A Case Study of Five Hindu Temples in Southern Ontario

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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The focus of this study is five Hindu temples situated in the Greater Metro area of Toronto in Southern Ontario. The goal of the study was to document the histories of each of the temples and to compare them to each other; and to gather data on the activities of the temples in the categories of: temple administration, temple plan, congregation, rituals and festivals, deities worshipped, sacral space, and links with the larger community. This data was then analysed to determine continuity and discontinuity with traditional Hinduism as described in the Dharmasastra. As it is commonly assumed that religious practices change due to immigration this study attempted to concretely prove or disprove this hypothesis by observing the religious practices using a sample from the Hindu communities of Southern Ontario. Information was gathered through observation of temple rituals, personal interviews and literature produced by the temples.
This work is dedicated to my supervisor and mentor
Professor N.K. Wagle and to the Hindu community of Ontario
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A Case Study of 5 Hindu Temples in Southern Ontario

Introduction

This study is concerned with the present state of Hindu ritual praxis in the greater Toronto area and uses a sample group of five temples. These temples were: the Hare Krishna Temple, Hindu Sabha Temple, Ganesh Temple, Vishnu Mandir and the Devi Temple.

1.1 Study of Ritual Practice

This research was conducted with particular attention paid to the idea of continuity and change within the Hindu tradition. The standard applied as the norm to which all of the temple practices were compared were the five volumes of the Dharmasastra. This codification of Hindu ritual and law was the starting point of the research.

I wished to examine ritual from both the theoretical and practical point of view. I was concerned with which rituals were being performed and which festivals were celebrated. With a broad background in the textual study of Hinduism actual fieldwork proved an interesting and often surprising experience.

The most basic information I looked for was whether ritual and practice in the temples had a bhakti or Vedic emphasis. I attempted to discern, as much as was possible, how the practitioners and the priest negotiated the sacred.

Many works on Hinduism see bhakti as the main emphasis within the polyphony that constitutes the tradition. They tend to de-emphasise the Vedas, which they regard as playing a more symbolic role as a sort of touchstone for all of the mainstream traditions. The reality of Hindu temple ritual led me to some
unexpected discoveries.

It would seem that in an attempt to create a tidy system out of Hinduism scholars, particularly those from the West, may have reached incorrect conclusions in a trying to simplify the tradition. Of course the sample within this essay was limited so sweeping statements cannot be made, however it does raise interesting questions for the study of Hinduism.

1.2 Cultural Adaptation

Another important aspect of this research was to investigate how communities adapt when they move into a society in which their institutions and worldview are not mirrored by the host society. This misalignment can cause tension within individuals and the communities to which they belong.

In Migration and the Transformation of Cultures, which addresses itself to study of the phenomenon of immigration in Canada. Jean Burnet writes that immigration, "...transforms ways of life, affects the intellectual and artistic aspects of cultures, and is a prime factor in social and economic change." (Burnet:1992:ix)

Changes that occur within a community after immigration do not only have overt material effects such as the tendency of South Asians in Canada to live in nuclear families rather than the traditional extended family structure. The incoming group is also challenged to effect the, "...reconstruction of the community or the society as a cultural-symbolic reality." (Breton:1992:15)

The South Asian community has addressed this challenge in various ways. For first generation immigrants the building up of traditional institutions such as temples, often based upon social networks, is of paramount importance. Ghuman found in his research that, " All leaders were of the opinion that their holy places
are the focus of their communities’ social and cultural life activities” (Ghuman:1994:126).

In his work *Coping With Two Cultures British Asian and Indo-Canadian Adolescents* P.A. Singh Ghuman examines the process of what he describes as “bi-culturalism”. He found that Hindus in particular were slow to organize religiously upon immigration. He attributes this to the nature of Hinduism, which is diffuse and decentralized.

Milton Israel discusses the adjustments made by of South Asians in Canada saying that upon coming to Canada the individual who is part of a minority experiences, "...discontinuity of customs and practices relating to religious observance, food, dress..." (Israel:1987:22).

Ghuman noted that Muslims and Christians from the sub-continent could attend mosques or churches already set up either by the indigenous population or earlier immigrant groups. Both of these religious communities were also accustomed to being in a minority position in India. Hindus in India, being in the majority have traditionally been able to absorb their tradition through arts, music, and general cultural practice as well as in temples.

When I commenced my research my hypothesis was that Hindu practice would transform in fundamental ways upon coming to Canada. This idea was formed based on the historical changes which have occurred within Western traditions under the pressure of modern industrial society. One could reasonably expect that the pressures inherent in immigration would effect religious behaviour.

The South Asian Hindu community also served as a complex case study as it faces very specific pressures within a racist society. There was the added challenge,
as is true for all immigrants of non-Christian background, of working religious celebrations around the Western calendar and life pattern.

When actual research commenced it became immediately clear that many of my working hypotheses would have to be revised. It was also evident that while the Devi, Hindu Sabha, Ganesh temples and Vishnu Mandir showed overall similar patterns of development, the Hare Krishna Temple had a very different history and structure.

An attempt was also made to discern whether Hinduism was becoming institutionalized in accordance with Western model or was remaining true to its more decentralized, network based traditional form. I also attempted to discern whether the temples were organized along sectarian lines and/or regional lines.

1.3 Temple Function in the Community

Another important focus of this research was to ascertain the function that the institution of the temple serves within the community. It was clear from the outset that each temple played a multifaceted role in the life of the various communities they served.

The temple serves both a personal level and collective function. I attempted to discern how central a role the temple played in the larger life of the community such as providing astrological advice regarding major life decisions as it does in the South Asian context. The role these temples play in fighting the racism of Canadian society and also of providing psychic defence was also investigated.

2.1 Methodology

Primary ethnographic research served as the core of my project into temple ritual. Interviews were held with various temple officials such as pandits and board
trustees. I also questioned members of the various temples in unstructured interviews.

The questions addressed to my informants were aimed at understanding the rituals as practised in the various temples as well as the textual sources of these rituals. I also tried to discover if the traditional *agamas* were followed in the building of the temples.

This was an important point symbolically because slippage in these areas can indicate more deep-seated changes. The rites involved in temple building i.e. the use of astrology, are woven into the traditional worldview of Hindus. The loss of the symbolic worldview within Christianity has had particular consequences for practitioners of that religion so I felt this to be a useful window on Canadian Hinduism.

I also asked questions related to the formation of the temple and its history. In this way I attempted to situate each temple chronologically within the overall development of the South Asian community in Ontario.

The book *The Hindus of Canada* by Ajit Adhopia was the starting point of my research as it contained the addresses and numbers of many of the Hindu temples in Canada. This book also provided very basic data on what rituals are central to modern Hinduism in Canada as well as descriptions of key concepts found within the tradition.

Another important element of my research consisted in observation of temple ritual and festivals. In the case of the Hare Krishna Temple I stayed over night and took part in the ritual cycle from 4:30 a.m. onward; at the other temples I observed regular ceremonies as well as several festivals.
The categories into which the material is organized i.e. history, temple administration arose organically from the material gathered. I attempted a balance between pure research data and more anecdotal information. Analysis of all the material is placed at the end the paper as a way to try and make sense of the information in order to determine similarities and differences between temples.

I attempted to situate the information within a larger context using texts written on the subject of immigration and histories of the South Asian community in Canada. The Multicultural History Society of Ontario proved to be an invaluable resource in this endeavour. By studying immigration patterns and history much of the evidence I was gathering began to fit into a larger pattern within the evolution of the Canadian South Asian community.

The research consulted was as up to date as I could find. Much of the information was gleaned from articles or essays as there has been little in the way of scholarship in this area.

As it has been a typical mistake made by politicians and historians to assume that patterns in the United States or Britain are applicable to Canada I made a point of consulting almost exclusively Canadian research. Ghuman's work *Coping With Two Cultures. British Asian and Indo-Canadian Adolescents* reveals the startling differences between Britain and Canada in the area of minority relations.

It was also important to me that the temples represented should be a cross-section of North and South Indian. The emphasis on North India in most studies of Hinduism made me sensitive to this issue. It also allowed me to study the patterns of ritual to see in concrete terms what was different and was the same in the two sub-communities.
In terms of methodological hazards I was well aware that religion is perhaps the most sensitive of any area that can be studied. When dealing with individuals I was acutely aware that religion is an extremely personal experience and tried to be considerate of this fact.

Not being a member of the South Asian community I tried to be particularly careful when doing the ethnographic research which forms the bulk of this work. There were questions regarding caste and marriage customs, which I didn't feel, were proper to ask. As the community feels justifiably defensive about these issues, and as they have often been mishandled by the mainstream press, I felt they were best left unasked.

It became clear almost immediately that it was more productive to let the informant talk without adhering rigorously to the prepared set of questions.. The interviews tended to be unstructured particularly when I was speaking with religious specialists who could discourse on subjects without much prompting.

The members of the Hindu community were unfailingly open and helpful. Considering the amount of misrepresentation of this community, particularly in the press, the graciousness of all involved was all the more impressive.

