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SOME REFLECTIONS ON SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF MODERN HINDUISM

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Modern Hinduism provides a fascinating area of study still comparatively little researched in the sociology of religion. Several scholars have demonstrated the fruitfulness of this approach[1] and emphasised the need for reconsidering the methodological perspectives used for studying Hinduism.[2] So far, two approaches have predominated in most studies on Hinduism. First, linguistic and philosophical tools of analysis were developed by nineteenth century indologists and their successors in order to uncover the meaning of textual materials relating to Indian religious beliefs and practices. By and large, however, these texts were, and often still analysed in isolation from the society in which they originated and are handed down. Thus, it is often overlooked that the interpretation of particular texts continues to be modified in response to changing social circumstances. Secondly, by contrast, contextual studies based on the observation of Indian society and, more recently, extensive fieldwork, have been developed by sociologists and social anthropologists of the twentieth century. The latter are usually mainly concerned with Indian social structure, caste, kinship and village studies, and the relationship between traditional values and modern socio-economic development.

In a way, the sociologist of religion who wants to look at Hinduism needs something of both approaches, and yet both have their inherent limitations. Whereas indologists reconstruct a largely forgotten and idealised past far removed from contemporary Indian society, sociologists and social anthropologists are often too closely wedded to the immediate present. One frequently gains the impression that neither group pays sufficient attention to the complexity of the past-present-continuum in Hinduism as a living religious tradition. In fact, instead of seeing Hinduism as a religious system, it would perhaps be more accurate to view it as a multi-dimensional socio-religious process which has undergone some radical transfor-

mations over the last hundred years and continues to change, providing in turn a basis for the religious legitimation of large-scale social and cultural change.

The present paper does not report on findings relating to research into one particular aspect of modern Hinduism. Rather, it maps out an important territory of research in a general manner. In this way, I hope to focus attention on some issues of interest to the sociologist of religion and point to the possibility of applying sociological analysis to recent historical data provided by religions studies. In what follows I deal only with Hinduism, but the complex relationship between tradition and the continuing process of its transformation can be studied in all religions and cultures. The Dutch scholar Gerardus Van der Leeuw referred to this process as 'the dynamics of religion'[3] to which historians of religion have perhaps not paid sufficient attention.

Modern Hinduism, that is to say the Hinduism of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is sometimes significantly called 'Neo-Hinduism'. Many of its aspects can be understood as a new kind of religion which would not exist in its present form, were it not for the prolonged contact between the different societies and cultures of India and the West. The beginnings of this culture-contact go back as far as the late fifteenth century or even earlier, but the interaction between the different cultures was intensified during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially through the full development of colonialism. The emergence of Neo-Hinduism is closely linked to important political, economic, social and cultural changes brought about during the last 150 years. Politically and socially, modern Hinduism developed in a colonial situation; theologically, one can see its development as closely related to the contact with Christianity or what an Indian writer has aptly characterized as 'The Shadow of the Cross', a title which refers to the modern encounter of 'Christianity and Hinduism in a colonial situation.'[4]

The development of India in the modern period provides an excellent case-study for one of the earliest examples of interaction between western and non-western societies where a wide range of responses to the incoming colonial culture can be particularly well observed. Similarly, modern Hinduism provides an equally early

example of a non-western religious tradition coming into contact with the West and undergoing deep transformation as a consequence of this cross-cultural encounter. Responses to new ideas, behaviour and institutions varied widely over space and time, and between different individuals; among others, they include patterns of acculturation, rejection, and revivalism. On the other hand, due to the particular links between the West and India, knowledge about Indian religions was diffused relatively early and affected intellectual developments in Europe from the eighteenth century onwards, particularly in literature, philosophy, and the arts. In addition, Hinduism was also one of the earliest faiths to be transplanted to the West by missionary means at the end of the nineteenth century, a process which continues to this day.

Because the culture-contact situation occurred sooner, Hinduism underwent profound changes earlier than most other non-western religions. Its dynamic development, whether viewed hermeneutically as the reinterpretation of the traditional religious heritage, or sociologically as modernization, provides a helpful paradigm for understanding the pattern of development occurring in traditional religions of non-western cultures during the modern period.

