these events happened after the indenture period had begun, we know that many of the workers who came to Mauritius were personally recruited for particular estates by workers making return trips to India. Both of these persons seem to have arrived in Mauritius to positions of privilege, and it seems reasonable to imagine that they had earlier links with this estate, perhaps through relatives who had worked there. In any case, they are said to have owned land in a period of time long before the depression of 1880, which led to widespread Indian ownership of land (Carter 1994; Sooriamoorthy 1977).

4. The naming of village goddesses is rather fluid even in India, where one often finds one worshipper using one name and a different worshipper a different name. In a new social setting, there is an even greater tendency for this to happen as worshippers continue to use the name with which their family was familiar. One way to create the wider link among Telegus was to equate each of the local goddesses with one from a group of goddesses called the "Seven Sisters." In India, the Telegu version of that list would usually include Poshamma, Pedamma, Yellamma, Balamma, Maicamma, Edamma, and Mankalamma. The most direct way to communicate with virtually all other Hindus was to call a goddess "Kalı Mai." Those who wished to link their local cult with the literary or priestly traditions of other deities might describe their goddess as Durga, Draupadı, or Lakṣmı.

5. The daughter of a Tamil priest from Réunion described to me her childhood delight at being able to hold the still twitching heart of the chicken or goat traditionally given to the priest at the sacrifice. When I pointed out that Western criticism of animal sacrifice and efforts to change to a more Sanskrit based worship had made sacrifice less common in both India and Mauritius, she acted appalled, and expressed the hope that Réunion would not follow suit.

6. Beejadhur (1935p. 39) provides a list of the most famous ones.

7. Beejadhur (1935p. 49) lists some of the major families. His heirs and publishers implicitly include him in that group when, on the jacket of his book, they list his estate holdings, links with French aristocracy, and political offices.

8. Ramoo Sooriamoorthy (1977) in his full history of Tamil influence in Maur itius mentions three or four other Draupadı temples built earlier. Although we know of a number of Draupadı temples built by the South Indian indentured workers in South Africa, the number in Mauritius seems to be in a higher proportion to the total number of South Indian temples than one would expect. Perhaps this indicates that the recruitment of workers for Mauritius was linked to the Naicker caste in some special way.

The fact that there are now no Draupadı temples in Guyana is not particularly surprising because the South Indian community there developed a very specific Mariyamman tradition that all South Indians were expected to follow.

9. I was able to watch the Prime Minister of Mauritius arrive at the Triolet temple for the Śivaratri festival, the festival that I will argue later has now become a national celebration.

10. The shrine they carry is made of light wooden pieces tied together and built into a structure that is covered with colorful cloth and paper strips and looks like a multistoried temple or mosque. In an article describing the custom of carrying a *tazzia* or relic bearing shrine for Muharram, Edun (1984) comments on how similar such mobile shrines are in the Mauritian celebrations of Hindus and Muslims. He refers to these Muslim shrines as *gouhn*, and I may have even misheard the word *kawer* and the Creole word for a mobile shrine might indeed be the same for Muslims and Hindus. Early in the indenture experience Muharram celebrations were important in most of the indenture based societies so it would not be hard to imagine that the Muharram celebration influenced the way Śivaratri came to be celebrated in Mauritius, but I did not hear that argument made by anyone at the celebration in Mauritius.

11. The author lived in the Chamar section of Citapur village, near Varanasi, in North India, from 1957 to 1960.

12. The political skills of the Franco African group in this situation have been surprising. Although the French make up less than 5 percent of the population and the whole "general population" are only about 30 percent, it is the French who have successfully initiated each of the party shuffles that have defined each new election.

From 1948 to 1968, Dr. Ramgoolam patiently insisted on a universal franchise while he faced one challenge after another. Jules Koenig as head of the Railliement Mauricien initially tried to keep Mauritius under British rule. Later, under the banner of the Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate (PMSD), he tried to make the Franco African community suspicious of the Indians' intentions. Koenig's successor as Franco African leader was Gatan Duval, and he fought hard to at least link Mauritius with Britain. It was only Ramgoolam's ability to keep the militant Indian Party (Indian Forward Bloc [IFB] headed by the Bissoondoyal brothers) and the nervous Muslim party (Muslim Committee on Action [MCA]) on his side, while he offered constitutional guarantees to the minorities, that made it possible for Independence to finally be achieved in 1968.

Once Independence was achieved Ramgoolam became Prime Minister, but he was forced to form a coalition of the Labour Party and its former rival, the PMSD, and to give Duval a major political role. With the formation of this coalition, the Labour Party's dream of socialist policies and closer links with India were given up once and for all.

By 1973, the initiative had shifted hands again, this time to Paul Bérenger, the descendent of a wealthy Franco Mauritian planter family who had become a radical Marxist as a student in Europe. He started a left wing party called the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM) and made an Indian, Aneerood Jugnauth, its president. By 1982, the MMM swept to power allied with the Parti Socialiste Mauricien (PSM). When Jugnauth as prime minister followed a clear free enterprise path, Bérenger split with him and went into opposition from 1983 to 1987. By 1991, Jugnauth and Bérenger were reunited again with Bérenger becoming foreign minister. By September of 2003, the Presidential system was in place and with an Indian in the President's chair it was possible for Bérenger to finally become prime minister.

STORY TWO: GUYANA

1. There is some disagreement among scholars as to how many of these strip plantations there were in 1838. Nath (1970) suggests there were 200 at that time, with most still at the original two mile length that the Dutch had established. By the end of the century, there were only 100, but the acreage listed would indicate that many had been expanded toward the forest to three times the original length, and already covered the area that is still used for sugarcane cultivation. The canal system and settlement locations still reflect the early strip plantation arrangement, but some of the bigger capitalist houses in Britian gradually bought out other sugarcane plantations and Booker Inc. owned three fourths of all the sugarcane land by the time of Independence. The sugar industry is now nationalized and run by the government, but people still identify the land they work on or the refinery they work for by the name of the original plantation.

2. The organization of the coastal plain of British Guiana was much like the industrialization going on in Britain at the same time.

3. In 1833, the British Parliament passed the British Education Act as well as the act to abolish slavery. Under this act, money left by Lady Mico was to be used for "nonsec tarian" education in the colonies. It was not until two years later that parliament voted funds under the Negro Education Grant.

By then, the missionaries were on the ground in Guyana and most of the funds were channeled through their schools. This was because in Guyana the missionaries were considered "allies of convenience" by both the planters and the government (Green 1976).

This is in sharp contrast to Mauritius where the missionary, Lebrun, was asked by the government to start some schools and administer Mauritius' portion of the money. The French planters saw no use for educating workers, and their leader, Adrien d'Epinay, asked that Lebrun be dismissed and the project abandoned (Kalla 1989).

4. In the 1960s, as Guyana stumbled to Independence and the rival political parties were headed up respectively by an Indo Guyanese and an Afro Guyanese, social scientists developed a whole range of theories about the relationship between these two communities. The school of "cultural pluralism" championed by M. G. Smith (1965) and Leo Despres (1967) thought they had proof that these two communities had always

belonged to two separate cultural worlds. R. T. Smith (1962) felt they shared a common set of values. When we were doing field work there in the 1990s, after the political turmoil had settled, we found Indo Guyanese and Afro Guyanese still happily living in the local settlements together, speaking a common language and joking about their shared drinking habits and common bloodlines. The Afro Guyanese had certainly taken to education earlier, and therefore a higher percentage had been inclined to go to the cities for employment and to imitate British styles of dress and speech. But the schools were compulsory for all as early as 1876, and the Sweetenham Circular rule, which Indian parents sometimes used to give their children special permission to continue to work on the plantation, was withdrawn in 1933 (Despres 1967), so the two communities shared a common culture in many ways. The two communities did maintain separate religious establishments, but even there, as we will see later, there was an unusual degree of sharing.

5. These large shiploads from Madras late in the indentureship in both Guyana and Trinidad have been overlooked by some scholars (Brereton 1981, p. 103; 1985, p. 21; Vertovec 1992, p. 89), with the result that the “Madrasi” contribution to the cultural life of the community, and especially the distinctive religious style of the “Madrasi” laborers, has not been given the attention it deserves by scholars such as Jayawardena (1967) or Moore (1995). Vertovec (1992, p. 57) duly notes the South Indian religious style, but does not let it affect his larger argument that there was a general homogenization of religion. Nath (1970) gives a more accurate picture of the sources of the Guyana immigration, and Father de Verteuil (1990) gives a detailed account of the arrivals in Trinidad.

6. The westernmost river is the great Essequibo that flows for 620 miles and receives many tributaries and has three major islands just where it goes into the ocean. The Demerara has the capital of Georgetown perched on its eastern bank just as it enters the ocean. It is a mile and a half wide at that point and navigable upstream for 75 miles. The Berbice has the city of New Amersterdam on its eastern shore and it also is navigable. And a fourth river, the Corentyn, provides the boundary between Guyana and Surinam to the east.

7. The lingering influence of Mudaliar’s appointment practices may have also been responsible for the controversy that flaired up in the Letters to the Editor section of the local newspapers in 1898 when writers from both New Amsterdam and Georgetown complained that all the clerks in the immigration offices in both towns were South Indians who did not understand the Hindi of new immigrants from North India (Seecharan 1999).

8. One does not hear of fire walking (or *Fire Pass* as it was called in Trinidad) as a South Indian ritual form in Guyana. As we have said, it probably did come with the laborers initially, because it is part of the Draupadı cult in Mauritius and South Africa and is also done in Mariyamman temples in those places as well. In Trinidad, *Fire Pass* seems to have been popular from the beginning, and seems to be an independent festival celebration not particularly attached to specific temples (McNeal 2009b). That arrangement may be explained by the fact that the villages established for Indians in Trinidad were for Indians only, and in that situation they did not seem to feel that it was

necessary to have established temples in the way the Hindu community in the multi cultural settlements of Guyana did. With the religious life of the villages focused primarily on festivals and with the whole population of the village participating, it would appear that *Fire Pass* served as the South Indian contribution to the festival cycle in Trinidad.

9. The details of this tradition are confirmed in Karna Bahadur Singh's study of the South Indian cult (1978). He was able to interview Ranganathan Naicker, who was a little boy on one of the last indentured worker ships and remembered his father helping build the Albion temple. He also remembered Bailappa as the revered priest of the temple when it opened. He explained that his own son, Ramswamy Ranganathan, who was trained to be Bailappa's successor, was then (1977) the head priest of the temple and the acknowledged head of the traditional South Indian cult.

The family or "caste" name "Naicker" in this account is interesting for a number of reasons. It is a Telegu speaker's name, but we know that a significant portion of the community we speak of as "Tamil speaking" in Guyana really came from the Telegu speaking area. Unlike the situation in Mauritius where they are two distinct commu nities, Tamil speakers and Telegu speakers are indistinguishable in Guyana, and both go under the label "Madrasi." The Naicker caste name could, of course, just be adopted in Guyana (as it often is in South Africa), because it is the name of a middle range land owning caste in India. Naicker caste members are often associated with Draupadı worship in India, a practice we have already noted is present in Mauritius and South Africa, but not in Guyana.

10. Horowitz (Horowitz 1963; Horowitz and Klass 1961; Singaravelou 1975; Nagapin and Sulty 1989) found that the South Indians in Martinique follow this arrangement of the three deities.

11. In India, Mariyamman festivals are now ten days long like most other temple festivals and are held in May (Younger 1980; 2002c).

Both Singh (1978) and I were told that in Guyana there are very important cosmological considerations as to when the festival should be held. On the other hand, each of us also found that festivals were held at different times in different temples and frequently had to be postponed because priests were not available or there was a death of a prominent member of the community.

The emphasis on the three days and the visits to homes in the community seem to be parts of the festivity that fit with the work routines of Guyana, but it is interesting to note that the same three day pattern is found in the Mariyamman festival routines of the Tamils sent to the tea estates of central Śrı Lanka at much the same time (Balasundaram and Kingsolver 2008).

12. Unfortunately none of these scholars, except K. B. Singh, whose thesis of 1978 has been referred to earlier, have a good grasp of the larger religious picture in Guyana. The two films (Singer 1976; Stephanides 1988) provide evidence of the intensity of the healing and exorcism practice, but the commentaries of the filmmakers seriously misinterpret much of the ritual action taking place. Although this temple's practice became widely known for a time in the 1970s, Jamsie Naidoo remains a deeply traditional *pujari*. He opened the spiritual practice up to a wider community, but he is

troubled by the interpretations it has been given by outside scholars (personal interview 1995).