3.0

Devi Temple
2590 Brock Road
Pickering, Ontario

3.1 History

The house in which Devi Temple is located, and the land it is on, were purchased in 1987. The plan to build a much larger structure had just been approved by Pickering town council the day I was visiting. The congregation of Devi Temple
began with 7 people and the buying of the land by Amar Binda, the president, and his brother.

The president and founder of the temple who is Trinidadian described the inspiration for the temple as a numinous experience that was the result of a dream in which Devi appeared. He felt that the particular land had significance and he recounted that he knew it was the right location when he saw it. He asserted that Devi was the reason for the growth of the membership of the temple.

The construction which is in the planning stages will be an approximately $2 000 000 project and upon the completion the temple will be 20 000 square feet. The new temple building will include a library, a mezzanine for arts performances, and full community centre facilities.

3.2 Temple Administration

The Devi temple is run by trustees who include the president, secretary, and treasurer, with these members being elected annually. Committees are formed when needed to administer particular functions. The president emphasized the democratic nature of the temple explaining that all the members participate in the various duties involved in running the temple including cooking and cleaning.

Two priests have been hired to serve all the functions of the temple. Currently the full-time priests are two brothers from Bangalore, India. The temple opens Monday 7-9 p.m., Friday 7-9 p.m. and Sunday 9:30-12:30. The priests perform all 16 of the life cycle sanskars including marriages and they also do horoscopes for members of the temple.

3.3 Temple Plan

The Devi Temple consists of a small house with a cloakroom and the upstairs...
serves as a dining area used for communal meals. The front room on the main level houses the *mandapa* (prayer hall). The *murtis* are displayed along one wall and are placed on a raised platform. The musicians are seated in one corner of the room and the priest sits on a raised seat to address the group.

### 3.4 Congregation

The congregation of the Devi Temple is West Indian and North Indian. The congregation is drawn from the greater Metropolitan area and as far as Belleville. The languages used by the priests are Sanskrit, Hindi, and English.

### 3.5 Rituals and Festivals

This temple celebrates the gamut of Hindu ceremonies due to its mixed congregation but Devi is considered to be the Universal Principle and the standard rituals end with *puja* to her. *Puja* is done to all the *murtis* while the musicians play *bhajans* devoted to the particular deities while the congregation sings.

The *puja* consists in the offering of flowers, incense, coconuts, and *arti*. The priest chants Sanskrit mantras and rings the bell while his assistant, in this case a woman, placed flowers on the statue. The texts most consulted by this temple are the *Puranas*, the *Ramayana* and *Bhagavad Gita*.

The *puja* climaxed with the bathing of the statue of Durga. The members of the congregation were invited to pour libations of juice, milk, butter, and water with sandalwood dissolved in it over the statue. The liquid is poured into small brass pots and the devotee pours first on the feet, the hands, and finally over the head of the deity.

After the bathing ceremony a curtain is put up and the congregation sings while the *murti* is dressed and covered in jewellery. The curtain is drawn as the conch is
blown, the bell rung and *bhajans* to the Goddess are sung. *Arti* is then performed to the dressed *murti* and donations of money are placed at her feet.

*Arti* was also offered to the priests and the musicians after the completion of the ceremony. The priest then gave a short discourse on leading a moral life stating that one should offer up one's problems to Devi. He also described the upcoming *puja* to Subramanya (Marugan) as it is celebrated in South India. At this ceremony 1008 snakes are collected and 20-25 pandits perform *hawan*.

The festivals celebrated by the Devi temple are: Divali (Sept-Oct), Navaratri (Sept-Oct), Shivratri (Feb-Mar), Ram Navami (Mar-Apr), Holi (March) and Krishna Janmashtami (Aug-Sept). The priest explained, however, that everyday is significant on the Hindu calendar depending on the phase of the moon.

The speeches given by the priest, which are in English, are centred on stories, which he feels are more effective than exhortation. Sometimes the temple also has visiting swamis in to address the congregation. A communal meal is held every Sunday.

### 3.6 Deities Worshipped

The statues in the Devi Temple, which are imported from India, are made of marble and represent: Durga, Siva Linga, Siva, Parvati, Ganesh, Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Vishnu, Ram, Lakshman, Sita and Hanuman. Nandi the bull mount of Siva is placed to the right of the God.

### 3.7 Sacral Space

The devotees are allowed to approach the statues and to participate in *puja*. The day that I visited the temple two women were assisting the priests. No leather is allowed on the altar and individuals were expected to refrain from eating meat for
the day if they were to perform puja.

3.8 Links With the Larger Community

The Devi Temple maintains close and cordial relations with the various Hindu temples in the Toronto area. They often invite members of other temples to their ceremonies. The temple distributes *Prabhat Sangeet Multicultural Magazine* which is distributed in the USA, Guyana, and Trinidad.

This magazine features articles on religious topics, morals, and topical issues such as racial discrimination. It also advertises businesses and other temples in the area. The Devi Temple offers Hindi classes, teaches music, and organizes performances of plays based on the *Ramayana*.

3.9 Observations

The Devi temple while following a similar pattern of development to that of several of the other temples it also possesses some unique features. The first one immediately evident was the participation of women in the ritual activity.

When I entered the temple a woman the priest informed me was "the grandmother of the temple" turned and asked if I was an MP. Another informant compared this woman who does service at the temple to Shivari a character in the *Ramayana* who was of low caste and was not allowed in the temple. This woman would enter the temple at night and clean the temple and do puja and was rewarded with a darsan of Lord Rama.

The head priest of the temple, who is a South Indian Brahmin, spent several years in Trinidad teaching Sanskrit. He was sensitive to the make up of his congregation and was careful to make the lectures and activities relevant to them. During his lecture the priest mentioned that Santa would be visiting the temple!
The congregation sat in mixed male/female family groups with children participating in the puja. Husbands and wives also performed the rituals hand in hand in traditional fashion. Booklets with the bhajans written in phonetic Hindi were distributed to those who needed them.

The president of the temple emphasized their concern with teaching the Hindu heritage to the children. He felt that religion held the family together in times of trouble. He compared it to a child going to his or her mother for help saying that the devotee could take his/her problems to the Goddess.

Another informant discussing Hinduism with me talked about his desire to study the different forms of Hinduism. He mentioned that the West Indians who did not know Hindi found it difficult to find material on Hinduism in English.

My informant also told me that Hanuman was very popular in the West Indies as this deity was felt to be the patron of people in distress. This was of particular value to the Indian community who were brought to the West Indies as indentured labour and who suffered both physically and psychologically in an environment hostile to their religion and culture.

Both informants expressed the idea that the Goddess or God is to be treated like a honoured guest and given the same treatment any visitor would receive. The relationship to the divine as described by members of this temple is clearly the bhakti mode of close personal relationship with God.

The ceremonies which are done upon installing the statues in the temple, and which last three days, are believed to impart actual life into the murti and prayer and puja is believed to increase the shakti or feminine power in the statue. My informant stated that the devotee is to look eye to eye with the murti and receive
blessings in this way.

It is believed that the body is made up of five elements: fire, water, earth, air and ether. The individual is to strive to control the fire elements, which represent the passions. When shakti is built up through faith it is believed that one can survive any ordeal.

My informants discussed the symbology of the killing of the demons by Durga which they said represents the slaying of the passions such as greed, envy, hatred, and pride. It was expected that the congregation try to be vegetarian and the stated aim of life is to be humble, polite, well spoken, and to lead an honest life.

4.0

Ganesh Temple
10945 Bayview Avenue
Richmond Hill

4.1 History

According to the magazine published by the Ganesh Temple it is the largest Hindu temple in North America. In 1983 4 acres of land were purchased on Bayview Avenue. The South Indian community first gathered in 1969 to perform communal bhajans when they numbered only in the hundreds. In 1973 approximately 100 families registered themselves as The Hindu Temple Society of Canada.

In the early 1980s, with the immigration of large numbers of Sri Lankan Tamils into the Metropolitan Toronto area, the already existing desire to build a temple became a possibility. In 1983 enough funds were raised to purchase the current site for the temple. It was considered particularly auspicious as the land possesses a river described in the magazine as a tirtha or holy river.
The plans for the temple were then presented to Richmond Hill town council where the planners showed models of the Meenakshi Temple in Madurai as an example of the architecture. The town council was also taken on a trip to visit the Venkateswara temple in Pittsburgh.

Mr. V. Janakiraman was appointed as Sthapathi or "religious architect" who then drew up plans in consultation with the senior Sankaracharya of Kanchipuram in South India. A team of trustees, all volunteer, then formed and hired an engineering firm.

A temporary structure was built by volunteers on the land to house the altars of Lord Ganesha and Goddess Durga. When construction on the main temple began a member of the temple M. Kodeeswaran volunteered to be site manager for nominal wages.

The entire cost of the project was $1.8 million dollars and took three years to complete. An initial loan of $100,000 was taken out in 1984 by 4 members followed by another loan guaranteed personally by 14 of the trustees.

The construction consisted in building the temple, a wedding hall, and residence for the priests. The temple trustees also hired 15 silpis (sculptors) from India to carve the murtis or vigrahias as they are called in the literature.