It is therefore all the more extraordinary that the complex process involved in the development of modern Hinduism has, up to now, received little analysis within a wider social and cultural context. Max Weber's pioneering study *The Religion of India* presents an analysis of ancient and medieval India rather than of the India of his own days or of the late nineteenth century.[5] Weber depended for his sources mainly on the works of German and British indologists of his time, dealing with the past rather than the present. With them he shares the achievement of having put forward a particular interpretation of ancient and medieval Indian religion and society linked to a scholarly reconstructed past of which many factual details have since been either modified or proved to be false.[6]

I would like to examine certain developments in modern Hinduism which can be related to theoretical issues debated in the sociology of religion. It is my contention that the developments of modern Hinduism cannot be satisfactorily explained without a sociological analysis of the factors involved in the contact between

Indian and Western culture. The importance of this culture-contact situation can be demonstrated at several levels. I shall mainly discuss approaches pertaining to 1. the conceptual and linguistic level; 2. the doctrinal and scriptural level; and 3. the institutional and societal level. All three levels were affected by the close interaction between Indian and western society, especially Britain.

1. Approach at the conceptual and linguistic level

Werner Cohn[7] has argued that social scientists as well as many history of religion scholars often apply the concept 'religion' in non-western contexts without clarifying and sufficiently separating the different meanings subsumed under this concept. 'Religion' is often used as an observer's construct. As such it is applied to sets of activities which the actors themselves may not necessarily term religious, nor may they necessarily combine distinctly separate activities into a coherent unity in the way the observer does. This can give rise to much confusion by leading to the wrong assumptions in cross-cultural comparisons and by creating the impression of greater similarity and universality of religious phenomena than is warranted by the actual data.

This difficulty is particularly apparent in the study of Hinduism. The latter is often presented in a one-dimensional manner, giving the impression of an overall unity and coherence which this religious tradition never possessed. The various historical strands which went into the making of Hinduism include a great diversity of beliefs, rituals, and institutions which, strictly speaking, are often not comparable to those found elsewhere. The concept 'Hinduism' itself is such a wide umbrella-term as to be heuristically almost useless for analysis. 'Hinduism' is primarily not a religious concept, but one of geographical origin. Derived from Sanskrit, a variant of the term 'Hindu' was used by ancient Persians, Greeks and Arabs to describe a way of life characteristic of the people of Sind or the Indus valley. The term 'Hinduism', adopted by the English in the early nineteenth century, was traditionally not used by Indians to describe their religious beliefs and practices but, through the influence of western usage, it has come to be widely accepted today, even in India. In the critical assessment of a late

nineteenth century Indian writer 'There is no Hindu conception answering to the term "Hinduism", and the question... what is Hinduism, can only be answered by defining what it is that the foreigners who use the word mean by the term'.[8] It is only recently that Western scholars have begun to analyse the multiple ramifications of the term "Hinduism".[9]

There is also no Indian word which corresponds exactly to the western concept 'religion'. The closest equivalent would be the term *dharma* which cannot be precisely translated by one English word but indicates a cosmic, moral, social and individual order as well as normative prescriptions of duty. Nowadays, Hindus also describe their way of life as *sanatana dharma*, an 'eternal order'. However, as a description of 'Hinduism' this term came into usage only through late nineteenth century apologetic connotations associated with other religious terms of western origin such as 'spirituality', 'mysticism', 'scripture' or 'theism', all of which are widely used in Indian writings in English.[10]

In the second half of the nineteenth century, western scholars first applied the term 'sect' to various Hindu communities which differ from each other by traditions and scriptures of their own and are usually called *sampradaya*. Strictly speaking, however, there is no Indian reality corresponding to the term 'sect' in the sense of a heterodox community, as there is no reality corresponding to the notion of a 'church' as a centralized institution defining orthodoxy. *Sampradaya* literally means 'what is handed over', that is to say 'tradition', and in that sense implies orthodoxy; the term is sometimes also used as equivalent for 'religion' in modern Indian languages, for example 'Hindu-sampradaya'. What constitutes a Hindu *sampradaya* is not the fact of being rejected by a central authoritative institution but rather being a tradition founded by a particular sage or saint, a guru. Joahim Wach[11] was the first to point out that the nature of Hindu *sampradaya* poses a problem for the sociology of religion, but its role and operation in Indian society provides an important channel for introducing effective social change.[12]