13. The Methodists started a specific mission to the Indians as early as 1852, and H. V. P. Bronkhurst (1883), who worked for them from 1860 to 1895, provides one of the best social histories of this period. The Anglicans sent an Indian clergyman, Ebenezer Bholanath Bose, as a missionary to the Indian population in 1861, and the Canadian Presbyterians, who were dominant in the education system of Indians in Trinidad, were also active in Guyana from the late 1860s. Today, some of the biggest schools are run by the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics, who got started a bit later (Jayawardena 1967; Ruhoman 1946).

14. I looked up the ship record of one family from Guyana now living in Canada that considered itself "Brahman." I found that they were listed as "Kṣatrıya" at the time of indentureship.

15. Bronkhurst (1883) complained about "the secret way in which [the Brahmans] try their utmost to oppose and set aside the teaching and preaching of Christian Missionaries to the coolies" (p. 291). The Anglican mission report of 1882 was even more bitter: "There is no doubt that our labours are marred by those lazy self styled Brahmins who assume the garb of a gossain and travel about the country for alms" (p. 18).

16. In an interesting article in 1991, van der Veer and Vertovec pointed out how prominent the Brahman role was in the three Caribbean countries of Surinam, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago. Their general argument is convincing, but because neither had done field work in Guyana they were not able to show how institutionalized the *mandir* was in Guyana and how it was through their link with that institution that the Brahmans of Guyana moved on to take such a prominent role in politics.

17. The group in India they were in contact with was the Sanatan Dharma Pratinidhi Sabha of the Punjab, which was an effort to establish a common religious base for Hindu practice. The term "Maha Sabha" later on became the name of a political party associated with the radical leader V. D. Sarvarkar in India, and, in Trinidad, Eric Williams, the first prime minister, was able to condemn the Indian political parties by [falsely] arguing that they were associated with that Indian political movement. That argument never really surfaced in Guyana, because, in spite of the active political participation of the *pandits*, the political parties were clearly secular and the *pandits* were found in all the parties.

18. A separate group arrived from India in the 1940s and established another reform movement known as Bharat Sevashram Sangha. This movement was started in Bengal by Swami Pranavananda who wrote *Aum Hindutvam* (Smart and Purnananda 1985), and his image is prominent in all the meetings.

The movement in Guyana is centered in its college in Cove and John, and it uses an "evangelistic team ministry" style, similar to that developed by Billy Graham, as it "visits" *mandirs* in various settlements. A group of young musicians present modern versions of Hindi temple music and a *brahmacari* or ascetic teacher from India presents a major sermon on the values and political interests of the Hindu community (personal observation 1995).

While this movement provides an implicit challenge to the local tradition of the *pandits* in a variety of ways, its strategy is different from that of the Arya Samaj. The Bharat Sevashram Sangha goes out of its way to avoid confrontation with the local tradition and is generally allowed to use local *mandirs*. It carefully glosses over any theological or ritual disagreements that arise.

STORY THREE: TRINIDAD

1. An interesting example of the ambiguity about cultural heritage in the context of Trinidad was the controversy that sprang up in the 1990s about "*chutney*" dance. As Peter Manuel (2000) traces the controversy, the island tradition of music and dance took on a more aggressive and creative form after the 1970s when the Black Power movement began to look for new forms of calypso, and music competitions gave new impetus to Carnival dances and African style music. By the 1990s the same stimuli meant that an old folk tradition of *tan singing* and *chutney* dance in the Indian villages also began to take on a new, more aggressive, form in similar public competitions. The leaders of various Hindu organizations condemned this development as a "creolization" of their religious heritage, but they themselves were seen at the time as a new and narrowly elitist voice in the long history of Trinidad culture, and the youth tended to ignore them.

2. In a fascinating paper, Keith McNeal (2009a) reconstructs a kind of under ground of shared possession cults where socially marginal persons within the African based Orisha or Shango and the Indian based Kalı cults learned from one another how to do healings and exorcisms. He finds it impossible to date these cults but sees them as old, with elaborate pantheons providing clues to their borrowing from one another. This kind of borrowing is certainly plausible, because the Indian villages, while generally Indian only, were not geographically distant, and extensive cultural contact among the different population groups on the island continued throughout the history.

3. As we mentioned when discussing the apparent absence of *Fire Pass* in Guyana, Keith McNeal (2009b) documents the continued presence of this festival in Trinidad down to the 1950s. The selective use of the fire walking tradition when South Indian religious forms moved to the different indenture based societies is very inter esting.

In India, fire walking is practised in both the Mariyamman and Draupadı cults, but it is a central feature of the Draupadı cult. In Mauritius, we noted that only a couple of Draupadı temples still carry on fire walking as a religious practice. In Guyana, we noted that while people speak of fire walking in the past, the single South Indian tradition found there today does not include fire walking and does not include any Draupadı temples either. In a later chapter, we will find that South Africa has a significant number of Draupadı temples, all of which continue to have prominent fire walking rituals, and that it also has many Mariyamman temples with fire walking facilities.

In Trinidad, fire walking is no longer practiced, but it was a central part of the story of village life in the past. One reason that the traditional festival style fire walking was discontinued in the 1950s is that at that time a more institutional form of Hinduism was

being developed and it involved the Sanatana Dharma Maha Sabha pushing for a more Brahmanical style of religious practice. Even though, as we will describe shortly, an explicitly South Indian style of temple was introduced in the 1970s centered on the worship of Mariyamman, it was a temple style borrowed from Guyana and does not include fire walking in its ritual.

4. The special significance of Hosey in Trinidad culture has been analyzed in Kelvin Singh's book (1988) on the important riots that broke out at the festival in 1884, and in Frank Korom's book (2003) on why this festival is still carried on in Trinidad culture when few if any Shi'a Muslims are part of it.

5. Scholars who have tried to sort out whether West Indian culture should be described as "consensual" (R. T. Smith 1962) or "pluralist" (Despres 1967; M. G. Smith 1965) often got tangled up by the fact that they did not recognize how different the cultural patterns were in Guyana and Trinidad. For one thing, when the colonial government in Guyana, which wanted to create cultural divisions where it could, gave recognition to the Council of Pandits in 1927, it was because in the settlements and in the schools the Afro Guyanese and Indo Guyanese already shared intimate cultural ties and the "divide and rule" mentality of the government thought that some cultural pluralism might be helpful. Trinidad, on the other hand, already had separate Indian villages and a separate Indian school system by the 1920s, and the government, which was led by a White and mixed blood elite that intended to stay into the postcolonial era, insisted that new political initiatives should lead to assimilation and the development of a more consensual culture. In the end, each society developed its own formula for cultural conversation, and few today would find the "pluralism" versus "consensual" debate very informative.

6. One cannot help but note the differences in the political leadership the Indians had in Mauritius, Guyana, and Trinidad at this critical time. In Mauritius, Dr. Ram goolam patiently faced the complicated schemes of the French elite for twenty years between 1948 and 1968 before a deal for Independence could be struck. In Guyana, Cheddi Jagan built up a solid political party, but then, when international intrigue set him aside at Independence, he had to wait quietly for almost thirty more years before his party came to power. In Trinidad, Rienzi never won the confidence of the Indian people as Ramgoolam and Jagan had in their situations. As a result, it was only after the radical reorganization of the Indian community that took place after 1952 that Indians were prepared to play their rightful political role.

7. Ramabhai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge* (2003) provides a lovely account of how gender roles and racial roles were shifted around at this dramatic moment in Trinidad's history.

8. Music and drama seem to have played a more central role in the local culture of the Trinidad Indians than they did for any of the other indentured societies. Once again, this may be evidence that in the spirit of the island culture, each subgroup was expected to entertain itself, but in a way that added to the cultural whole. Carnival began to be the most prominent public celebration from the 1920s and primarily was an Afro Trinidadian event. There was, however, at about the same time the development of a new style of public performance for Indian music and drama as

well. Semiprofessional singers such as Bel Bagai, who as an Imam was known as Ghulam Mustafa, became widely known for performances of *tan singing*, and Fakeer Mohammed, who had some training in theatre when he was sent to India for his schooling, became renowned for his productions of old Indian dramas (Manuel 2000). In the Indian case, these performances, while locally developed, were based on traditional art forms and involved both entertainment and the preservation of the Indian cultural heritage. As in North India, Muslim performers are among the most important musicians and dramatists of Trinidad. When in the 1990s some of the Indian youth introduced *tan singing* and *chutney* dancing into the Carnival competitions of the island culture, the more conservative Hindu leaders of organizations such as the Maha Sabha were deeply critical of what appeared to them a debasing of their cultural traditions.

9. A more explicit effort to redirect Hindu practice in Trinidad is the Hindu Prachar Kendra started by Ravindranath Maharaj ("Ravi Ji") in 1990 after he returned from India and some training from the Vishva Hindu Parishad. He especially concentrates on the celebration of Holi or Phagwa and has started a song and dance competition for youth that imitates the *chowtal* competitions of the traditional festival. For the members of the Hindu Maha Sabha, this seems to move Hindu practice too close to the entertainment culture of Carnival and they have condemned it with the same passion with which they condemned the *chutney* dancing of the 1990s.

STORY FOUR: SOUTH AFRICA

1. Although apparently tiny, this early Muslim settlement in Cape Town has had an important role in defining the Indian Muslims' understanding of their role in South African society. Muslim families throughout South Africa make a determined effort to link themselves with the Cape Town families through marriage. Whether they have succeeded in that effort or not, many elite Muslims throughout South Africa claim a tie with that early settlement tradition.

In the modern democratic politics of the country this legendary reputation continues to be important, and Indian representation in the national government often comes from that community.

2. Swan's argument (1985) that Gandhi worked primarily for the businessmen and not the indentured workers is unconvincing. Throughout his *Autobiography* he makes clear how surprised, but pleased, he was with the role the South Indians assumed. When he organized his nursing corp to serve at the time of the "Zulu Rebellion," he specifies that his group included four Gujaratis, one Pathan, and nineteen South Indians. In her autobiography, Dr. Goonam (1991), a South Indian who led in the nonviolent resistance movement of the 1940s, describes how Gandhi would regularly have tea with her South Indian parents after a busy day in his law office.

3. One of the strange stories of the indenture based societies is the way Muharram was celebrated in each of these locations. Historically, Muharram is a Shi'a Muslim time of mourning for the brothers Hassan and Hussein who were killed when the original split in the Muslim community occurred. People carry elaborate replicas of their caskets or *tazzias* through the streets and mourn by beating themselves and

engaging in stick fights with one another. Celebrations of this festival spread from Iraq to India, even when there were no Shi'a in the area, and in each of the indenture societies the British authorities made this one of the official festival days.

The odd thing is that there were few Shi'a in the areas where recruitment for indenture took place, and this festival had to be modified to fit Sunni Muslim interests, but then also to fit Hindu festivals for which no other holiday time was provided. Divali seems to have been part of the celebration in Guyana (Moore 1995), but Hindu support for the festival was also strong in Trinidad (Korom 2003), South Africa (Desai and Vahed 2007), and Fiji (Ali 2004; Kelly 2004). In Mauritius, the national celebration of Śivaratri is now a serious Hindu festival, but the way the model temples are constructed and carried about reminds one of the older Muharram celebrations (Edun 1984).

The other odd part of the story is that violence was frequently associated with the celebration. The major massacre of 1884 in Trinidad is a special story (K. Singh 1988), but the celebration was often taken over by rowdy Afro Caribbeans in Guyana and Trinidad, and even in the more segregated atmosphere of South Africa the stickfighting and alcohol use created serious problems of law and order. It is almost certainly the case that this celebratory violence on the part of the victimized Indian community was in some sense an answer to the pattern of officially sponsored violence that pervaded the whole indenture system.

It is not surprising that in most cases it was the Muslim community in these locations that requested that this increasingly inauthentic Muslim celebration be scaled back.

4. The Khoi and San peoples are thought to represent two of the earliest layers of civilization in South Africa, and some of them still inhabit the Kalahari Desert and live in the traditional way. They are relatively fair skinned people and have an easy going manner. Their extensive contact with the early European settlers in the Cape soon made it hard to distinguish those of mixed blood from others, and they all came to be classified as "Colored" in the later schemes of racial classification.

5. The Xhosa speakers are thought of as Bantu speaking tribes, who came into South Africa from further north, but they must have migrated a very long time ago because they are now fiercely attached to their farms in the southernmost part of the country. Nelson Mandela is from a royal lineage in this tribal community (Mandela 1994).

6. The Zulu speaking tribes are also Bantu speakers and came from further north, probably not too long before the arrival of the Europeans.