The first phase of construction was completed in 1988-89 and the temple opened for public use. The second phase, begun in 1991 consisted in the constructing of the two vimanas, which are towers with domes over the altar of a God or Goddess. These two vimanas house the altar of Lord Vishnu (Sri Venkateswara) and that of Lord Murugan (Sri Subramanya).

Construction will be continuing as the architects plan to build two Raja Gopurams
over the main altars up to 82 feet high with two smaller towers of 45 feet high over the altars of Lord Ganesha and Lord Shiva.

4.2 Temple Administration

The Ganesh Temple is run by a 19-member board of trustees, which is elected bi-annually. The duties of running the temple which has annual revenues of $1.2 million are delegated to 10 committees. The daily management of the temple is conducted by a manager and assistant manager.

Ganesh Temple currently has 7 full-time priests who are recruited from India and Sri Lanka. The candidates are screened by volunteers and experts on the Vedas and Agamas. The priests then are assisted in attaining visas and provided with accommodation, a salary, and health care.

4.3 Temple Plan

The Ganesh Temple was built strictly according to the Agama Sastra which emerged from the Yajur Veda and lays out the calculations and methods for building a Hindu temple is and used in India, Sri Lanka, Singapore, and Malaysia. The methods in the text had to modified, however, in order to suit both provincial safety regulations and to allow for Canadian weather.

The vimanas were built from steel columns covered with bricks and cement. The modules of the structure were lifted by a crane and then painted and the dome covered with gold leaf. The modular method of erecting these structures is unique to this temple.

The temple itself is 18 000 square feet with 28 foot ceilings this tremendous size and space is meant to give the feeling of, "...being inside the great temples back home." In the future the floors will be finished with granite and the pillars will be
The temple was designed according to the sastras, which prescribe rules for the placing of the statues. The temple priest discussed the idea of energy as created by the particular spacing of the altars and statues. It is believed that each item in the puja has a specific relevance and effect on the mental and spiritual state of those participating.

In the book *The Indian Temple. Its Meaning* Rao writes that the temple itself is considered to be "an image or conception of divinity" (Rao:1979:40). The vimanas channel and hold divine energy and the supplicant is "to have an intuitive apprehension of the presence that make the temple a sacred enclosure" (ibid:113).

There are 14 altars within this space dedicated to the various Gods and Goddesses each vigraha is housed within an elaborately carved wooden or cement moolasthana or garbghriha (structure which houses the statue). Each altar has a flag of a particular colour and this flag is hoisted during the festivals dedicated to the God or Goddess.

The size of the temple, which gives a courtyard effect, combined with the beauty of the dark, granite statues is quite overwhelming. The temple priest informed me that the members of the congregation perform dramas in this vast area such as the battle of devas against the asuras. This is the story in the Vedas, which documents triumph of the Gods over the demons and is performed on November 10th every year.

The temple also houses an office where the manager and assistants work, and a cloak room and front hall where there are bulletin board advertising upcoming events. Medallions and tickets for archanas can be purchased from the office. As it
is traditional in India to keep Vaisnavite and Shaivite temples separate the temple is divided in half spatially between the two Gods.

4.4 Congregation

The congregation of the Ganesh Temple is made up of approximately 150,000 people and its members are South Indian and Sri Lankan.

4.5 Rituals and Festivals

The rituals of the Ganesh Temple consist in a variety of activities one of the most important being archana in which the devotee purchases a ticket, this and a piece of paper with the person's name and astrological sign written on it, is presented to the priest. The priest then chants in Sanskrit the name of God 108 times in the person's honour.

The puja is performed on an ongoing basis throughout the day and the deities are bathed in turmeric, sandalwood paste, yoghurt, honey and milk. They are offered flowers, coconuts, and arti with camphor. The prasadam of coconut, lotus flowers, and sacred ash is then offered to the devotees and money is offered in return.

Members of the temple also circumambulate the statues of the 9 planets, which are not housed in a garbgrīha but are on a platform. Saturday is the traditional day for worship of the planet Sani or Saturn. Within both Eastern and Western astrology this planet is considered to cause difficulties and limitations in an individual's life.

While I was at the temple women were performing a havan fire ritual in honour of their husbands which occurs on the new moon day. Members also offer coconuts at particular times in their lives such as prior to an exam.

The Ganesh Temple celebrates a multitude of festivals centred around the many
Gods and Goddesses represented in the temple. These include: an annual festival in honour of Marugan called Tiruvizha, Navarathri (Sept-Oct), festival in honour of Lord Venkateswara (Vishnu) (Sept-Oct), Diwali in honour of Sri Varalaxmi (Sept-Oct) Thiruvemba (Dec-Jan) festival dedicated to Siva in the form of Nataraj, Markazhi (Dec-Jan) recital of 30 Tamil songs in praise of Lord Vishnu and composed by Andal, Ram Navami festival dedicated to Lord Rama (Mar-Apr) Adipooram (August) celebration of Andal's birthday.

4.6 Deities Worshipped

The deities as worshipped in the Ganesh Temple are broadly comparable to those of the other temples studied however the South Indian make up of the temple showed in the Gods and Goddesses as well as in the design of the temple itself. As is customary in South Indian temples there is a statue of an alvar or mystic poet of the medieval era. The works of these Saivite and Vaisnavite poets are referred to as the "Tamil Veda". (Carman/Narayanan:1989:4).

In this case the statue is of Andal a beloved figure in South India whose poems are recited at weddings into the present day. She was a Vaisnavite and this perhaps points to the leanings of the administrators of the temple although both Shiva and Vishnu are represented.

The deities as represented by vigrahas are: Ganesh, the altar is 23 feet high is the most popular deity in the temple, Murugan (Subramanya/Karthik) is considered to be the second son of Lord Shiva and commander-in-chief of the divine army. The statue is blue granite and at 8 feet tall it considered to be the tallest statue of Marugan in the world, the Shiva Linga, which was sent from India, Parvati has her own moolsthana to the right of Shiva and she is celebrated during Navaratri,
Nataraja, the form of Shiva as the cosmic dancer is covered in gold leaf as according to Tamil scripture Lord Shiva is golden-bodied.

The vigraha of Durga is depicted as standing on a buffalo head, the temple also included statues of Valli and Devayani who are considered to be consorts of Marugan. The male energy is considered to be sivam (inert) with the two Goddesses representing shakti in two forms: mental and dynamic.

The temple possesses nine smaller granite statues of the nine planets, Bhairavar, who is considered to be guardian of the temple or village, Chandikeswara, a saint rewarded for his devotion to Shiva and made into his guard and is traditionally prayed after performing prayers at the Shiva altar, Skandachandamoorthi is the guard of Marugan and plays the same role as Chandikeswara.

Within the temple, but in its own alcove, are vigrahas of Ram, Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman. The vigraha of Venkateswara, a form of Vishnu, is 8 feet tall and pujas are done for this deity throughout the year according to the Vaisnavite calendar. Lakshmi, Vishnu's consort and Goddess of wealth, is depicted in her own altar, and Andal, as described before, has a beautiful moolasthana right at the entrance to the temple. She is considered to be Bhudevi or earthly consort of Vishnu and an aspect of the Universal Mother.

A statue of Sudarsana also appears and he is considered a guardian of the virtuous and remover of obstacles. Sri Sudarsana Homa is the fire ritual performed to remove evil influences from the life of the individual. The temple also included statues of the vihanas or vehicles of the gods including Mooshika, the mouse guardian of Ganesh, Nandi the bull guardian of Siva, and Garuda the carrier of Vishnu.
4.7 Sacral Space

As is to be expected in an orthoprax South Indian Temple the sacral space surrounding the deity is strictly guarded. Only the priests are allowed to step within the moolasthanas and perform the puja or archana on behalf of the individual.

4.8 Links With The Larger Community

The Ganesh Temple maintains a cordial relationship with other Hindu temples and is mentioned in listing of Hindu temples in Ontario in various magazines. The temple also hosts tours of the temple for university classes.

The magazine published by the temple contains history of the temple, description of the construction, descriptions of the deities and photographs of them, as well as advertisements by local businesses. All articles are in Tamil and English.

There is much less of the community centre aspect to this temple; it quite clearly for religious matters only .and there was no mention made of counselling services for the community. Perhaps because of language barriers and the traditional North/South divide in India the temple seems to function quite autonomously from other Hindu temples.

4.9 Observations

The first most obvious observation at the Ganesh Temple was the fact that there is no congregational worship as seen in every other temple studied. The devotees approach whichever deity they wish and line up to have archanas performed and then to receive prasad.

The singing of bhajans and discourses on the holy books were not in evidence. The temple was clearly about the performing of rituals not group activity. This emphasis was in sharp contrast to the other temples observed in this study.
The temple priest K. Venkataraman mentioned that rituals are performed at the time of Navaratri in which children are introduced to the alphabet under the auspices of Sarasvati. Life cycle rituals are also performed when needed.

On the night I visited the temple was celebrating Navaratri which is considered one of the most social times of the year with much visiting between families. During this time women are considered to be incarnations of the Goddess and are treated with great ceremony. Upon leaving the temple I was given a coconut, flowers, kum kum, and turmeric.

In this temple there was a distinct sense of the numinous enhanced by the smell of camphor and incense the huge black statues lit by lanterns and the priests ringing bells and performing arti.

5.0

Hare Krishna Temple
243 Avenue Road
Toronto, Ontario

5.1 History

The history of the Hare Krishna Temple differs drastically from that of the other temples investigated in this study. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKON) was founded in New York City in 1966 by Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada to, "...attract followers to devotion to Krishna." (Williams:1988:130).

Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada founded a North American sect of traditional Bengali Vaisnivism, which emphasized the chanting of the name of Krishna as the most efficacious road to salvation. It currently has offices in countries as diverse as Poland, Greece, and Indonesia.
In its beginnings ISKON appealed specifically to members of the Western counter-culture. However, Williams notes in his work *Religions of Immigrants from India and Pakistan* that in more recent times South Asians have increasingly made up much of the congregation (ibid). As these temples have functioned since the 1960s they were often the only Hindu temples available for early immigrants.

Because of the evangelical nature of the Hare Krishna sect members were sent out to establish chapters across Canada and the United States. From its outset the temples sponsored by ISKON were quite uniform in structure and practice.

The Toronto Hare Krishna Temple was established in 1969 by a representative of ISKON who was sent from the United States. The group was first housed at Gerrard and Sherbourne and the founding president was Jai Pataka.

From this location the devotees performed their traditional activities of outreach, public chanting of the name of Krishna, and the selling of written material on the subjects of vegetarianism, reincarnation, and meditation. They also performed small Rath Yatra processions in various locations throughout the city.

Eventually in 1976 the community gathered enough money together to put a down payment down on the building they now occupy on Avenue Road. The temple is housed in what was originally a Presbyterian Church built in 1897.

5.2 Temple Administrative Structure

The ISKON movement is highly structured and bears far more resemblance to the workings of the Christian churches than to any Hindu movement with which this writer is familiar and it tends towards a far greater degree of centralization.

Upon his death in 1977 Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada vested authority in the Governing Body Commission. This group of American gurus were then each
given responsibility for different regions of the United States (ibid). With the switch to the Governing Body Commission there was what Williams calls a, "relativizing of authority" (ibid).

In the wake of various scandals rocking ISKON in America since the late seventies the Toronto chapter was at great pains to distance itself from their influence. According to my informant the Governing Body periodically sends representatives to ensure that temples are being run properly.

However, ties have not been completely cut and hundreds of people travel to Toronto from Atlanta, New York, and Pennsylvania every year to participate in the Rath Yatra. There appear to be close ties between the Montreal and Toronto chapter of ISKON with much mutual visiting of devotees back and forth.

The administration of the Avenue Road temple rests mainly upon its president who is currently a fully renounced senyasin called Bhakti Marga Swami. Devotees who live at the temple provide support staff for the office answering calls and escorting visitors around the temple.

The live-in devotees at this temple also work in the store and restaurant and those who have received the second level of Vaisnavite initiation perform arti at the daily rituals. Currently there are 13 qualified pujaris at the Hare Krishna Temple.

The funds for the temple, which is registered as a charitable institution, come from membership dues, donations, sales from the store attached to the temple, and the restaurant. ISKON Toronto publishes a financial statement each year. The total receipts for 1993-4 were $22 354.11 and expenses $21 112.09.
5.3 Temple Plan

The temple is a large building very elegant in design and is divided up according to function. The two main spaces are: the mandapa which houses the statues of the deities where the rituals are performed, and the other is dining hall/restaurant area which also serves as a concert hall for artistic performances. The ground floor houses the store, which sells Indian clothing, books, prayer beads, incense burners etc. The basement, which is currently under construction, houses the kitchen and showers for those who live at the temple or who are visiting. The second floor houses the guestrooms and the rooms of the devotees, which are shared by up to three people segregated by sex.

5.4 Congregation

The congregation of the Avenue Road temple is 80-85% South Asian Hindu the rest being of mostly European origin. Approximately 1000 families belong to the temple with about 300 attending rituals on Sundays from 6:00-8:30 p.m. 20-25 devotees live in the temple at any given time. The temple advertises festivals such as the Rath Yatra in local South Asian community newspapers and prints its literature in Tamil, Hindi, and English.

5.5 Rituals and Festivals

The rituals of the Hare Krishna temple follow the particularly Gaudiya Vaisnavaite bhakti as exemplified by the Bengali saint Caitanya and therefore differ from those of the other temples studied. These rituals have been carried through sampradaya (disciplic succession) derived from the Gosvamis of Vrinaban and ritual praxis set down by Sennathi Goswami.

The artis as performed at ISKON temples were standardized by Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupada upon arrival in North America from the Haribhaktivilas which are, "...the entire body of the ritual and devotional practices of Caitanyism.." (De:1961:408) There is a great emphasis within this tradition upon the inherent power of Sanskrit. The central texts of the tradition of the ISKON branch of Caitanyism are the Vedas, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Srimad Bhagavatam.

As a result of devotees living on the premises the Hare Krishna temple maintains daylong rituals starting at 4:30 a.m. with mangala arti. During this morning wakening of the gods the iron gates around the deities and the curtains are opened. A devotee then performs the artis in front of the murtis.

A conch is blown and the devotee rings a bell while making the traditional offerings of food, incense, water and flowers, fanning, and perfume. The ritual mantras are performed in Sanskrit and Bengali.

While this is being performed the participants, who consist of the live-in devotees, the president, and any members of the community who wish to attend sing, dance, and some play drums or finger symbols. The congregation is divided into male and female sections. At the conclusion of these rituals the observers, are offered vibhuti (sacred ash), flowers, milk, and perfume. The devotees also take arti from a clay lamp.

From 5:00-7:00 a.m. the devotees do individual japa which they can do as a walking or sitting meditation. At 7:15 a.m. there is gurupuja in which the same offerings as described above are offered to a seated statue of Bhaktivedanata Swami Prabhupada and dhupa arti and sringara bhoga are performed.

Upon return from private meditation the devotees then sit and listen to a short discourse on sections of the Srimad-Bhagavatam. The discourses are written out on a
board in Sanskrit and these discussions also serve as a way to teach the participants the language.

At noon the devotees perform *raj bhoga* and *raj arti*. At this point the members disperse to perform various duties such as preparing food for lunch and some nap. At 4:15 p.m. *dhupa arti* and *vaikalika bhoga* are performed followed by *sandhya arti* and *sitala bhoga* at 6:00 p.m. and *sayana arti* and *ratri kalina bhoga* at 8:00 p.m.

Sundays from 6:00-7:30 p.m. is the main day of worship for the general public. Members leave their shoes at the door and enter the *mandapa* as a recorded tape alerts them to the beginning of the rituals. At the Hare Krishna temple there was a marked tendency for the congregation to divide into male and female during the service.

As the officiating priest performed *puja* to the *murtis* as described above the crowd was led in song by one of the temple devotees who played a drum. Some of the congregation danced others were more contemplative or prostrated themselves full length on the floor. A devotee then brought around a ghi lamp from which people took blessing and gave offerings of money.

The rituals were then followed by a short lecture by the president of the temple on subjects related to *dharma* and this was in turn followed by a communal meal. The meals are sponsored by members of the congregation.

The festivals and holy days celebrated by the Hare Krishna temple are printed in a yearly calendar. Significance is attached to almost every day on the calendar with many fasts attached to them. The emphasis of the festivals are clearly Vaisnavite but there are days of devoted to other deities such as Siva and Sita. The main festivals as described by my informant are: Rath Yatra (July), Sri Gauranga
Mahaprabhu Appearance (March 27), Krsna Janamastami (August 29), Srila Prabhupada’s Appearance (August 30), Dipavali (Kalipuja) November 3, Govardhana Puja (Worship of Govardhana Hill) (Nov 4), Go Puja (Cow Worship) (November 4), Srila Prabhupada Disappearance (November 6).

5.6 Rath Yatra

The Rath Yatra is the largest festival held by the Hari Krishnas in Toronto and bears special mention. This festival has occurred every year in July for twenty-four years. It was originally held along University Avenue, but now goes from Bloor and Yonge to Centre Island.

This festival attracts up to 20 000 people over the course of two days from the United States and across Canada and the temple lodges from 100-200 guests throughout the celebrations.

The Rath Yatra re-enacts a journey of Krishna, his brother Balrama, and sister Subhadra, and is considered to be 2000-5000 year old ritual. It is celebrated very elaborately in Puri, Orissa at the Jaganattha temple and is historically considered a particular favourite of Sri Caitanya.

The aim of this festival is to give darsan of the Gods to the public. It is considered great good fortune to look at these figures. Members of the temple construct huge wooden carts, which are pulled by devotees and carry the murtis and their officiating priests down Yonge Street. Each year the group has camels or elephants brought from the lion safari for the parade.