7. I met a different Govendar family in Pietermaritzburg in 2000 who claimed that it was their grandfather who discovered those anthills and started the temple. They insisted they were still the legal owners of the temple. They described the lady who acted like a priest when I was at the temple as a servant they have hired to look after the place.

8. As we have already mentioned when discussing the role of the Arya Samaj in Guyana, the Arya Samaj missionaries first discovered the indentured societies when Manilal Maganlal Doctor, the Gujarati lawyer who went to South Africa to assist Gandhi, invited Professor Bhai Paramanand to do a lecture tour of South Africa in 1905. This tour was apparently a grand success among Hindus in the fluid cultural situation of the day. It was not long before the Arya Samaj sent Swami Shankarananda Maharaj to

establish a more permanent mission in 1908. The later mission had strong anti Muslim and anti Christian features that Gandhi objected to. We leave for later a discussion on the role the Arya Samaj eventually had in the development of a Hindu identity in South Africa.

9. We are provided with an intimate glimpse into one family of Tamil traders by Dr. Goonam's autobiography *Coolie Doctor* (1991). Dr. Goonam's father, R. K. Naidoo, was a teenager when he saw the recruiters in his home town of Mayavaram recruiting the lower castes for work in South Africa. He paid for a passage on a ship around 1890 and soon opened a business selling vegetables and importing Indian goods, which he sold in the famous Indian market of Grey Street, Durban. He soon married a high caste Tamil girl who had just graduated from the elite St. Aiden's School for girls run by the Anglican Church in Durban. Her family was among the Tamil elite that had been in Mauritius for generations, and they had sent her to Durban for an elite education. The substantial home this couple established just off Grey Street was a place where Gandhi regularly stopped for tea after a busy day.

10. The two famous examples are Kistappa Reddy, 1863 1941, and Kothanar Ramaswamy Pillai, 1863 1938 (Mikula et al.1982).

11. P. Pratap Kumar (2000) refers to this issue, but he seems to think it is not common. He also seems to confuse the South African practice with a very different issue in other places where people take on priestly functions and then adopt Brahman names. In South Africa, there were no South Indian Brahman names involved. It was lower caste persons who took on landlord caste names. I found dozens of families willing to talk about their name change and how it had occurred. There were, of course, others who were embarrassed that I should ask and hesitated to answer.

12. In the Cape Colony, the political rights of the Indian, Colored, and Black Africans had evolved together. It was actually Dr. Abdul Abdurrahman, an Indian Muslim whose family had been in the Cape for centuries (the group described above who were often called "Malay"), who represented all non Europeans in Cape politics throughout this period. He formed the African Political Organization (APO) in 1901, and sat on both the Cape Town City Council from 1904, and the Cape Provincial Council from 1914, until his death in 1940.

13. Nelson Mandela's description of his friendships with Indian students during his student days in Witwaterstrand University starting in 1943 is instructive in this regard. He describes their tight knit group as based in Ismail Meer's apartment where Mandela frequently stayed. He would later stay with Ismail and his wife Fatima in Durban when he was on the run from the police. J. N. Singh, a member of the Communist party was also a close friend. He also describes working closely with Dr. Yusaf Dadoo on a daily basis from 1949 on.

STORY FIVE: FIJI

1. The total area is 7,055 square miles. Indians were employed only on the two largest islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. Viti Levu is mountainous in the center, and the plantations were all around the outside, while in Vanua Levu the plantations were

mainly in the central plateau. Much of the native cultural and political leadership comes from the smaller Lau islands to the east, but no Indian workers were settled there.

2. For the South Indians, the matter of language turned out a bit different than it did for the North Indians. Because they did not start coming to Fiji until 1903 and were placed on plantations where North Indians had well established routines, the South Indians of Fiji just learned the established Hindi of the plantation. When, however, the South Indians took the lead in starting their own school system, they made some effort to introduce the students to proper literary Tamil and Telegu. Following their lead, the sectarian school systems later introduced by the Muslims, Sanatanas and Arya Samajis also introduced literary Urdu or Hindi into the curriculum.

3. It was not until 1897, and the second generation was well in place, that the Methodist mission decided to bring Miss Dudley, who had been a missionary in India, to try to figure out what to do for the Indians in Fiji. A number of schools for Indians were started, and the Dudley High School of Suva became one of the prestige schools for girls.

In 1902, J. W. Burton arrived in Fiji to work among the Indians. He became an impassioned critic of the way the Colonial Sugar Refining company treated the Indian workers, and his book *Fiji of Today*, published in London in 1910, had a major impact on setting up the inquiry of C. F. Andrews and eventually bringing an end to indenture ship. As a missionary, Burton had a frustrating time, but he did start a number of schools, an orphanage, and had a small number of converts. (Lal 1998 includes Burton's report to the mission board for 1909.)

4. The publishing history of this small piece is somewhat complicated. Totaram seems to have been helped by a journalist named Benarsidas Chaturvedi in getting his thoughts down on paper. Both were at the time involved in the Gandhian movement and hoping to get the indenture system closed down, so only a portion of their notes were published at the time, and they had an important role in that political cause. That pamphlet was translated in 1991 by Kelly and Singh. Many years later, Chaturvedi turned over additional notes to K. L. Gillion when Gillion was conducting research on the Fiji indentureship. These were eventually published by Lal and Yadav in 1994 and translated in part in Lal (1998) and Lal (2000).

5. Jayawardena's argument is probably a bit exaggerated in that even Burton and Sanadhya speak of the public nature of the Indian festival celebrations such as Ramlıla and Tazzia (Muharram), which Hindus and Muslims shared together and in which Native Fijians happily played the part of the monkey army of Ravana in the mass dramas. Festivals were probably an exception to the overall pattern, however, and Jayawardena is generally right when he argues that Hindu practice was not a noticeably public phenomenon until the cultural sharing of the modern era began to take place.

6. Friends in Suva told me about the tradition in a major Mariyamman temple there that was still carried on by a North Indian *pujari* in the 1970s and 1980s. He was apparently trained by a South Indian because the worship they described included severe ascetic practices including fire walking, animal sacrifices, possession, and the exorcism of evil spirits in the South Indian style we have seen in other indenture locations and in India. When I was there in 2000, the temple site was not in operation.

7. It is interesting to note in this connection that in 1920 five distinguished Indian members became part of the Legislative Council for Kenya, and that in 1928 the three best known Indian leaders in Trinidad became part of its Legislative Council. The absence of political representation in the colonial legislative bodies of Fiji from 1929 to 1970 certainly cost the Indian community dearly.

8. By 1946 the concern had become a reality as native Fijians were 45 percent and Indians 46 percent.

9. After almost six years of caretaker government headed up by the Native Fijian nationalist Laisenia Qarace, the army stepped in once again with a mini coup to "clean up" the government in December 2006. Many of the persons involved had played similar roles in 2000. The public consensus seems to be stronger this time that even where there is corruption in government a coup is not the best way to resolve such problems.

10. Some of the same new concern with creating public symbols of Indo Fijian life was probably also involved in the major renovation of the "Indian" Methodist church on the northern edge of Nadi city carried out in 2000.

STORY SIX: EAST AFRICA

1. Cynthia Salvadori's book *Through Open Doors: a View of Asian Cultures in Kenya* (1983) is an incredible labor of love in which she clearly visited every temple in Kenya and conducted detailed interviews with its leaders.

2. The regional breakdown and religious affiliations of the Asian population of East Africa is interesting. The following table is adapted from Gregory (1993, p. 12).

Asian Religious Affiliation in East Africa in 1962

	Hindu/Jain[a]	Muslim	Sikh	Christian
Kenya	97,841 (55.4%)	40,057 (22.7%)	21,169 (12%)	16,524 (9.3%)
Uganda	47,689 (66.4%)	17,818 (24.8%)	3,058 (4.3%)	3,145 (4.4%)
Tanganyika[b]	29,048 (38%)	36,361 (47.5%)	4,234 (5.5%)	4,732 (6%)
Zanzibar[b]	4,243 (26.7)	10,618 (66.8%)	30 (0.2%)	714 (4.5%)
Total	178,821 (52.5%)	104,854 (30.8%)	28,491 (8%)	25,115 (7%)

[a]Jains were counted with Hindus in the census of that time. An estimate would put the Jains at about 15,000 in 1962.
[b]Tanganyika and Zanzibar were later joined together to become Tanzania.

3. Jomo Kenyatta in *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938) explains the strong traditions and sense of autonomy the large Kikuyu tribe in mid Kenya expected outsiders to honor. Oginga Odinga in *Not Yet Uhuru* and many lectures and interviews develops the same sense of the strong traditions of the Luo people on the shores of Lake Victoria (1992).

4. The details of Ismaili organization in East Africa are described by Walji (1974), but are really beyond the range of the present study. They were well ahead of others and had hundreds of families based in Zanzibar and later Dar es Salaam by the mid nineteenth century. A community center and *jamat khana* were put up in

Mombasa in 1888, and Nairobi in 1903, and their grand stone Khoja Mosque followed in 1920.

5. The internal politics of the Bohra community at the beginning of the twentieth century must have been fascinating. A. M. Jeevanjee got his start by representing a wealthy Karachi trader first in Australia and by 1890 in East Africa. He did help build the Bohra community center in Mombasa in 1902, but he worked primarily with the British to recruit labor and sell property in Nairobi. He could not have been very conservative, because he hired the most radical editors for his newspapers and donated land for a public park with a statue of Queen Victoria in Nairobi. He was involved in all the early Indian political associations, and was the only Asian member of the Nairobi Club. One has to wonder if he actually opposed the building of a Bohra community center in Nairobi, because the one eventually built in 1931 was built by the Karimjee family of Dar es Salaam.

6. In the Punjab in the 1920s, the Singh Sabha movement sought to get rid of all caste distinctions among Sikhs and people began insisting that they were all Jat Sikhs. The migrants to East Africa left before that reform, and they continue to be proud of their specific caste identities. The Sikhs who came first were in the British army and police services and were Jat Sikhs. They rebuilt their *gurudwara* three or four times at the top of the hill above the railway, and the lovely domed structure there now was opened in 1963. The workers who came to build the railway were Ramgarhia, a caste that traditionally specialized in skilled crafts such as carpentry, masonry, and black smithy. They made up the great majority of the Sikhs in East Africa. They also had early *gurudwaras* near the railway, but in 1972 built a vast *gurudwara* and medical complex on the suburban Muranga Road. The oldest *gurudwara* still used is the lovely one in the old bazaar on Gaberone Road, which was built in 1918 by the Khatri or high caste Sikhs. The low caste potter and sweeper Sikhs had a *gurudwara* in the Kariakor area of Nairobi, but it is no longer in use.

In 1927 the Oshwal (farmer) Svetambar Jains opened the lovely stone temple that is in the old bazaar area of Nairobi. Most of them moved to the Ngara area in 1967 where they could have their own schools and housing and where they built a new temple finished in 1984. When some families split off and began to follow a Digambar teacher, another beautiful temple was built nearby. Somewhat later, the Navnat (merchant) caste of Jains arrived, but it too has now split and has a number of community halls.

7. Before the founder died in 1830, he established a line through India and put everything north of that line under the Ahmedabad diocese and its Nar Narayana (Viṣṇu) temple, with one of his nephews as the *acarya* of that region. Those to the south were in the Vadtal diocese and its Lakshmi Narayana temple, with a different nephew as *acarya*. The first temple built in Nairobi in 1945 is under the jurisdiction of the Ahmedabad line, and its *acarya* installed the new deities in the remodeled temple in 1984. The first temple in Dar es Salaam built in 1957 is apparently under the Vadtal line.

During the founder's lifetime, the main leadership in the temples was in the hands of ascetics or *sadhus*. Part of the idea of appointing *acaryas* was to have a way of curbing overly ambitious *sadhus* by moving them to a new temple every three years. Gopala nanda Swami had been a prominent *sadhu* initiated by the founder, and, in 1940,

Muktajivandas left the Ahmedabad diocese arguing that there had been a "Gadi" or spiritual seat of authority left with Gopalananda and only persons in that lineage or Gadi were divine incarnations. In 1952, the Gadi group built the Swaminarayan Sikhant Sajivan Mandal temple on Kirinyaga Road in Nairobi where the Seat or Gadi of the divine *sadhu* is honored along with the *murtis* of Swaminarayan and the Nar Narayana. In 1982, the current *sadhu*, Priyadasji Swami, visited the temple, but it is considered inappropriate for *sadhus* to live outside of India, and his presence is considered to be there in the Gadi or seat.