On the island free vegetarian food is offered to all as well as dance and music performances. There are booths set up devoted to explaining concepts such as reincarnation to the general public. The services of astrologers and palm readers
are also available and were very popular with the attendees.

The ritual aspect of the festivities consists in Go Puja (honouring the cow), Vishnu yajna, considered to be a South Indian ritual, and Vedic agni hotra. There is also kirtan for the main body of the congregation.

The majority of the people attending the picnic were of South Asian origin and came in family groups. They were also some interested individuals of other backgrounds and everyone mingled in the July heat on Centre Island.

5.7 Deities Worshipped

As the members of ISKON are a particular branch of Bengali bhakti they do not worship the same Gods as found in the other Hindu temples studies. The Hare Krishna's focus more strictly upon Sri Krishna, his consort Radha, the founder of the sect Caitanya, and Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhumada. There is also a statue of Caitanya's closest associate Nityananda. The altar includes portraits of the masters of the disciplic succession of the temple. The murtis are kept in garbagrihas made of wood and are surrounded by wrought iron gates, which are closed at night. The figures of Caitanya and Nityananda are housed to the left of the central figures of Krishna and Radha. On the right are more stylized images of Jagganathatha, Balrama and Subhadra and these are the figures that are taken out during the Rath Yatra.

On the main floor of the mandapa and facing the deities is a waxen figure of Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhumada. Portraits, which depict stories from the life of Krishna, hang on the walls of the hall.

5.8 Sacral Space

The murtis at the Hare Krishna Temple are kept well back from the congregation. Only the pujari actually offers puja and then brings down the prasad to the
devotees. The puja are the members of the temple who have second initiation with a spiritual master. There are currently 13 people at the temple who have reached this stage.

5.9 Links With the Larger Community

Bhakti Marga Swami described his role in the temple as follows: to give darsan of the deity, to display devotion through dancing and chanting, to arrange social events, to educate members in dharma, and to inspire members towards self-realization.

The Hare Krishna Temple of Toronto maintains friendly relations with other temples in the vicinity. Members of the temple have visited the Hindu Sabha in Brampton and the Vaishnu Devi temple in Oakville and have performed rituals and kirtan together.

Members of the temple also lead kirtan and perform arti in the homes of individual members of the congregation. The temple distributes Hindu Dharma magazine, which is a publication of the Canadian Council of Hindus.

The members of the Hare Krishna temple are very aware of the reputation of ISKON and maintain open communication with the media. Members of the press were invited to a dinner the evening before the Rath Yatra. The members of the temple are also willing to help any student, such as myself, who wishes to do research.

Bhakti Marga Swami mentioned the failure of a plan for a private school for members of the movement and the fact that the temple sponsors a ten day peace walk every summer. The temple also organizes classes for children devoted to Hindu teachings and artistic events such as classical Indian dance.
The temple donates food to Second Harvest, a group that collects food from restaurants and distributes it to the needy. The belief expressed by Bhakti Marga Swami is that no one within a ten-mile radius of the temple should go hungry.

5.10 Observations

The Hare Krishna temple appears to be doing two very distinct things at once: one is functioning as an ashram for members of the movement, and secondly as the local temple for members of the South Asian community.

Devotees living in the temple were from China, Sri Lanka and the Phillipines but a surprising number were of Eastern European one being Polish, two Bulgarian and three Yugoslavian. Apparently the ISKON movement has moved into this area with the ending of the Cold War

The role of the devotees who live in the temple is considered to be proselytizing and the selling of books. It was clear that authority is very centralized in the temple with the president making the decisions and there is a clear demarcations of male and female labour. All the members who lived in the temple showed were glad to answer any questions and showed a profound knowledge of the religion.

Sarasvati and Tanujra, two young devotees whom I interviewed, answered all my questions thoughtfully and with clarity. When asked about their beliefs regarding politics Tanujra commented that groups like Greenpeace are good but that they do not go to the root of the problem. He felt that it was ignorance which resulted in people destroying the environment through their greed and that political solutions were "relative truths".

Both were very philosophical about their choices in life. When I inquired how Tanujra responded to negativity when proselytizing he replied, "That is the nature
of the world”. Both had been dissatisfied with the focus on materialism they had experienced in their upbringing.

The main body of the congregation was South Asian and they appeared to use the Hare Krishna temple as their local temple as described in Williams work *Religions of Immigrants from India and Pakistan*. The South Asian members are also closely involved in planning the events undertaken by the temple including the Rath Yatra.

Bhakti Marga Swami, the president of the temple, and who was born on a small farm in Ontario, serves as the bridge between these two groups. As he is a renounced sannyasin Bhakti Marga Swami lives in the temple and considers it his role to guide the other devotees living there.

The president takes an active role in the lives of the devotees and arranges marriages between the unrenounced members of the ashram. This was done in the traditional way with the use of Vedic astrology.

Bhakti Marga Swami discussed the temple's links with India and felt that it was extremely important to stay connected with the traditions of the sub-continent. There is international ISKON centre located in Vrindaban, North India to which devotees can make a pilgrimage.

The Hare Krishna sect, which has historical connections to Orissa through Caitanya, also feels a strong affinity with the other Southern *bhakti* tradition. Bhakti Marga Swami noted that South Indian practice is the most orthodox.

The Hare Krishna temple is a greatly diversified enterprise with a newsletter, restaurant, and store and possesses links to other chapters in the United States, Canada and India. It is ambitious in its scope seeking to fulfil the aims of
Hinduism, but more particularly, of the ISKON movement.

It struck me as a hybrid enterprise with the seemingly juxtaposed role as local temple for South Asians and ashram for mostly Europeans of various religious backgrounds. The temple is also a community centre of sorts and so serves many purposes for the congregation.

6.0

**Hindu Sabha Temple**
**Brampton, Ontario**

**6.1 History**

The Hindu Sabha was founded by five families in 1975. Currently 2 176 families are members and the temple it is run solely on donation and membership dues. The temple has been located in a house on Highway 10 in Brampton until this year. Upon approaching the temple from the highway the first thing one sees is a large sign with a lotus painted on it saying, "World is One Family" in English and in Hindi.

The board of trustees decided that the temple needed to expand and construction began in May 1994 on an enormous complex outside of Brampton at Highway #10 and #407 on 25 acres of land. This building will enable the temple to consolidate its many functions at one centralized location.

**6.2 Temple Administration**

The temple organization is very elaborate with an annually elected Board of Trustees of 14 members consisting of a Chairman and Vice-Chairman. The Executive Committee has 12 members including the President and Vice-president. The caucus has 22 members including a legal advisor.

Members of these three tiers serve varying roles including: building committee,
fund raising, treasurer, general secretary, and programmer. The Hindu Sabha
temple publishes a yearly statement of income. Net income for the fiscal year
ending March 31, 1994 was $152,323 and a retained income fund of $119,703.

The temple itself is overseen by three full time priests who keep it open seven
days a week and perform all the life rituals required by the community. These
priests perform rituals in the Metropolitan Toronto area and as far as Ottawa. They
also serve at functions at the request of the Bengali, Mahratti, Assamese, and Sri
Lankan communities. The temple publishes a newsletter, which contains a budget
report, list of trustees, caucus and executive committees, and short essays on
religion. This publication is supported by advertising from the South Asian
business community in the area.

6.3 Temple Plan

The present temple is a two-story house with the whole lower floor serving as the
mandapa. The statues of the deities are housed at the eastern side of the room and
pictorial depictions of other deities hand along the eastern wall. The upper floor
houses the offices and dining hall.

The temple currently under construction is being built in the traditional Indian
style by architects from India and Greece. It has been designed to look Indian but
to stand up to the Canadian winter.

This temple will also include a large library open to the public devoted to
literature on religion. The second phase of building will consist in a community
centre and a senior citizens' home. My informant saw this structure as a legacy to
the coming generations of Hindus and a way to preserve Hindu culture.
6.4 Congregation

The congregation of the Hindu Sabha temple is North Indian and their publications are printed in Hindi and in English. Judging by dress the congregation is overwhelmingly Punjabi and some speeches at the construction ceremony were in Punjabi. The attendees participated in extended family units. The temple serves the communities of Brampton, Bramalea and Mississauga.

6.5 Rituals and Festivals

The Hindu Sabha Temple keeps a traditional schedule of events seven days a week. They are as follows: Sunday 11:00 a.m. Satsang/Discourses, 1:30 p.m. Arti, 1:45 Priti Bhojan, Monday 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Shiv Puja, Tuesday 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Ramayan Paath, Wednesday and Thursday 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Arti, Saturday 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. kirtan (upon demand), and Sunday 9 p.m. Jagran/Chowki (upon demand).

The pandits of the Hindu Sabha also perform puja 8 times a day beginning at 9:00 a.m. and ending at 7 p.m. In this traditional bhakti puja, as the pandit expressed it, "We treat the idol like ourselves". The rituals are as follows: awakening arti snana (bathing), offering food, fruits, flowers and final arti.

The ceremony conducted by the temple for the congregation begins with an invocation of the deity Ganesh for blessings followed by Naigrov the worship of the nine planets. The Supreme Being Brahma is worshipped and a prayer is said for the well being of all people in the world and for animal and plant life.

Congregational worship consists in bhajan (hymn) singing and discourses which are sung and spoken in Sanskrit, Hindi and English. Prayers are then led in praise of a particular deity. According to the pandit these hymns are taken from sruti and
**snruti** literature. These ceremonies are followed on Sundays by a communal meal and *prasad* (consecrated food) is given to the congregation.

In discussion the chief priest of the temple emphasized that within the tradition the individual is permitted to make personal choices about which deity they will worship. He recounted that he himself was born into a family that worshipped Lord Rama and Siva, but he was a follower of Devi and had recently took initiation for Krishna.

The *pandit* noted that within Hinduism there is a division into *sanatan* (idol worshipping) and *asamas* (non-idol worshipping). He also described the other major division in Hinduism into those who believe in the soul as being radically separate from God (*dvait*) as seen in the *bhakti* schools and those who believe in the immanence of God in each person as exemplified by the *advaita* school.

In our discussion the priest was at pains to emphasize that all schools understand that any represented God or Goddess is a manifestation of the undifferentiated divine. He emphasized that the British in India and even some English speaking Indians misunderstood this point.

My informant noted that most Hindus belong to the *dvait* school and relate best to the devotional style of worship and that works like the *Ramayana* and the *Bhagavad Gita* are most popular with the masses. The *Ramayana* can be recited by the individual or community and is periodically recited in its entirety over a 24 hour period to gain merit.

The devotees also have home shrines in which they may worship a variety of gods and goddesses. The priest pointed out that Brahmins are enjoined to pray three times a day while it may vary within the other castes. The devotee also offers
prayer to their particular guru each day.

The pandit spent a great deal of time describing the concept of sanskar or sanskara and described it as a purification of the individual comparing the process by which a diamond is polished and cut into its perfect shape. He noted that these sanskars are laid out in the holy books which are divided into sruti (revealed) and smruti (received).

The sanskars performed have been reduced over time from the original forty to the current sixteen; all of which are performed at the temple. These rituals span from conception to death with vibhsanskar (marriage ritual) being the most important.

The pandit noted that the members of the temple being from North India follow the system of marrying outside of the gotra (family lineage). The marriage is performed with the traditional Vedic havan (fire ritual).

The final sanskar, as laid out by the holy books, is to be performed by the eldest son, cousin or priest. The dying person is to recite the holy names of God, give alms to the poor, and cremation is to occur traditionally within 24 hours. A sannyasin or renounced person is considered to be without family and is buried or put into water such as the river Ganges.

Ten days of ritual follow the last rites and it is believed that it is during this time that the soul may take its new form. For the next year commemoration rituals are performed after the full moon. After the first year this becomes an annual event to which relatives are invited.

My informant also described the tarpas ceremony, which is an offering to the forefathers and is performed once a month on the new moon day. The following of
the phases of the moon called *tirthis* in the *Dharmasastra* is followed assiduously by this temple when arranging times for rituals and events. This system divides the month into dark and light sides of the moon.

The *pandit* described the sources of the temple ritual as being the *Vedas* and the *Dharmasastra*. He noted that the Vedas were 60% ritual, 20% knowledge of a philosophical nature, and 20% worldly knowledge such as archery, medicine, music and astrology. The mantras or *gayatri* are considered foundational and are used by all sects within Hinduism.

It was explained that any *pandit* is required to know the 4 Vedas, the Upanishads, Brahmanas and the 6 sastras. The *acharya* I spoke with possesses an M.A. and all the priests at Hindu Sabha received their training in India.

My informant also talked about the concept of *dharma* which he described as "behaviour pattern" and not as faith. He noted the fact that different *rsis* have had different ideas regarding proper forms of *dharma*. He discussed those found in the *Manusmriti*, which enjoins the individual to be: pure in mind, speech and body, to control the senses and to be compassionate, humble and patient.

The *pandit* talked about the *ashramas* and the central place of duty to family in an individual’s life. He talked about obligation to ancestors and the idea of having a son to carry out the *tarpas* ritual. He discussed the stage of life after 55 in which a person may wish to renounce worldly life but duty to society is emphasized until this age.

The main festivals celebrated by this temple are: Shivaratri (Feb-Mar), Holi(March), Janama/Krishna's Birthday (August), Navaratri (Sept-Oct), Diwali(October). The temple also holds semi-annual all night *sankirtan*. 
6.6 Deities Worshipped

The deities worshipped at the Hindu Sabha temple are: Ganesh, Ram and Sita, Brahma, Krishna and Radha, Siva and Devi.

6.7 Sacral Space

The murtis at this temple are almost at eye level to the people seated on the floor. The members of the congregation can approach them and give offerings. There is little differentiation between the garb griha which is a recessed space in this instance and the congregation. It will be interesting to see if this changes when the statues are moved to the new temple.

6.8 Links With Larger Community

The Hindu Sabha Temple organizes Hindi classes as well as heritage classes, and a youth and seniors group. The temple is also available for wedding and madan (engagement) ceremonies.

6.9 Observations

The Hindu Sabha temple appears to follow the typical pattern of Canadian temples being founded by a few dedicated families and eventually building a congregation and expanding rapidly. I was fortunate to be able to witness the laying of the cornerstone for the new temple on Gore Road.

It was rather an other worldly scene: in the middle of corn fields an awning had been set up with chairs and in front a small altar with pictures of deities. On a platform was the fire and Sanskrit chants were being broadcast over loud speakers and drummers were playing. To the right of the onlookers were seats set up for visiting holy men from India.

The rituals were in honour of the consecration of the corner stone of the shikara of
the temple and MPs from Brampton had been invited to take part in the occasion. A young boy came around with bowls of fruit and as families looked on the MPs made speeches and members were thanked for their donations.

The ceremony culminated with the raising of a red flag. The speakers emphasized the role the new temple would play in preserving Hindu culture and religion for coming generations. A Jain monk was in attendance as were several yogis from India and they too made speeches.

The services performed in the current temple on Highway 10 are casual in tone with families sitting on the floor and children playing together. Perhaps because of the homogenous nature of the satsang there was a familial air to the gathering with people coming and going as they wished.

The priest interviewed showed a broad knowledge of Hindu scripture as well philosophical knowledge. There appeared to be little discontinuity between practices of the sub-continent and Canada. Until he retired he had maintained a full time job and worked for the temple doing Vedic astrology without charge for members of the temple.

This temple also seems particularly dedicated to maintaining the sanskar rituals in the traditional way. Hindu Sabha seems to maintain an even balance between Vedic and bhakti teachings. Congregational worship is bhakti in nature but Vedic ritual such as hawan are also used regularly.

The chairman when describing the running of the temple pointed out that the executive committee maintained close ties with the congregation; when they expressed the desire that Devi puja be performed this was incorporated into the temple service.
7.0

Vishnu Mandir
8640 Yonge Street
Thornhill, Ontario

7.1 History

The current Vishnu Mandir was built upon a former site that consisted of a small house and was founded in 1979. The larger temple complex was built in 1981 on the initiative of a "small group of people" spearheaded by Doctor Doobay. Their aim was to house both a temple and resource/community centre. In the future they plan to build an old age home and ultimately a Hindu school.

The temple is built in the traditional North Indian rekha style (Ghosh:1982:95) with one main tower or sikhara. The building of the temple was preceded by rituals to consecrate the earth. These rituals were conducted by local priests.

7.2 Temple Administration

Currently two full time and several part time priests service the congregation of the Vishnu Mandir. The temple is open regularly from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. but stays open later on special ritual occasions such as Durga Puja or Navaratri.

The Board of Trustees is fluid and can consist of as many as a one hundred members. However, Dr. B. Doobay was the driving force behind the building of the temple and continues as life time president of the mandir.

7.3 Temple Plan

The Vishnu Mandir is a large building built on two levels. On the ground floor is the mandapa the room housing the representations of the deities and is where services are held. The murtis are housed in a recessed area on a platform.
There is also a cloakroom, offices for the temple functionaries, and a counter from which books and religious items such as incense burners and books of mantras and prayers are sold. The basement level of temple houses a laundry facility, kitchen, eating area, and library/conference room.

7.4 Congregation

The congregation, which numbers approximately 10 000 people, consists of members of North Indian, Trinidadian, Guyanese, East African, Mauritian and Sri Lankan extraction. As a result services are in English which is a common language to all and prayers are in Sanskrit.

7.5 Rituals and Festivals

The most regular programme performed at the temple takes place Sundays 10-12:30 a.m. This consists typically of an opening mantra, an hour and a half of bhajan singing, a discourse by the head priest in English, closing mantras, prasad and a shared meal.

Shiv Puja is performed every Monday 6:30-8:30 p.m., Hanuman Puja on Tuesdays 7:00-8:00 p.m., Arti on Wednesdays at 7:00 Sai Bhajans Thursdays 7:00-9:00 p.m., Durga Puja Fridays 6:30-8:30 p.m. and Navgrah Puja Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m..