Two doors from the Gadi temple in Nairobi is the Shree Kutch Bhuj Nar Narayana temple opened in 1954, and the same group built the fancy "birthday cake" temple of Mombasa in 1960. The community that built these two temples is from the remote region of Gujarat called Kutch from where the Ismailis, Bohras, and Lohanas also came. This group is nominally under the Ahmedabad diocese, but people in Kutch are a long way from Ahmedabad and speak Kutchi rather than Gujarati. The Bhuj temple of Kutch from the beginning kept its funds separate and its ascetics appointed their own successors, so in effect it is a separate denomination even though it continues to be linked to Ahmedabad. This branch of Swaminarayan seems to be the wealthiest one in East Africa, and it keeps very much to itself, partly because it uses a different language.

Finally, there is the branch of the movement known as the BAPS (for Bochasanwasi Aksar Purushottam Sanstha), which built its first temple in Mom basa in 1954, another in the Ngara suburb of Nairobi in 1966, and still another in Dar es Salaam in 1977. This movement grew out of an early split in the Vadtal diocese when Shastriji Maharaj in 1906 criticized the *acarya*'s lax ways and said the leadership should have stayed with the *sadhus* because Sadhu Gunatitananda had been appointed to be the founder's spiritual successor. Through the 1950s and 1960s, the leadership of this group was shared, with Yogiji Maharaj the spiritual leader and Pramukh Swami the administrator, and the movement expanded dra matically. Since 1971, Pramukh Swami has been the sole leader, and magnificent temples are now being built in Britain, Canada, and the United States. The movement appeals to a higher caste grouping among the Patels, and, even in East Africa, most of its adherents are quite modern and use English as the medium of communication (Salvadori 1983; Williams 1984).

8. The African funeral in East Africa is not either a family affair, as it is in Western society, or a careful ritual send off of the soul, as it is in India. It starts with a number of huge celebrations or *harambis* (Swahili version of chain gang cry "all together now"), where a persons' "age mates," those with whom they were initiated and remain life long friends, make sacrificial contributions to fund the funeral. There is then a dramatic processional leading to the burial. Then there is an extensive set of pictures and eulogies that run in the newspapers and other publications for as long as appropriate. Eventually, the spirit of the person is said to reside in a grandchild or other young person, and that person is given the elder's name.

9. The sociopolitical circumstances in which the communities of Indians live in East Africa continue to evolve with every wind of political change. In many ways, the dramatic events of the 1960s and 1970s are now a generation back, and

in all three countries that make up the region, the initiatives of the Indian business community are now generally welcomed by the political leadership. In Kenya, where free enterprise has remained central throughout, the early efforts of the first President to push Indians from the shopkeeper role into that of indus trialist seem in retrospect to have been reasonably well intentioned. The "Asian role" in the economy, much like the "Kikuyu role," is now discussed in the financial pages of the newspaper and seems like a fairly routine issue. In Tanzania and Uganda, there is actually some effort to restore Asian economic initiative after the restricting political actions of earlier socialist (Nyerere) and racist (Idi Amin) regimes. In Uganda especially, it is notable that the two billionaire families of Mehtas and Madhvanis have been welcomed back by the government, even though some of the race based resentment of their economic dominance remains.

10. Some of the larger communities such as the Ismailis and the Ramgarhia Sikhs saw relatively high percentages of their members leave in the exodus of the early 1970s, but they continued to establish their presence in East Africa.

The Ismailis began to move away from their monumental Khoja Mosque at the center of Nairobi to their expansive community center in Parklands earlier, but since the 1970s their community center has been expanded to include a sports arena, schools, and library as well the *jamat khana*. It is their hospitals, considered by many the best in East Africa, and their ownership of the major daily, *The Nation*, that indicates that they have no plans to give up their role in East Africa.

The Ramgarhia Sikhs started to develop their major community center on Muranga Road, Nairobi just as the expulsion order came in Uganda. In 1985, their grand medical center opened with a clear indication that they would continue to be part of the new multiracial society.

11. It is difficult for the Hindus who have now chosen to live in East Africa to figure out what kind of a long term social role they can find in the society that is evolving since Independence. At the most superficial level, there is a lot of resentment. Africans resent the guards at the slightly opened doorways of the many Hindu temples. Indians resent the fact that they are not expected to have any role in government or to be appointed to government agencies even when they sometimes have the greatest expertise. Africans resent the near monopoly control Indians have of many facets of the economy, and Indians resent the fact that the schools and hospitals they have built are not recognized for the creative role they play in the improvement of society. While the resentments are sharply felt, and frequently and forcefully stated in conversation, they are at the same time acknowledged to be superficial. Africans always conclude that they admire India and Gandhi and cannot understand why the "Asians" of East Africa are so different. Indians in East Africa, and even more those from East Africa now living in the West, become quite sentimental about how East Africa has become their "home."

12. It is not been easy for historians to explain the economic success of the Asians in East Africa. Arab traders seem to have had the upper hand at the beginning of the nineteenth century, colonial authorities seem to have stacked the cards against the Indians in the first half of the twentieth century, and the political authorities of the

independent African states have had little reason to support Indian interests in the later part of the century.

To an economic historian it is probably possible to identify how Indians were in a position to take advantage of a growing economy, and how they established themselves as the primary shopkeepers, entrepreneurs, and industrialists in the region just as the economy needed those services.

It was, of course, also helpful that for cultural reasons the Asian businessmen of the day tended to practice the fabled "this worldly asceticism" of Weber and plough their wealth back into the economy over and over again.

13. One is reminded at this point of the debates between Protestant missionaries and Vedantic scholars of a century ago. The missionaries complained that the Hindus did not have a system of ethics, and the Vedantins argued that the Protestants had only a system of ethics. As the Vedantins saw it, ethics was not "religion" and while Protestants had a human institution or "church" and a set of human teachers, it had no concern with *mokṣa* and "realization."

The Hindus of East Africa also have strong human institutions, their "teachers" are revered, and each community has a clear set of instructions on behavior, but the question might be raised whether in the process they have adopted a system of "ethics" and lost a sense of *mokṣa* and "realization." Certainly the ascetics or *sanyasins*, who in India are the embodiment of "realization," are totally absent from the East African scene. They, as the representatives of what Louis Dumont once called the "man outside society" part of the Hindu system, are in India a balance or structural opposite to the caste or "man in society" norm. In East Africa, that balancing dimension is not to be found.

14. The Arya Samaj movement was considered a "reform" movement in India, but it is an elitist movement with a high ritual form in East Africa.

CONCLUSION

1. Deo Kernahan, a Trinidad Hindu, founded the Canadian Council of Hindus and represented Hindus in inter faith conversations through the 1980s and 1990s.

2. Neil Bisoondath, a Trinidad Hindu, stirred up a major controversy in 1994 when he wrote *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*.

3. The one innovation in this caste based pattern seems to be that in North America community centers are used by a cluster of similar caste groups. Going one step further, the Navaratri celebration of the traditional *ras garbha* dances, which are known in Gujarat as family specific and in East Africa as caste specific and involve mostly women, have become massive Gujarati speakers celebrations in North America with strong male participation.

4. One context in which a section of the East African Hindu tradition is now actively engaging both the Indian tradition and the Western religious tradition is the new temple building pattern of the BAPS branch of the Swaminarayan movement. As we noted earlier, the Swaminarayan movement started in India and was originally more of a sectarian movement than a caste based temple movement. Nevertheless, the four

branches of the movement went to East Africa and functioned much like caste based temples in that context. At the time of the early exodus from East Africa, each of those groups moved on to Britain and again functioned as caste groups (Barot 1980). The BAPS leader in India, Pramukh Swami, however, had dreams of projecting his group onto the world stage as the primary voice for all of Hinduism and to that end he raised money in East Africa and elsewhere for some of the most ornate temples anywhere in suburbs of London, Chicago, and Toronto. These temples use traditional Indian ritual, and also encourage the this worldly accumulation of wealth associated with the East African traditions. What is most unusual, however, is that they also have a newer sense of mission that one might associate with modern Western institutions (Williams 1984).

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Index

1780 British control of South Africa, 128
1802 British control of Trinidad, 95
1810 British control of Mauritius, 20
1815 British control of British Guiana, 55
1830s (1843) Indian workers to Mauritius, 21
1838 Indian workers to Guyana, 57
1845 Indian workers to Trinidad, 95
1860 Indian workers to South Africa, 125 127
1874 British control of Fiji, 169
1879 Indian workers to Fiji, 171
1880s British and German trusteeships in East Africa, 201
1895 Indian workers to East Africa, 201
1917 End of Indenture, 173 174, 196, 247
1960s Independence for East Africa, 219, 243, 251n.11
1962 Independence for Trinidad, 108, 242
1966 Independence for Guyana, 86, 242
1968 Independence for Mauritius, 43, 241, 253n.12, 259n.6
1970 Independence for Fiji, 188 189, 197, 243
1994 Democratic Elections for South Africa, 156 158, 162, 164 165, 243

Abdurrahman, Dr. Abdul, 155, 163, 262n.12
absence of appropriate institutions (Fiji), 176, 264n.7
Action Libérale (Mauritius), 41
adoption of higher caste names (South Africa), 135, 236
“Africanized” and “Christianized” (Guyana *mandirs*), 91
Africans, 3, 5, 231
  in East Africa, 15, 201 203, 212, 216 218, 221 222, 229, 240 241, 244, 247, 267n.11
  in Guyana, 13, 58 61 (*see also* Afro Guyanese)
  in Mauritius, 13, 19 21, 23, 30, 44, 49, 51 (*see also* Creole, General Population)
  in South Africa, 14, 144 145, 155, 162, 245, 262n.12 (*see also* ANC, Xhosa speaking tribes, Zulu speaking tribes)
  in Trinidad, 14, 95 97, 100, 108, 110, 113 114, 121, 123 (*see also* Blacks)
Afrikaners, 129, 134, 155, 242. *See also* Boer War
Afrikaner led Nationalist government, 156 157. *See also* apartheid
Afro Guyanese, 58, 64, 70 72, 75, 78, 86 88, 90 92, 94, 254n.4, 259n.5
Aga Khan, 200, 213. *See also* Ismailis
“age mates” (East Africa), 212, 266n.8

Ahmadiya, 206
Albion (Guyana), 56, 61 65, 72 73, 256n.9
Alliance Party (Fiji), 188 189
"allies of convenience." *See* missionaries
Ananda Marg, 222 224, 229
Anassamy, Vellivahel, 26
Anassamy, Inonmondy, 26
ANC (African National Congress) (South Africa), 145, 151, 154 157, 163 164, 242
Anderson, Benedict, 77, 238, 249n.1
Anderson, C., 26, 127, 240
Andrews, C. F., 174 175, 185, 263n.3
Angad, Krishna, 116. *See also* Kalı Mai
animal sacrifice
  in Fiji, 179
  in Guyana, 65, 69 71, 75 76, 238
  in Mauritius, 28, 30, 252n.5
  in South Africa, 130 131, 134, 136
  in Trinidad, 110, 118
apartheid, 137 138, 144, 148, 151, 155, 157 158, 161, 163 165, 243. *See also* Group Areas Act
APO (African Peoples Organization) (South Africa), 155, 262n.12
apprenticeship, 21, 25, 50
Arab traders, 199, 203
arati, 48, 79, 90
Arawak, 95, 123
"area of darkness," 11, 98, 245. *See also* Naipaul, V. S.
Arya Samaj
  in East Africa, 206, 268n.14
  in Fiji, 182 184, 189
  in Guyana, 80 85, 89, 92 93, 238, 257n.18
  in Mauritius, 32, 39 41
  in South Africa, 134, 147 149, 151 152, 163, 165, 261n.8
  in Trinidad, 104, 110
"Asians" (of East Africa), 201 203, 211 212, 215 220, 222, 224, 237, 267n.11
Asiatic Land Tenure Act (South Africa), 153 154
authentic tradition, 11, 246
avataras, 76