The temple practitioners are very careful to set times and dates of all ritual according to the phases of the moon. This is clearly in accordance with the Dharmasastra which contains an entire section devoted to tirthis which sets out auspicious and inauspicious times for ritual activity according to the waxing or waning of the moon.

Festivals celebrated by the Vishnu Mandir were the central ones of all Hinduism:
Divali (Nov), Navatantri or Durga Puja (Nov), Ramanavatri (April/May) and the celebration of the birthday of Krishna in August. The Vishnu Mandir also organizes a procession every year in which the Ganesh *murti* is taken in procession down to Lake Ontario. The dates for processions and festivals are calculated astrologically and fall on different days every year.

The priests of the temple perform all the basic life cycle rituals including marriage and funereal rites. The rituals as practised in the temple were taken from the Vedas and *Dharmasastra*.

7.6 Deities Worshipped

Ganesh, Siva, Siva Lingam, Krishna, Ram, Sita, Hanuman and Lakshmi are represented at the Vishnu Mandir. There was also a small altar devoted to Sai Baba. The goddess Durga was represented in her nine forms with a *murti* for each function such as patron of children, the household or "feminine sickness". There was also nine *murtis* which represented the nine planets and different coloured flags to represent each one. The priest interviewed stated that all the above were viewed as manifestations of the one God.

7.7 Sacral Space

The members of the temple are permitted to walk right up to the *murti*, which is located on a raised platform. They ring the bell then offer prayers while standing directly in front of the statue. During *Navaratri* members of the congregation dressed the figure of the goddess.

7.8 Links With the Larger Community

The Vishnu Mandir maintains contact with the Canadian Council of Hindus and when necessary contacts the media. It also offers 6 scholarships for first year
university students, lessons in religion, and classical dance.

The stated aims of the Vishnu Mandir are to: maintain a centre to engage in cultural activities, to be a common meeting ground, to acquaint other Canadians with the Hindu heritage, to stimulate the interest of the younger generation in their culture, and to promote multiculturalism.

7.9 Observations

On October 2, 1994 when I first visited Vishnu Mandir it was in full swing celebrating the 125th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi. Walking up to the front of the temple one immediately sees the statue of Gandhi and the Indian and Canadian flag flying above it.

The temple was a hub of activity with people of all ages engaged in various activities. The communal meal or had just finished and people were socializing in the dining hall and lobby of the building. Bulletin boards in the lobby advertised yoga classes and community events.

The prayer hall is rectangular in shape with the statues of the deities at one end on a raised platform. Upon entering the devotees rang a large bell hanging at the entrance and upon leaving took arti from a flame as well as prasad.

Inside the mandapa after the service music lessons were being taught to children and devotees were doing private prayer. One woman was presenting her baby to the goddess Durga protector of children, and at one point the priest was called over to perform a particular blessing for the child.

As Navarantri or Durga Puja was taking place the following week after my first visit I received permission to attend. The rituals were held for nine evenings in the bright half of Aswayuja (September/October) began at approximately 6:30 p.m. and
ending at 9:00 p.m. with Friday and Saturday services going from 9:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m.

The Friday and Saturday Puja consisted of a Bhagwati Chowki by Neetu Anand a fifteen year old bhajan singer from Pennsylvania. The ceremonies, according to the temple literature, were dedicated to Durga and her nine manifestations in order to, "...propitiate Shakti, the Goddess in her aspect of power to bestow upon man all wealth, auspiciousness, prosperity, knowledge (both sacred and secular)".

Men, women and children sat together on the floor in family groups and the hall was full. The singer sang in Hindi punctuated by short speeches about the Goddess and a homily on proper behaviour. She and the presiding priest Dr. Doobay gave speeches calling for the maintenance of traditional Hindu culture.

Throughout the singing, which was accompanied by tabla and harmonium and members of the congregation were invited to dance while others garlanded the statue of Durga and covered it with multi-coloured silk.

My informant, Jagdish Hary-Paul, described the function of the temple as being that of a community centre. He felt the role of religion was to alleviate the anxieties and stress of members of the satsang as well as provide a place in which to celebrate occasions such as the birth of a child. He felt the temple had a role to play as a bridge between the Hindu community and the larger Canadian community in general.

Vishnu Mandir also provides services such as a home for battered women, a woman's discussion group, day camp for children, and family counselling. The temple is currently planning the building of a home for the elderly, a Indian Community Centre, and Hindu Vedic School through member donation.
Hary-Paul also discussed the temple's plan to build a Hindu school, which would provide vegetarian food and religious instruction as well as the usual public school curriculum. Hary-Paul talked about the Hindu communities concern regarding the drug problem in the public school system. He expressed dissatisfaction that only Catholic separate schools receive funding from the government.

The Vishnu Mandir also serves as a liaison with the non-Hindu community. Hary-Paul gave the example that during the recent plague scare in India the media depicted Hindus as "rat worshippers". The temple administrators responded immediately by contacting the media and going on Vision television to clarify the issue.

Historically the temple has organized ecumenical services including Christians, Muslims, and Jews. Services were performed in the aftermath of the Air India crash in 1985 and in the wake of such tragedies as the San Francisco earthquake. Hary-Paul emphasized that Hinduism embraces all other religious traditions.

The temple conducts tours of the temple for classes from high schools and universities as part of their effort to foster understanding between communities. The Vishnu Mandir sees itself as taking a leadership role in relations between the Hindu and non-Hindu communities.

In my talk with Jagdish Hary-Paul it became obvious that the Hindus of this temple had encountered the prejudices of Canadian society. He immediately began explaining the existence of such Gods as Hanuman and had clearly been asked and/or ridiculed about these issues.

Hary-Paul described an incident in which the temple was forced to go to court when members of the public in Richmond Hill objected to the setting off of
firecrackers on the temple property during festivals. The case was settled in the mandir's favour.

When asked about the rituals my informant stated that the emphasis of the rituals was on the devotional and on one's personal relationship with the deity. However, the Vedas were sited as the core texts from which all other practices flowed. The booklets published by the temple contained words to mantras and prayers in Sanskrit with English definitions underneath. They also outline how to perform basic home rituals such as puja and arti.

The rituals performed and deities represented in this temple clearly represent the mixed quality of the congregation. The traditional Vaisnavaite/Saivite division had been dispensed with in order to serve the needs of the members. The services were in English as it is the lingua franca of the congregation.

From observation the temple appeared to be an integral part of the life of the members of the congregation. There was little formality in evidence with much socializing going on in the communal areas after the ceremony. There was also an almost equal distribution of age with families from infants to the elderly in attendance. The South Asian tradition of extended family was evident.

While textual research had indicated that Hindus were slower to organize than their South Asian Muslim counterparts it is clear that the Vishnu Mandir was extremely proactive in addressing the specific needs of their constituency.

It was particularly interesting to see the open manner in which the pandit discussed issues such as a women's shelter. The Hindu community at this temple have obviously responded to community need without judgement. Here we have an interesting confluence between Western concepts of women and Indian ideas of
The temple showed a distinct blending of functions both sacred and secular. In its role in counselling it appears to fulfil the role traditionally played by the family network in India. In the South Asian context Hindu culture being dominant is diffused in the culture. Within the Canadian context the temple takes a more active role in teaching children Hindu beliefs.

8.0 Analysis

Vijay Agnew states in his research done on the South Asian Community in Toronto that, "religious organizations are the best organized and the most strongly supported of the community organizations" (Agnew:1987:9). In his study comparing South Asian adolescents in Canada and Britain Ghuman concurs documenting the time and resources devoted to the building and running of religious organizations (Ghuman:1994:126).

The information gathered in this study shows concordance with these findings. The temple seems to be an ideal institution to embody South Asian values in a foreign environment. According to my research South Asian communities in Ontario began gathering in informal groups for prayer and bhajan singing almost immediately upon arrival in Canada.

The evolution of these small gatherings into such monumental structures as the Ganesh Temple and the projected Hindu Sabha Temple in Brampton and Devi Temple in Pickering is best understood in the context of a survey of South Asian immigration to Canada.

The majority of South Asian immigration occurred in the late 1960's and early
1970's. This was a result of the change in Canadian immigration policy. Jean Burnet writes:

The Second World War led in Canada, as elsewhere, to a revulsion against racism which was expressed in the signing of the United Nations Charter in 1944, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Burnet:1992:ix)

Upon the heels of these changes and in the liberal and expansive atmosphere of the 1960's barriers to non-white immigration to Canada were removed (ibid).

It is only logical then that for the first decade after the first waves of immigration from the South Asian sub-continent and the West Indies the community was concerned with adjusting to the new milieu and to making a living. It was only in the 1980's and into the current decade that the community had a solid base from which to draw support for temple construction.

The fact that these communities have now put down roots growth is witnessed the proliferation of Hindu temples in Southern Ontario. In his work The Hindus of Canada Ajit Adophia lists over 40 temples in the greater Metro area.

The situation is evolving at a rapid rate as new temples are continuously founded. It was part of my task to determine the degree of continuity between religious practice in Canada and India. Taking my cue from Coward and Goa's study of Religious Experience of the South Asian Diaspora, I focused attention on ritual, prayer, sacred language and sacraments. I also focused on structure and the role of each temple within the Hindu and larger Canadian community.