Bailappa, 63 65, 115, 238, 256n.9
BAPS (Bochasanwasi Aksar Purushottam Sanstha), 210, 215, 265n.7, 268n.4
Baron Grant, 23, 251n.1
barracks, 4, 15, 173, 232, 240. *See also* "lines," plantation housing, railway housing, slave quarters
Bau island (Fiji), 167 169, 187 188. *See also* Cakobau
Bavadra, Timoci, 190
Beejadhur, Aunauth, 22, 24, 42, 239, 251n.1, 252n.6, 252n.7
Bengal
  French Bengal offspring, 22
  lady from, 24, 252n.3
  slaves from, 23 24, 49, 252n.2
Bérenger, Paul, 43, 253n.12
Bethesda Temple, 147 152, 163 164
Bhai Paramanand, 81 82, 261n.8. *See also* Arya Samaj
bhajans, 78, 117
Bharat Sevashram Sangha, 89, 93, 257n.18
Bharati, Agehananda, 226
Bhatias, 199 200, 213
Bhavani Dayal Sanyasi, 147. *See also* Arya Samaj
Black African political struggle, 144 147, 155, 157
Black Bush Polder (Guyana), 56, 73
Black Consciousness Movement, 106, 124
black deity. *See* Cankani Karuppu
Black Madonna, 100 101
"black power," 112 114, 242, 258n.1
Black River, 20, 50
Blacks (Trinidadians), 105 106, 108, 112 114
Boer War, 129, 134, 145. *See also* Afrikaners
Bohra (Muslims), 201, 203, 207, 213, 265n.5
Bon Espoir (Mauritius), 26, 35 36
Booker Inc. (Guyana), 254n.1
boundary marker, 38
Bourbon. *See* Réunion
Brahma Kumari Movement, 44, 222 223, 229
Brahman (caste)
  in Fiji, 174 175, 179
  in Guyana, 76 78, 82 84, 91, 235, 257n.14, 257n.15, 257n.16
  in Mauritius, 31, 35, 37

Brahman (caste) (*continued*)
  in South Africa, 130, 135, 142, 262n.11
  in Trinidad, 101, 105 106, 111 112, 114, 118
brahmanical temple, 28, 74, 179, 191 193
Brown, Mootoo, 116, 118
Butadroka, Sakiasi, 189
British businessmen, 14 15, 24, 27, 50, 55, 129, 254n.2
British colonial government, 4 6, 12, 15, 21, 41, 88, 199, 201, 215 216, 226
British Education Act, 254n.3
British Empire, 3, 5, 12, 55
British Guiana, 21, 55, 57, 86, 254n.2
British indentured worker scheme, 3, 14, 21, 57
British Parliament, 21, 25, 50, 57, 254n.3
British planters, 14, 55, 57, 64
Bronkhurst, H. V. P., 63, 257n.13
Buddhist temple (Mauritius), 33
building of tradition, 238 241
Burnham, Forbes, 86 89, 92, 242
Burton, J. W., 174, 196
Butler, T. U. B., 105 106

Cakobau, 169
Calcutta, 4, 23, 26, 30, 59, 76, 126 127, 160, 172, 201, 235
  "Calcutta coolies" 30, 76
Camp de Lascar, 25
Camp de Malabards, 25
Camp de Noirs Libres, 25
camphor, 48, 71, 79
Canada, 16, 87, 190 192, 197, 250n.5
Canadian Council of Hindus, 268n.1
Canadian Presbyterian Mission, 102 103, 120. *See also* denominational schools
Candeśvaran, 34
Cankani Karuppu (Cankili Karuppanar), 66 67, 69, 130
Cape Colony, 144, 164, 261n.4, 262n.12
Cape Town Muslims, 127, 163, 260n.1
capitalist, 3 5, 15, 21, 24, 27, 50, 52, 55, 58, 84, 95, 254n.1
Caribbean culture, 98, 100, 105 106, 122, 242
Carlisle Street (South Africa), 148, 150
caste
  background varied, 8 9, 11, 234
   based social pattern (in East Africa), 15, 200, 212, 226, 228 230, 236 237, 243, 246
   based temples, 202 203, 208, 229
   based worship, 15, 130, 206 208, 211, 213 215, 229, 268n.3
   community centers, 15, 204, 207 208, 215, 226, 240, 247
   free society (in Guyana), 76, 82 83, 91, 235
   like social hierarchy (in Mauritius), 25, 28, 31 32, 37 38, 40, 45, 51 52, 54, 74
  opposition to, 40, 82 83, 206
castes
  changed (in South Africa), 130, 134 135, 149
  lower, 59, 67, 71, 76, 130, 208, 211, 226, 229, 236
  of Sikhs, 15, 203, 265n.6
  rudimentary system of, 99, 101, 106
  upper, 71, 74, 134 135, 149, 179, 226, 229, 236, 262n.9
Catholic Church, 24 25, 34, 37, 40, 43, 49 51, 53, 60, 75, 88, 91, 93, 97, 204
Chaguanas (Trinidad), 96, 103, 116, 120
Chamar (caste), 32, 40, 51, 101, 253n.11
Chariot Festival, 161. *See also* Hari Kṛṣṇas
Chaudhry, Mahendra, 190
Chatsworth (South Africa), 151, 157, 160 161, 164
Chettiar (caste), 25 26, 29
chiefly confederacies, 187
chiefs, 168 170, 172, 176, 186 189, 195
Chinese people
  as a community, 22, 33, 86
  as traders, 22, 32 33, 44, 49
  as laborers, 32, 60
Christians, 42, 61, 70, 78 79, 99, 102, 125, 127, 168, 201. *See also* Bethesda Temple
"Christianized." *See* "Africanized"
chutney dance, 258n.1, 259n.8, 260n.9
Cini dad or land of sugar, 124
Cipriani, Arthur, 105
Clairwood (South Africa), 135, 137
"colored" people of South Africa, 128 129, 155 157, 163, 261n.4, 262n.12

common culture, 9, 235, 244, 254n.4
common electoral roll, 176
community halls, 207 208, 210 211. *See also* caste
congregational form of worship, 79, 83 85, 90, 152, 246
constitution, 145, 154, 187, 189 190, 195, 197, 241, 243, 253n.12
contract. *See* indenture
"coolie Christmas," 128
"coolitude," 251n.1. *See also* Torabully, Khal
cosmic landscape, 9, 212, 221, 228
Council of Chiefs (Fiji), 169 170, 176, 186 188, 195
Council of Government (Mauritius), 41
Council of Pandits (Guyana), 80 81, 83 84, 88 89, 238, 259n.5
coups (Fiji), 190 192, 197, 243, 251n.10, 264n.9
Couva (Trinidad), 96, 102
Creole
  as a shared culture, 109, 113 115, 238
  as a language, 23, 25, 31, 43 44, 59 60, 73, 100, 184, 235, 253n.10
  as a population group, 30, 33, 42 43, 64, 114, 251n.1
  as a social process (creolization), 73, 113 115, 119, 146, 176
CSR (Colonial Sugar Refining Company) (Fiji), 170 171, 173, 176 178, 187, 263n.3
culture
  African, 146, 165, 216
  Caribbean, 98, 100
  Chinese, 33
  creole, 114 115, 119, 146, 176
  East African Indian, 202, 237
  French, 21, 24, 42, 53 54, 239
  Hindu, 8, 11, 81, 98, 123, 165, 244 245, 248
  host, 10, 233
  Indian, 4, 8, 81, 98 99, 109 110, 113, 119, 178 179, 216, 233
  Indo Fijian, 178, 185, 190 191, 240
  island, 54, 96 100, 123, 239
  local, 8 9, 27 28, 110, 121, 172, 202
  loss of, 6, 9, 58, 61, 172, 234
  ethnic, 10, 64, 98
  open, 9, 73, 78, 85
  patterns of, 8 9
  rebuilding of, 7, 58 59, 63, 65, 234 241, 243, 248
  shared, 8 9, 84, 87 89, 94, 98 100, 117, 120, 191, 254n.4
  slave, 50
  South African Indian, 146, 156 157, 159, 245
  Trinidad Indian, 99, 109 110, 258n.1
cultural hybridity, 6
Curé, Dr. Maurice, 42
Curepe (Trinidad), 96, 119
Curepipe (Mauritius), 20, 37, 46

Dadoo, Dr. Yusuf, 153 155, 163, 262n.13
Dakṣinamurti, 34
Dalton, Henry, 62
Dancing Śiva, 34, 141
Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), 200, 202 203, 210 211, 264n.4, 265n.5, 265n.7
Dass, Isher, 217 218, 240
Dayananda Saraswati, 39. *See also* Arya Samaj
Deen, Shamsud, 216
denominational schools, 104, 107 108, 112, 121 122
Deo, Vishnu, 183 184
depression in sugar prices, 22, 28, 61, 128
Desai, Manilal Ambalal, 216 217, 240
Dharmic Sabha (Guyana), 89
diaspora, 10, 12, 75, 165, 248, 250n.3, 250n.4, 251n.1
Divali, 119 120, 260n.3
Divine Life Society, 149, 160, 165
DLP (Democratic Labour Party) (Trinidad), 108 109, 112 113
Doctor, Manilal Maganlal, 41, 81, 177, 182, 261n.8. *See also* Arya Samaj
Draupadı, 20, 37, 62, 130, 137, 253n.8, 255n.8, 258n.3
drum
  tappu, 69
  utaki, 69, 71
Dube, John Langalibalele, 145. *See also* ANC
Dube subcaste, 142
Dudley, Miss, 263n.3
Dumont, Louis, 51, 67, 268n.13
Durban (South Africa), 240, 251n.9, 262n.9, 262n.13

Durga, 34, 36, 39, 208, 252n.4
Durkheim, E., 211
Dutch colonists
in Guyana, 55 57, 75, 93, 95, 254n.1
in Mauritius, 19, 23, 49, 252n.2
in South Africa, 128 129. *See also* Afrikaners

East Africa
African groups in, 5, 199, 212, 216 217, 219, 229, 233, 244
caste based social patterns of, 15, 203, 207, 226, 228 229, 237, 246 247
colonial rule in, 15, 202, 216, 230, 232, 240
Gujarati castes in, 201, 206 207, 225
Hindu practices of, 208 209, 213, 222 224, 228, 246 247
indentured workers in, 3 4, 201
Indian numbers in, 5, 201, 219, 264n.2
Jain groups in, 201, 203, 205, 220, 247
Muslim groups in, 200, 209 210, 213, 265n.5
Punjabis in, 4, 201, 206, 222
reverence for human figures in, 213, 226 228
Sikhs in, 203, 226, 265n.6
Swaminarayan groups in, 208 209, 213 215, 220, 265n.7
temples of, 221 222
this worldly values of, 227 230, 237, 243
traders in, 15, 199 202, 264n.4
East Indian National Association (Trinidad), 102 103, 121
East Indian National Congress (Trinidad), 102 103, 121
education,
in East Africa, 220, 222, 224, 229
English medium, 54 55, 57, 86
in Fiji, 172 173, 196, 263n.3
in Guyana, 57, 60, 82, 84, 254n.4, 257n.13
in Mauritius, 43, 52, 54, 254n.3
in South Africa, 146, 149, 152, 156, 158, 163
in Trinidad, 99, 102 104, 106, 110 112, 121 122
Emerging leadership, 102 107
English speaking urbaneness, 146
entering the global world, 244 247
estates, 21, 23 25, 27, 29, 32, 38, 40, 49 51, 62, 252n.3
ethnic community, 26, 48, 107, 112, 122 124
ethnic identity, 10, 44, 77, 97 98, 109, 115, 117, 119, 121, 223
ethnic religion, 46, 108, 110, 113, 123
ethnicity, 14, 45, 100, 103 104, 112, 115, 119 121
European settlers, 67 68, 96, 110 111, 129, 170, 176 177, 183, 189, 200 201
evil spirits, 59, 68 71, 75, 92 93, 115, 150, 226, 263n.6. *See also* exorcism
exorcism, 69 70, 72 73, 90 91, 110, 115 117, 130 131, 151, 158, 163, 246, 256n.12, 258n.2

family based goddess temples (Fiji), 179, 181
fatalistic tone, 228
Federation of the British West Indies, 105, 108, 112
festivals
in East Africa, 207, 211, 215, 230
in Fiji, 178 179, 182, 191, 263n.5
in Guyana, 63 65, 68 71, 75, 255n.8, 256n.11
in Mauritius, 31, 37, 46 48, 54, 253n.9
in South Africa, 131 132, 136 137, 139, 141, 161, 165, 260n.3
in Trinidad, 100 101, 109, 115, 119, 258n.3, 259n.4, 260n.9
Fiji
colonial structures of, 168 170, 186 188, 195 197, 202, 232 233, 239, 243
Colonial Sugar Refining Company of, 170 171, 173, 176 178, 232
Hindu temples of, 175, 178 180, 185, 191 196
indentured workers of, 171 178, 180, 187, 195 196
independence of, 164, 187 189, 195 197, 243
Indian numbers in, 5, 164, 263n.1, 264n.8
relations with Native Fijians thereof, 5, 176, 186, 188

Fijian Affairs Board, 186
fire altar, 40, 82 83
fire pass. *See* fire walking
fire walking, 37, 62, 100, 109, 115, 137 138, 255n.8, 258n.3
five or ten acre plots of land, 96, 99
five year contract, 58, 124, 233 234. *See also* indenture
flag, 31, 65, 79, 92
flagstaff, 131, 141, 192 193
four racial groups, 156
"free" Indians, 96, 171, 173
free return trip, 58, 99, 124
French planters (in Trinidad), 95, 97, 110
French society (in Mauritius)
  Catholicism of, 34, 49
  culture of, 21, 41 42, 251n.1
  elite attitudes of, 25, 26, 30, 37, 42, 44, 46, 52, 239, 241, 252n.6, 252n.7
  language of, 23, 25, 31, 43, 44, 50 52
  mixed offspring of, 22
  planters of, 21 22, 24, 27, 29, 31 32, 36, 41, 43, 50 52, 54, 95, 97, 110, 254n.3
  prime minister from, 43, 253n.12
  rule of, 19, 21, 29, 32 33, 49 50
  settlers of, 19, 21, 23, 29, 42, 49, 53, 74, 96
  social hierarchy of, 24 25, 40, 52, 93
futuristic perspective, 9, 11, 105, 108, 124, 220, 224, 228 229, 245

Gandhi, M. K., 81, 125, 127, 129, 133 135, 143 148, 153 154, 162 164, 174, 177, 186, 197, 218, 232 233, 236, 239 240
Ganeśa, 34, 36, 39, 66, 78, 193, 212 214, 221
Ganga Amman, 73
General Population (Mauritius), 30, 43 44, 253n.12
Georgetown (Guyana), 56 57, 61, 86, 232, 255n.6, 255n.7
"Ghetto Act" (South Africa), 153
Gillion, K. L., 169 170, 176, 263n.4
Goan Christians, 201, 203 204, 240
goddess worship,
  in East Africa, 207 208, 212 213, 221, 229
  in Fiji, 179
  in Guyana, 62 70, 73, 76, 91 93, 246
  in Mauritius, 8, 28 30, 34, 36 38, 252n.4
  in South Africa, 130 134, 136 137, 141 142, 150, 162
  in Trinidad, 101, 115, 119
Good Friday festival. *See* Black Madonna
Good Friday Isipingo festival, 131
Gool, Cissy, 155. *See also* Abdurrahman, Dr. Abdul
Goonam, Dr. K., 154, 260n.2, 262n.9
Gordon, Arthur, 15, 169 170
Gounder, Dr. Ponnu Swami, 192
Grand Bassin Reservoir, 20, 47
Grey Street (South Africa), 128, 139 140, 148, 150, 262n.9
Group Areas Act, 131, 137, 151, 156 157
Gujarat
  businessmen of, 15, 127, 134 135, 143, 178, 182, 207
  castes of, 201, 207, 213, 226
  language of, 158, 215, 235
  people from, 127, 146, 201, 218, 225
  temple styles of, 143, 149, 206, 208, 214, 268n.3
Gurudeva Sivaya Subramuniya Svamigal, 192
gurudwaras. *See* Sikhs
Guyana
  Hindu traditions of, 28, 31, 67 73, 75 80, 101, 104, 172, 178, 194, 225 226, 228, 233, 241 242 (*see also* Arya Samaj, Brahman)
  indentured workers of, 5, 13, 21, 56 60, 115, 125, 177, 195, 232, 247, 254n.1, 254n.2
  Indian numbers in, 251n.7
  move to Europe and North America, 16, 85 87, 245 246
  multiculturalism of, 56 58, 87 88, 94, 99 100, 121, 146, 172, 194, 238, 246
  North Indian traditions of, 31, 75 80, 81, 87, 101, 109, 111, 142, 235, 257n.15, 257n.16
  planters of, 14, 56 57, 61, 127 128, 232
  rivers of, 255n.6
  secular political tradition of, 86 89, 108, 164 165, 176, 224, 251.7, 254n.4, 259n.6
  slave population of, 55 56, 93, 233, 254n.3

Guyana (*continued*)
social equality of, 56 58, 93, 101, 110
South Indian traditions of, 62 75, 115 116, 179, 226, 236, 255n.5, 256n.9, 256n.11, 256n.12

Hanuman, 31, 35, 37, 39, 78 79, 92 93, 110, 120, 142
Hari Kṛṣṇa
in East Africa, 222 223, 225, 229
in Mauritius, 39, 44
in South Africa, 149, 160 161, 165
havan, 82 83
healing
in East Africa, 207, 229
in Guyana, 70, 72 73, 91, 100 101, 115 116, 246, 256n.12
in Mauritius, 50
in South Africa, 130 131, 150 151, 158, 163
in Trinidad, 258n.2
"hell" (Fiji), 196
hierarchical system, 24 25, 31 32, 40, 49, 51 52, 54, 71, 93, 110, 201, 232, 234, 236
Hindi language, 44, 59, 76, 82, 104, 147 149, 158, 174, 184 185, 222, 237, 255n.7, 263n.2
Hindu Prachar Kendra, 260n.9
Hinduism, 40, 44, 46, 53, 83 84, 93, 102, 108 109, 112, 125, 165, 226
Hindus
communities of, 8, 10, 13, 16, 54, 77, 85, 107, 124, 134, 143, 147, 165
identity of, 8 9, 12, 45, 76, 79, 101, 133, 190
in East Africa, 16, 200 201, 203, 206 208, 215, 221 222, 226 227
in Fiji, 183, 190, 192 193
in Guyana, 59, 61, 75, 78, 84 85, 89 94
in Mauritius, 30 31, 33, 35 36, 40, 42 45, 48, 50 51, 53 54
in South Africa, 15, 129, 132, 139, 143, 149, 152, 158 159, 161
in Trinidad, 98, 101 105, 107 109, 111 112, 114, 120, 122 123
religious practices of, 9, 33, 45 46, 53, 94, 115, 129, 194
temples of, 33, 64, 92, 111, 130, 139, 143, 158, 191 193, 203, 209, 221
traditions of, 7 8, 11, 61, 82, 84, 92, 132, 208, 226, 228
Holi, 31, 100, 260n.9
homeland, 7 9, 11, 58, 81 82, 90, 93, 172, 217, 219, 226, 233, 237, 245, 250n.3
Hosein, F. E. M., 103, 105
Hosey, 100, 109
"humanization," 226 228
hybrid cultural forms, 73, 100, 162

IFB (Indian Forward Bloc) (Mauritius), 42, 253n.12
Idi Amin, 219, 243, 266n.9
Île de France, 20, 23 25
images
crafted, 36, 39, 46, 48, 63, 65, 131, 141, 211 212
of humans, 211 212, 229
of main deity, 36, 38, 78, 118, 131 132, 141 142
of subsidiary deities, 67, 116, 139, 212
rejection of, 80 85, 147, 149
indenture (contract)
communities based on, 241 242, 244 245
individual contracts of, 3, 14, 27, 74, 96, 98 99, 101, 133 135, 179, 196
a system of, 3 5, 14, 22 23, 173, 178 179, 202, 226
indentured societies, 12, 14, 16, 26 28, 81 82, 127, 178, 196, 201
indentured workers, 3, 12 13, 16, 24, 26, 57 58, 62, 127 128
indentureship
the ending of, 63, 77, 92, 100, 173 178, 196, 240
the experience of, 3 4, 9, 11, 22, 27, 58 59, 99, 104, 173 175, 252n.3, 255n.5
the period of, 62 63, 100, 115, 120, 175 176, 187
Independence
in East Africa, 201, 203, 218 219, 222, 229 230, 251n.11, 267n.11
in Fiji, 170, 177, 187 189, 195 196, 243
in Guyana, 86 90, 241 242, 254n.4, 259n.6
in Mauritius, 28, 30, 42 44, 47, 241, 253n.12, 259n.6

in Trinidad, 106 109, 122 123, 242, 259n.6
"Indian" Methodist Church, 264n.10
"Indian penetration" (South Africa), 152
Indian Relief Act of 1914, 146
"Indian representation" (Trinidad), 103, 105
Indian Representation Act (South Africa), 153 154
Indo Fijians, 172 173, 176, 187 188, 190 192, 194 198, 243
intermarriage, 48 49, 79, 94, 96 97, 217
interpreter 61, 69 71, 88
invented traditions, 58, 65, 71, 73, 78, 84, 90, 92, 94
ISKON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness). *See* Hari Kṛṣṇas
Isipingo temple, 131, 136
island culture, 96 100, 232, 239, 259n.8
Ismailis, 15, 201 203, 213, 264n.4, 267n.10

Jagan, Cheddi, 86 89, 241 242, 259n.6. *See also* PPP
Jagan, Janet, 86 87. *See also* PPP
jahaji bhai, 4
Jains, 201, 203, 205, 211, 220, 264n.2, 265n.6
Jain temple, 205, 211, 220
jari. *See* exorcism
Jayawardena, Chandra, 58, 61, 75, 80 83, 86, 178, 194, 255n.5, 263n.5
Jeevanjee, A. M., 213, 216 217, 240, 265n.5
Jellaram, 213 214
jhandi. *See* flag
Jugnauth, Aneerood, 44, 253n.12

Kabir, 32
Kalı, 36, 39
Kalı kı Ma. *See* Black Madonna
Kalı Mai, 31, 37, 64, 73, 75, 85, 88, 115 117, 132, 252n.4
kañci, 70
karakum, 70 71
karma, 227 228
katha, 78, 87
Kavaṭi Festival, 136
Kelly, John and Martha Kaplan, 238, 249n.1
Kenya, 15, 200 201, 204 209, 211, 214, 219 220, 243, 264n.1, 264n.2, 264n.3, 264n.7, 266n.9
Kenyatta, Jomo, 217, 219, 264n.3
Khan, Aisha, 110
Khoi san, 128, 261n.4
Khoja mosque, 204, 264n.4, 267n.10. *See also* Ismailis
Kikuyu Central Association, 216
Kisan Sabha, 177, 184
Kisumu (Kenya), 200, 202 203, 207, 211, 213 214
Klass, Morton, 110
Koenig, Jules, 42, 253n.12
koil, 65, 69
Korom, Frank, 259n.4
Koterie, 73, 130
Kṣatrıya 31, 51, 76, 257n.14
Kurien, Prema, 250n.4
Kutchi speaking, 215

Labasa (Fiji), 168, 171, 185, 191
labor movement. *See* TLP
Labour Party (Mauritius), 42 43, 241, 253n.12
Labourdonnais, Mahé de, 19, 23 26, 35, 49, 251n.1
Lakṣmı, 39, 78, 119, 252n.4
Lal, B., 171 176, 183, 186, 189, 263n.4
Lalla, Rev. C. D., 103
language, 3 4, 6, 10 11, 234 235
in East Africa, 199, 215, 218, 225
in Fiji, 172 173, 178, 188, 237, 263n.2
in Guyana, 59, 77, 235, 254n.4
in Mauritius, 21, 23, 28, 31, 43, 45, 51 52
in South Africa, 134, 146 148, 158 159, 236
in Trinidad, 100, 106, 110
Lau Islands (Fiji), 168, 187, 262n.1
Lautoka (Fiji), 168, 171 172, 178 180, 191
legendary vegetable market (South Africa), 128, 262n.9
Legislative Council, 42, 86, 103, 105, 177, 182 184, 216 217, 230, 239 240, 264n.7
Lenasia (South Africa), 157 158
Leonara (Guyana), 56, 61, 71

Liberal Study Group (South Africa), 153, 163
Limbachias (caste), 207, 211, 213
"lines," 171 175, 178, 195. *See also* barracks, plantation housing, slave quarters
"lion seat," 78
"little Guyana," 87
Lohana (caste), 200, 207, 209 210, 213, 223, 226
long term leases (Fiji), 171
Long Mountain (Mauritius), 37