The practices of the various temples were first categorized in order to make sense
of the data. The rituals of the temple were then compared to one another with, and to the traditional practices of Hinduism as found in law books such as the Dharmasastra.

Many of my working hypotheses changed rapidly: It was apparent early on that there is a remarkable degree of continuity between the rituals performed in Canada and those in India. It would appear that Austin Creel's statement that Hinduism puts, "....stress upon continuity and continuance of an eternal pattern" (Creel:1977:17) is concretely true in the case of the temples examined in this survey.

While these Hindu temples were startlingly orthodox and orthoprax they also show flexibility in addressing the changing needs of their constituency. It is to be noted that the Hindu tradition has always allowed for a wide variation in worship.

The Dharmasastra itself states that, "The dharmas of countries, castes, and families that are not opposed to the Vedic scriptures are authoritative and binding "(Kane:1946:857). All the temple officials consulted expressed the desire that their temples be a legacy to future generations.

The histories of the all the temples studied are very similar except for the case of the Hare Krishna Temple which follows the organizational pattern of the ISKON movement. The other four started with a few families and the slow building of a congregation. Ganesh and Vishnu Mandir have built large temple complexes and Hindu Sabha and Devi Temple are currently in the process of the doing the same.

The administrations of the various mandirs also show broad similarities, again with the exception of the Hare Krishna Temple. The Devi, Ganesh, Hindu Sabha and Vishnu Temple all have trustees, boards of directors, and appoint committees to handle specific tasks.
All of the above temples, except the Hare Krishna temple, have brought in Indian-educated priests which ensures a degree of orthodoxy. The temples also show an interesting combination of grass roots organizing, in which there is consultation with their congregations, coupled with a strong institutional structure.

The Devi, Hindu Sabha and Vishnu Mandir showed marked similarities in terms of temple layout with murtis grouped along one wall. This is no doubt a result of the strong North Indian influence in the congregation. The hall allows for congregational worship and singing, and close contact with the deities.

The Ganesh Temple, in contrast, is built along South Indian lines, in strict accordance with the agamas, or the "...canonical collection of literature concerning the temple " (Rao:1979:iv). The murtis are arranged in various positions in the central courtyard according to the sacred texts. Vishnu and Siva and their consorts occupy different halves of the temple.

The Hare Krishna Temple follows a different pattern partly because it is housed in an already existing church building. It combines the layout of the North Indian-style temple with that of the South Indian. The murtis are lined along one wall but are removed from the congregation.

The congregations of the temples showed the effect of the South Asian immigration to Canada. While the Ganesh Temple and Hindu Sabha Temple are homogenously South Indian/Sri Lankan and North Indian respectively, the others show mixed attendance. Devi and Vishnu Mandir have West Indian, North Indian, Gujarati and Fijian devotees. The Hare Krishna Temple serves North and South Indians and Europeans.
In the case of all these temples, sectarian divisions have disappeared in the Canadian context. It is almost certain that temples house all deities together in a way that would not occur in India.

This change can be seen most clearly in the festivals celebrated by the various temples. Vaisnavite and Saivite divisions are overlooked and temples celebrate both Krishna's Birthday and Sivaratri. There seemed to be an attempt on the part of all the temples except the Hare Krishna Temple, for reasons already specified, to reflect the wishes of the congregation.

All the temples studied celebrate Diwali, Krishna janamastami (Lord Venkateswara at the Ganesh Temple), Navami in honour of Lord Rama, and Sivaratri. All but the Hare Krishna Temple celebrate Navaratri. The three temples, Devi, Hindu Sabha, and Vishnu Mandir, which have a large number of North Indian members, all celebrate Holi, the spring festival of colours.

Vishnu Mandir, Hare Krishna Temple and Ganesh Temple all perform processions in which the murti is taken from the garbgrihna and is shown to the congregation. In the case of the Vishnu Mandir and Hare Krishna Temple the image is taken down to the water in traditional Indian fashion, in this case to Lake Ontario.

All the temples studied use Sanskrit in their services, conduct life cycle rituals or sanskars as per the sastras, and all offer astrological services. All the temples studied also follow the phases of the moon and arrange festivals and important events around astrological considerations. All the temple officiaries interviewed referred to holy books and acknowledged the authority of the Vedas.

The basic outline of the pujja as performed by all five of the temples show marked
similarities both to one another and to the prescriptions of the Dharmasastra. The Vedas were also mentioned as being central in all the temples except Devi Temple which focuses on the puranas.

All puja included the traditional offerings of foodstuffs, incense, flowers and arti (Kane:1958:38). All of the temples used agni hotra (fire worship) for a number of their rituals. A mixture of Vedic and bhakti influence was observed in the ritual praxis of each temple except Ganesh Temple.

The deities worshipped by the Devi and the Hindu Sabha temple were virtually identical to the Vishnu Mandir, except that Vishnu Mandir included an altar to Sai Baba. The Hare Krishna Temple represented only Krishna and Radha and those related to their worship for reasons described already. The Ganesh Temple showed deviation from the other temples, however the South Indian Gods such as Marugan were looked upon as being manifestations of Siva or Vishnu.

The approaches to sacral space within all of these institutions varied. Devi temple, Hindu Sabha and Vishnu Mandir allowed worshippers to directly approach the murtis. The Devi temple was the most permissive in this regard with the entire congregation participating in bathing the statue of the goddess.

The Ganesh Temple and Hare Krishna temples were more strict about space around the murti with Ganesh Temple being the more orthodox of these in allowing only trained priests to approach the deity. The pujari or priest functioned as a mediator between the devotee and the sacred.

In terms of links with the larger South Asian and Canadian community Vishnu Mandir was the most active in this area. They clearly wished to create their own institutions and also to function as a link between Hindus and non-Hindu
Canadian society. This temple communicates with the media, both television and print, and also negotiates with various levels of Canadian government when necessary.

The Hare Krishna Temple also maintains strong connections with other Hindu groups and the larger Canadian society. Their aims are specifically to fulfil the mandates set out by Swami Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada. These goals include providing food for the needy, educating the public regarding vegetarianism and reincarnation, and ultimately inspiring people towards self-realization. Because of its evangelical nature this temple is the most focused in its external goals.

The Devi, Ganesh, and Hindu Sabha temples seemed more concerned with the activities of their temples than with activities within the larger Canadian community. This being said they are also open to giving tours of their temples and discussing their religion.

When interviewed, priests from Devi, Hindu Sabha, and Vishnu Mandir asserted their mandate to contribute to community and family cohesiveness. Articles in the various magazines such as Hindu Dharma, Prabhat Sangeet Multicultural Magazine and Hindu Sabha Magazine show great concern for issues relating to family relations and care of senior citizens.

All the temples examined were also centrally concerned with the maintenance of Hindu values and culture. Many of my informants expressed concern that the younger generations did not understand Hinduism or their own culture. Many also worried about the influence of mainstream Canadian society in terms of drug and alcohol abuse, and sexual mores. In response to these influences many of the temples have set up heritage, language, and religion classes for children and
6.0 Conclusion

There is obviously no final statement that can be made regarding the state of modern Hindu practice in the Canadian context. The temples certainly do not present a uniform picture. However, some general statements can be made.

While some changes have occurred in the Canadian setting such as the break down of sectarian (and very likely caste) barriers, and some of these changes may be due to a West Indian influence also, overall the Hindu religious paradigm has remained intact.

Respect for tradition is a hallmark of South Asian society and this is borne out by the commitment of everyone interviewed to keep Hindu religious and cultural patterns intact. The central mode of maintaining orthodoxy is the hiring of priests trained in the sub-continent.

The Ganesh Temple and Hindu Sabha were the most rigorous in keeping to South Asian standards and all priests are carefully selected for their profound knowledge of the Hindu holy books. This temple has also received influxes of Sri Lankan immigrants who help maintain customary practice.

In his essay Research on South Asians in Canada Retrospect and Prospect, Norman Buchignani asserts that the ease of travel between the sub-continent and Canada will have important effects on culture. He writes:

In addition, there is an enormous amount of visiting done between Canada and the countries of origin; this process must profoundly affect the transmission and maintenance of South Asian family values (Buchignani:1987:123).
It is clear that connections with India are important both individually and institutionally to South Asians in Canada. Visiting swamis are regularly invited to speak at all the temples.

In the Canadian context, the Hindu temple is serving a vital function for the community. On both a psychological, social, and symbolic level, the temple functions to orient the individual. The temple itself is an embodiment of the Hindu world view. The effectiveness of the temple in fulfilling these needs is reflected in the congregation's increasing numbers, and in the recent construction of large Indian-style temples.

Hindu temples that I observed are retaining traditional religious praxis even as they settle into Canadian society. I perceived none of the "myth of return" mentality which was said to describe British South Asians. The Hindus of Canada are clearly here to stay and are ensuring that they will pass on their rich cultural and religious legacy both to their descendants and to the people of Canada.
Bibliography


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