Madagascar, 23
Madras, 4, 14, 19, 26, 37, 126 127, 130, 135, 201, 234 235, 255n.5
  "Madras Coolies" 28, 30, 62
Madrasis 59, 61 62, 64, 75, 87 88, 90, 235, 256n.9
Maha Sabha, 83, 88 89, 102, 107 109, 112, 114, 119, 122 123, 242, 257n.17, 259n.8, 260n.9
Mahabharata, 37
Maharaj, Badri, 177, 182
Maharaj, Rabindranath, 242, 245
Mahasabha, 104, 108 109, 239
mahatma, 125, 212
Mahatma Gandhi Institute, 251n.1
"major" chiefs (Fiji), 170
majority community (Mauritius), 45, 52 54
malaria epidemic, 22, 27, 37, 46
Mandela, Nelson, 148, 154 156, 164, 242, 261n.5, 262n.13
mandir, 78 79, 83, 85, 87, 89, 93, 101, 111, 235, 257n.16, 257n.18
Manning, Patrick, 113
Manuel, Peter, 110, 113 114, 258n.1, 259n.8
Mara, Chief Kamisese, 188 189, 197
Maraj, Bhadase Sagan, 107 112, 121 124, 239, 242. *See also* DLP, PDP, Maha Sabha
Maratha speakers, 26
market economy in Trinidad, 99
Mariamen and Śiva Soopramaniar, 20, 35
Mariyamman
  in Fiji, 179
  in Guyana, 62 67, 70, 73 74, 253n.8, 256n.11
  in Mauritius, 34 37
  in South Africa, 130 132, 136 137, 139, 141, 144, 151, 158
  in Trinidad, 115 117, 258n.3
Marxist, 86, 88, 218, 241. *See also* South African Communist Party
Mary image, 31, 37
Matadin, *B.,* 62
mataquali, 188
Maturai Vıran, 34 35, 65, 67, 69, 130 131, 136
Mau Mau rebellion, 219
Mauritian Entity, 41 42, 239. *See also* Action Libérale
Mauritius
  estates of, 21, 49, 51 52, 232 233, 252n.3
  French rule in, 19 20, 23, 40, 49, 53
  government of, 19, 23, 25, 41, 43, 53, 251n.1, 253n.9, 253n.12, 259n.6
  Hindu practices of, 31, 40 41, 44, 46, 53 54, 62, 65, 74, 93, 253n.8, 253n.10
  indentured workers in, 12, 26, 31, 50 51, 54
  Indian numbers in, 5, 13, 22, 239, 244, 251n.6
  slaves of, 21, 23, 25, 49 50, 252n.2
  temples in, 34 35, 37, 39, 45 46
McNeal, Keith, 110, 115, 255n.8, 258n.2, 258n.3
Meer, Ismail, 126 128, 262n.13
Mehta and Madhvani families, 219, 266n.9
Melanesia, 167
memories, 6 9, 11, 54, 90, 93, 100, 109, 114, 121, 234 235, 237 238, 241, 248
memory, 7 8, 11, 64, 173, 196, 236 237, 246
  memory bank, 8, 124
  memory sorting, 10
Methodist Church (of Fiji), 168 169, 174, 176, 263n.3, 264n.10
Mınakṣi Amman, 20, 33 34
Mishra, Sudesh, 250n.3
Miss Phoebe (Guyana), 56, 70 71
missionaries
  Arya Samaj, 81 82, 84, 104, 147, 182
  as "allies of convenience," 254n.3
  Christian, 58, 60, 76 78, 102 103, 121, 150, 183 184, 233, 257n.13

mission schools, 78, 100, 102 105, 111 112, 121, 185
mokṣa, 268n.13
Mombasa (Kenya), 200, 202 203, 207, 211, 213, 216, 218, 223, 264n.4, 265n.5, 265n.7
Moonaswamy, Bharat, 116
Moonaswamy, Seechan, 116
Morton, John, 102. *See also* Canadian Presbyterian Mission
mosque, 30, 87, 139 140, 157, 163 164, 191, 203 204, 253n.10, 264n.4, 267n.10
Moyne Commission, 106
Mozambique, 23, 49
Mudaliar, Veeraswamy, 61, 255n.7
Muharram, 31, 100, 128, 136, 253n.10, 260n.3, 263n.5
multicultural, 25, 84, 87 89, 94, 99, 112, 146, 195, 197, 230, 245, 247
Muniśvaran, 66 69, 130
murtis. See images
Murukan, 37, 136 137, 141, 179 180, 191
Muslim schools, 103 104, 107, 121
Muslim traders, 127, 134 135, 209
Muslims
in East Africa, 200 201, 203, 206 207, 209, 213, 216, 228, 247, 264n.2
in Fiji, 182 184, 189
in Guyana, 61, 67 68, 89, 94
in Mauritius, 25, 30 31, 49 50
in South Africa, 125, 127, 139, 144 147, 151, 154, 157, 162 164, 236, 260n.1, 262n.12
in Trinidad, 99 100, 104, 109, 115, 121 122, 259n.4, 259n.8

Nadi (Fiji), 168, 179 182, 185, 191 194, 243, 264n.10
Naicker, Dr. G. M. (Monty), 153 154, 163 164, 240
Naidoo, Guru Krishna, 132
Naidoo, D. C., 159 160. *See also* Ramakrishna Centre
Naidu, Jamsie, 63, 72, 75, 88, 116, 256n.12
Naidu, Kuppu Swami, 180 181, 191
Naipaul, V. S., 11, 98, 106, 242, 245 246
Nairobi (Kenya), 200, 202 209, 211 213, 215 218, 220 225
Nakura, 67 69, 213
NAR (National Alliance for Reconciliation) (Trinidad), 113, 122
Natal, 126, 127, 129 130, 133, 139, 145, 153 155, 157, 163
national religion, 40, 53
Nationalist Party (South Africa), 154. *See also* Afrikaner
Native Fijians, 171 172, 174, 176, 186 190, 195 198, 240, 243, 263n.5
Native Land Trust Board, 188
Nausori (Fiji), 168, 170
neoorthodox, 62 63, 70
NEUF (Non European United Front) (South Africa), 155
New Amsterdam (Guyana), 56, 86, 255n.6
new ethnic identity, 97 99, 106 107, 121
new homeland, 3, 7 12, 54, 93 94, 121, 124 125, 171, 185, 190, 198, 229 230, 241, 244 245, 247 248, 249n.1
new imagined identity, 4 12, 77, 196, 236 237
new postcolonial identity, 6, 106, 113, 133 135, 239, 240 242, 245
new religious identity, 12, 45, 76 79, 84, 101, 176, 185 186, 238, 247
new religious tradition, 7, 11, 84, 90, 114, 119 120, 124, 149, 178, 185, 227, 232, 244 245, 248
NIC (Natal Indian Congress) (South Africa), 127, 145, 152 155, 163
Nigerian priest, 224 225. *See also* Hari Kṛṣṇas
North America, 8, 10, 12, 17, 165, 169, 211, 219, 221, 224, 242, 245 247, 268n.3
North Indians
in Fiji, 172, 181 182, 185, 188
in Guyana, 61, 64, 66 67, 75 77, 79 80, 82, 84 85, 87 92, 235, 237 238, 242, 246
in Mauritius, 3, 13, 31 32, 36 40, 43, 46 47, 51, 236
in South Africa, 132, 142 143, 149, 163
in Trinidad, 100, 109, 246, 259n.8
Nyerere, President Julius, 219, 266n.9

obeah, 67, 110
Old Ismaili mosque, 204. *See also* Khoja mosque
Old Jain temple, 205
OPEC (Organization of Oil Exporting Countries), 113
oral histories, 16
Ordre de St. Lazare, 24
other population groups, 3 4, 8 9, 178, 215, 232 234, 239, 244 246, 250n.3

pal puja, 67
Pandey, Basdeo, 113 114, 119. *See also* UNC
pandit, 79 80, 82 85, 87 93, 101 102, 104, 108, 121 123, 142, 174 175, 238, 246
Pandit Bhaskeranand, 82. *See also* Arya Samaj
Pandya, J. B., 216
"parallel" hierarchy, 13
parallel society, definition, 51
Parvati, 39
"passenger" Indians, 139
Passive Resistance Council (South Africa), 154 155, 157, 163
Patel, A. B., 217
Patel, A. D., 188 189
PDP (People's Democratic Party) (Trinidad), 107 109
pentecostal. *See* Bethesda Temple
Persaud, Pandit Reepu, 89. *See also* PPP
Phadke, V. V., 216 217
Phagwa, 100, 109, 260n.9
Phillips, Leslie, 64 65
Phoenix (South Africa), 145, 151, 157, 160, 164
Pietermaritzburg (South Africa), 126, 128 129, 137, 145, 147, 149 151, 157 158, 165
Pillai, Kothenar Ramaswamy, 139, 262n.10
Pillai, Ramaswamy, 179 180, 191
Pillay, Ram, 158
Pinto, Pio Gama, 219, 240
plantation
  housing on, 58 59, 63, 172, 174 175, 232 (*see also* barracks, "lines," slave quarters)
  Indian ownership of, 29, 35, 239
  large, 28 29, 98
  management system of, 14, 21, 32, 56, 61, 105, 127 131, 169 170, 232, 234 235, 254n.1
  moving from the, 25, 57, 61, 100, 109, 133, 137, 162, 172
  owners and managers of, 4, 16, 22, 25, 57, 68 69, 84, 98 99, 171, 179, 232 233, 236
  settlements adjacent to, 13, 56 58, 60, 77 78, 84, 86, 99 100, 115, 233, 246
  temple on a, 35 37, 100, 109, 111, 131 132, 137
pluralism, 6, 10 11, 167, 229 230, 254n.4, 259n.5
PMSD (Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate) (Mauritius), 42 43, 253n.12
PNC (People's National Congress) (Guyana), 86 89
PNM (People's National Movement) (Trinidad), 109, 113
Polynesia, 167 168
Port Louis (Mauritius), 20, 24, 25, 30, 33, 34, 36, 37
Port Mourant (Guyana), 56, 77, 86
Port of Spain (Trinidad), 96 97
Portugal, 60 61, 86
postcolonial cultural style, 9 11, 73, 85, 106, 112, 123 124, 162, 190, 198, 229, 241 244, 247
postcolonial era, 5, 10 11, 84, 86, 90, 106, 112 113, 164, 197, 229 230, 241, 247
postcolonial society, 4 6, 9, 11, 17, 73, 85, 90, 124, 162, 230, 244, 247, 249n.2
postcolonial thought, 8 11, 17, 73, 85, 94, 106, 112 113, 123 124, 164, 198, 229, 248, 249n.1
possessed, 59, 67 70, 73, 91, 115, 131, 179, 213, 246, 258n.2, 263n.6
Poudre d'or (Mauritius), 20, 38
PPP (People's Progressive Party) (Guyana), 86 90
Prajapatis (caste), 208, 228
Prakash, Satish, 84, 93. *See also* Arya Samaj
Pramukh Swami, 265n.7, 268n.4. *See also* BAPS, and Swaminarayan
prayer book, 108, 152

Pretoria Agreement, 152
Princes Town (Trinidad), 96, 102
protector of emigrants, 127, 231
Protestant church, 57, 60, 78 80, 82, 84
pujari, 62, 68 72, 74 75, 79, 87, 91, 115 116, 118, 130 131, 179, 226, 238, 256n.12
Pujari Sandra, 73 74
Punjab, 15, 201, 222, 226, 235, 257n.17, 265n.6
Punjabis, 201, 206, 209, 218, 222, 226, 240
"pushy" (Indo Fijians), 187, 196

quasi slavery, 4

Rabuka, Lt. Colonel, 190
racial basis, 111, 261n.4
railway, 3, 4, 15, 37, 128, 133, 139, 142, 201, 203, 211, 216 218
railway housing, 139, 142
Rajagopal, 63
Rajagopaul, Kistama, 70, 238
rakṣasas, 120
Rama, 31, 76, 78, 82, 84, 119 120, 142
Ramakrishna Centre, 149, 159 160
Ramakrishna Mission, 44, 159 160, 180 181
Ramayana, 120, 207 208
Ramcharitmanas, 31, 76, 78 79, 82, 93, 183 184, 226, 246
Ramgoolam, Seewoosagar, 42, 241, 253n.12, 259n.6
Ranganathan, Ramswamy, 63 65, 256n.9
Ravi Dass, 32
Reddy, Kistappa, 137 139
reform movements, 40, 70 73, 81 83, 88 89, 93, 104, 147, 149, 159, 183, 206, 268n.14
reform of society, 14, 55, 63, 84, 125, 133 135, 190, 227, 241, 243, 245
reform style religion, 125, 133 135, 147, 151 152, 159 160, 162 163, 165, 243, 245
religious tradition
  new, 6 11, 100, 124, 172, 178 179, 185, 215, 231 232, 244 245, 247 248, 249n.1
  Indian, 82, 134, 244
  invented, 54, 59, 61 62, 64 65, 70, 73, 75, 84 85, 89 92, 172, 232, 235, 238
retail shops, 176, 185, 196, 201, 240
Réunion, 20 21, 23, 33, 43, 49, 252n.5
rice farming, 58, 73
Rienzi, Adrian Cola, 105 106, 259n.6
ritual
  caste, 202, 204, 207, 210, 213, 226 228, 237
  community, 7, 9, 11 12, 15 17, 53 54, 94, 104, 114, 123, 179, 184 185
  change of, 53 54, 63, 70 71, 73, 78, 134, 149 (*see also* Sanskritization)
  festival, 69
  fire altar, 82 83 (*see also havan*)
  fire walking, 139, 255n.8, 258n.3
  goddess worship, 36, 62 64, 67 68, 70, 75, 110, 132, 137, 179
  life cycle, 31, 76, 111, 202, 266n.8 (*see also samskaras*)
  orthodox (Sanskritic), 30, 37, 45, 53, 62, 135, 139, 179, 192 193
  possession, 50, 70, 75, 90, 110, 246, 256n.12
  traditional, 168 169
River Umbilo (South Africa), 128, 137
River Umgeni (South Africa), 128, 139 142
Roodal, Timothy, 103, 105
Rowlands, J. F., 149 151
rudimentary caste system (Trinidad), 99, 101
rural value system, 99, 185

SAIC (South African Indian Congress) (South Africa), 149, 155
śaktis, 34, 130. *See also* goddesses
Sai Baba, 39, 149, 161
St. Augustine (Trinidad), 116 117
Saiva Siddhanta Sangha (South Africa), 147, 151, 163, 165
Salvadori, Cynthia, 264n.1
samskaras, 76, 101, 111, 117, 123. *See also* life cycle rituals
San Fernando (Trinidad), 96, 103, 105
Sanadhya, Totaram, 174 175, 178, 182, 196
Sanatana (movement), 40, 82 83, 149, 183 184

Sanatana Dharma Maha Sabha. *See* Maha Sabha
Sanatana Hindu Mandir (Tanzania), 209 210
Sanatana temple (Kenya), 206, 221 222
Sangam. *See* TISI Sangam
Sanskritic worship, 62, 78, 135, 139, 152
Sanskritization, 51, 71 72, 134 137, 139, 142 143, 149
sanyasins, 268n.13
Saraswati 36, 39
satsang, 117 118, 123
schools
 in East Africa, 220, 222, 224, 229, 265n.6, 267n.10, 267n.11
 in Fiji, 174, 176, 178, 180 182, 184 186, 237, 240, 263n.2, 263n.3
 in Guyana, 56 57, 60 61, 75, 78, 254n.3, 254n.4, 257n.13, 259n.5
 in Mauritius, 43 44, 254n.3
 in South Africa, 145, 148, 151, 154, 156, 160, 164, 262n.9
 in Trinidad, 102 105, 107 108, 120 123, 237, 239, 242, 259n.5, 259n.8
Second Umbilo temple, 137 138
segregated society, 15, 158 159, 176, 178, 190, 195, 206, 243
self reliance, 185, 196, 237, 247
self segregation, 202
separate cemetary, 59
settlement system (Trinidad), 96, 99, 102
settlements (Guyana)
 community in, 57 61, 77 78, 83, 86, 89, 130, 194, 233, 238, 246, 254n.1, 254n.4
 move to, 57 59, 63, 77, 100, 111, 232, 235, 238
 multiculturalism of, 60, 87 89, 99, 233
 worship traditions in, 60 61, 63 65, 68 70, 73, 93, 115, 235, 238, 246, 256n.9
Seven Sisters, 36, 252n.4
Sharma, Pandit R. N., 77, 88 89
Sharma, Pandit Ram Chandra, 183
ships records, 16, 63
Sikhs, 178, 182, 184 185, 203, 205 206, 218, 226, 237, 240, 264n.2, 265n.6
 Jat Sikh *gurudwara,* 205, 265n.6
 Khatri Sikh *gurudwara,* 265n.6
 Ramgarhia Sikh *gurudwara,* 206, 265n.6, 267n.10
Singer, Philip, 70, 73
Singh, Karna Bahadur, 59, 61, 63 64, 70, 73, 77, 256n.9, 256n.11, 256n.12
Singh, Kelvin, 102, 259n.4
Singh, Makan, 218, 240
Singh Sabha movement. *See* Sikhs
Siparia. *See* Black Madonna
Sita, 39, 78, 120, 142
Śiva, 20, 36 39, 66, 78, 135 136, 141 142, 147, 151 152, 213
Śiva Linga, 34 35, 77, 141, 152
Śiva Naṭaraja, 152
Śivalaya, 77
Śivaratri, 37, 47, 53, 54, 241, 253n.9, 253n.10, 260n.3
slave quarters, 58, 59. *See also* barracks, “lines,” and plantation housing
slave trade, 3, 55
slavery, 3 4, 21, 25 26, 49, 57, 60, 199, 233, 254n.3
 Anti Slavery Society, 21, 56 57
slaves
 African, 5, 19 21, 23
 baptized, 24 25, 49
 Bengali, 23, 252n.2
 domestic, 23, 49
 freed, 13, 49 50, 57, 86, 93, 95 96, 232 233
 in Guyana, 13, 56 60, 67
 in Mauritius, 21, 23, 49 50
 in Trinidad, 95 96
 Malagasy, 23, 49
 Mozambiquan, 23
 revolts of, 49, 55, 60, 75
 society of, 49 50
 West African, 13 14, 55, 95, 231
sluice gate, 55, 57, 93
Smuts, Jan, 146, 152 154
Solomon Island laborers, 170
Sometsu Road temple (South Africa), 142 143
South Africa
 Africans of, 144 145, 155, 261n.4, 261n.5, 261n.6
 change of names in, 134 135, 236, 262n.11
 Christians of, 135, 149 151

Gandhi's impact (1893 1914) in, 14, 81, 232, 239
indentured workers in, 128, 131, 146, 165, 232, 236
Muslims of, 77, 125, 127, 134, 139, 146 147, 151, 154, 260n.1, 260n.3, 262n.12
plantation style Hinduism in, 130 132
political activism in, 146, 240, 242, 262n.9
reform movements of, 147, 159 160, 165, 245
temple Hinduism in, 137 139, 143
South African Communist Party, 146, 151, 154 155, 163
South Indians
as a minority community, 235 237, 263n.2
as Christians, 61, 70, 75, 89, 91 92, 94, 135, 149 151
as craftsmen, 19, 26, 29, 33 34, 36
festivals of, 64 65, 69 71, 75, 137
merchants among, 25, 135
in Fiji, 172, 178 182, 185, 189, 191, 193 194
in Guyana, 60 63, 74 75, 89, 91, 226, 238, 242, 246, 255n.5, 256n.9
in Mauritius, 12, 14, 21, 25 26, 29, 35, 37, 253n.8
in South Africa, 125, 130 131, 134 135, 139, 146, 159
laborers among, 21, 26, 61 62, 75, 130, 134, 142, 172, 178 179, 236, 253n.8
plantation owners among, 12, 29, 35
temple styles of, 29, 33 36, 38, 65 66, 135, 179, 181, 185, 262n.10
temple compounds of, 65, 77 78, 256n.9
religious traditions of, 61 65, 70 73, 91, 136, 163, 179, 236, 238, 258n.3
who worked with Gandhi, 260n.2, 262n.9
Spanish churches, 95, 97, 100, 123
Spanish settlers, 95 96, 110
Spanish traditions, 96 97, 123
Sri Siva Subramaniya Svami temple (Fiji), 193 194
Srinivasan, V., 160. *See also* Divine Life Society
Stephanides, Stephan, 70, 73
Sthapati, V. Ganapati, 192
strikes, 171, 177, 187
strip planations, 56, 254n.1
Subramanya, 34 35, 38 39, 136, 139, 141, 152
subsidiary images, 65, 67, 73, 212
Sukuna, Ratu Sir Lala, 186 188
Surinam, 73, 257n.16
Swahili, 199, 203
Swami Prabhupada, 160. *See also* Hari Kṛṣṇas
Swami Shankarananda, 147
Swaminarayan (religion), 208 210, 213 214, 220, 229, 265n.7, 268n.4
Swastika temple (Mauritius), 46

T. S. Mahalingam Gurukal, 192
Tamil language, 59, 69 70, 73 74, 149, 158, 181, 263n.2
Tamil speakers
as a community, 24 25, 28 30, 37, 59, 235, 251n.12, 256n.9, 262n.9
as workers 28, 30, 37, 61 62, 236
the religious practices of 30, 35 37, 61 73, 252n.5, 253n.8, 256n.11. *See also* South Indians
tan singing, 258n.1, 259n.8
Tanzania, 16, 199 201, 209 210, 219, 243, 264n.2
"tasks," 171
taukei, 188, 197
Teelucksingh, Sarran, 103 104
Telegu speakers
as a community, 28, 30, 45, 135, 181, 235, 256n.9, 263n.2
as workers, 28, 30, 236
the religious practices of, 28, 30, 45, 252n.4
See also South Indians
temple altar, 78, 80
Tevi, 63, 65, 68 70
"this worldly asceticism," 227 228, 230, 237, 243, 247, 267n.12
three day festival tradition, 64 65, 69 71, 256n.11
three strand colonial regime, 60
Thuku, Harry, 216
Thurston, J. B., 169
TIC (Transvaal Indian Congress) (South Africa), 154 155

tikina, 167
Tirupati style temple, 20, 45
TISI Sangam (Then India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam), 180 182, 191, 193
TLP (Trinidad Labour Party), 105, 239
Tonga Islands, 167 168
Tookay (goddess Durka or Durga), 20, 36
Torabully, Khal, 251n.1. *See also* "coolitude"
traditional ethnicity, 100, 119
trance, 65, 69 70, 72 73, 77, 90, 100, 110, 117, 130, 134, 136, 213, 226
Trinidad
  Christians of, 99 100, 102 105, 109, 115, 121 122, 236
  culture of, 96 100, 109 110, 114 115, 117, 119 121, 123, 228, 236 237, 242
  Hinduism of, 98, 102, 104, 108 110, 112 113, 119 123, 239, 242, 245 246, 260n.9
  indentured workers of, 5, 13, 231
  Muslims of, 99, 104, 107, 109, 115, 121 122, 259n.8, 260n.3
  society of, 96, 98, 100 101, 105 112, 115, 119, 121, 123 124, 239
  students from, 16
Trinidad and Tobago, 114, 119
Triolet (Mauritius), 20, 37, 39 40, 253n.9
Triumph (Guyana), 56, 61
trusteeships, 15, 216 217, 227
Tulsıdas, 76, 79, 183 184

UDF (United Democratic Front) (South Africa), 158
Uganda, 15, 16, 200 201, 207, 219 220, 243, 264n.2, 266n.9, 267n.10
Umgeni Road temple, 139 142
UNC (United National Congress) (Trinidad), 113 114, 122
Union of South Africa, 163, 216, 218
United States, 10, 11, 123, 250n.5
University of Durban Westville, 158
University of Kwa Zulu Natal, 158
Uttar Pradesh, 76

values, 7, 13, 195 197, 227 228, 237, 243, 247, 254n.4
Vancouver (Canada), 192
van der Veer, P. and S. Vertovec, 257n.16
van Plevitz, Adolphe, 22
Vanniyar (or Naicker), 37, 130, 137. *See also* Draupadı
vanua, 168 169
Vanua Levu, 168, 171, 188, 191, 262n.1
Vatican like role, 122
Veda Dharma Sabhas, 147
Vedantic scholars, 268n.13
Vedic fire altar. *See* fire altar
Velala (caste), 142, 179
Venkateśvara, 39, 70
Vidyarthi, G. L., 218, 222, 240
village religion (Trinidad), 96, 99 103, 106, 108 111, 113, 115, 117, 119 123
vimana, 34, 65, 116, 131, 136 137
Viṣṇu, 39, 62, 66, 70, 78, 265n.7
Visvarkarmas (caste), 208
Viti Levu, 167 172, 178 179, 187, 189 190, 197, 262n.1

Wanzas (caste), 207
Weber, Max, 16, 227, 267n.12
West, 8, 10 12, 247, 266n.8, 267n.11, 268n.4
whipping rope, 67
"White" ancestry, 97, 259n.5
white citizens of Durban, 128, 152, 240
White establishment, 112 113
Whitehead, Henry, 62, 67
Williams, Brackette, 75
Williams, Eric, 108 109, 112 113, 122, 257n.17
women, role of
  in East Africa, 199, 203, 210, 214 215, 229, 268n.3
  in Fiji, 172 173, 196
  in Guyana, 72, 75, 82, 84, 88, 91
  in Mauritius, 23, 27, 33, 48 49, 51 52, 236
  in South Africa, 160
  in Trinidad, 102, 116
world religion, 244 245
World War II, 99, 102, 107, 115, 117, 121

Xhosa speaking tribes, 128 129, 145, 261n.5

yagña, 117 118, 123

Zanzibar, 199 201, 210, 264n.2, 264n.4
Zulu speaking tribes, 129, 134, 145, 261n.6