These few examples make it apparent that the study of Hinduism can highlight some of the problems encountered in the definitional debates about religion as well as the discussions about the typology

of religious institutions. This would also be true of other areas of central interest to the sociology of religion as for example the question of the religious location and transmission of religious authority in society. Before being applied, conceptual terms of western origin need to be closely examined in order to clarify whether or not they are suitable for the sociological analysis of Hinduism.

Another fruitful area of investigation is the examination of the historical transfer of words and concepts from one society to another. The culture-contact situation between India and England is well documented at the linguistic level by the presence of Indian words in the English language, and that of far more numerous English words in Indian languages. A historical-descriptive survey of *Indian Words in English*[13] shows that in the period before the nineteenth century, due to the particular kind of contact between the two societies, Indian words introduced into English mainly relate to commercial, military, and political terms, that is to say primarily to material culture. In the nineteenth century, however, the religions, languages, literatures and, above all, the philosophies of India, began to attract the attention of English scholars. Consequently, linguistic terms relating to philology, philosophy, and particular aspects of religious belief were introduced into English at that time.

A thematic rather than merely chronological analysis of the words introduced shows that the religious terms relate to a mixture of words of both Hindu and Muslim origin, due to the contiguous presence of Hinduism and Islam in Northern India. Words relating to Indian religious figures were the first to become known in the West, beginning with 'brahmin' at the end of the fifteenth century, followed in the seventeenth century by such terms as 'pir', 'fakir', 'guru', 'sannyasi', 'yogi', 'pundit', and 'Hindu'. The four basic *varnas* or castes were also known relatively early: after the term 'brahmin' at the top of the hierarchy had been introduced in the late fifteenth century, the other end of the theoretical *varna*-scheme, the 'shudra', become known 150 years later, in the seventeenth century, when the term 'pariah' too is first found in English. The 'kshatrya' and the 'vaishya', the two other castes in the middle of the four-fold *varna*-scheme, became only known in the eighteenth century.

Terms such as 'yoga' (1820), 'vedanta' (1823), 'maya' (1823), 'karma' (1828), 'nirvana' (1836), 'dharma' (1862), 'atman' (1870), and 'bhakti' (1877) were all introduced during the nineteenth century, and a variety of meanings came to be associated with them. The widespread diffusion of such words as 'karma', 'maya', 'nirvana' and 'yoga' for example, was particularly due to the writings of the theosophical movement, founded in 1875.

The term 'Buddhism' is found from 1801 onwards, whereas the term 'Hinduism' was introduced into English in 1829. But the two major religious movements of Hinduism, Vaishnavism and Shaivism, became only known in 1871 and 1878 respectively. Max Müller was the first to translate the term 'darshan' quite mistakenly as 'philosophy'. 'Darshan' refers to different Hindu worldviews, traditionally said to be six in number; the concept does not exactly correspond to the critical position associated with the development of philosophy in the West, particularly during the modern period.[14]

The diffusion of knowledge about Hinduism in the West through the introduction of linguistic terms and philosophical concepts relating to Indian religious figures, institutions and beliefs provides a worthwhile field for the sociology of knowledge for it relates to the development of western awareness about religion in non-western cultures. The fact that the majority of western works on Hinduism have mainly dealt with philosophy, spirituality or mysticism rather than with ethics, epistemology, logic or other aspects of Indian religious thought and practice has so far escaped sociological attention. Closely related to this is the historical time sequence in which Indian religious writings became known in the West, either merely by their proper names, or as texts in translation.[15] The earliest texts referred to in seventeenth century English were the 'shastras' (1616-19), a descriptive term relating to scholarly treatises and commentaries. In the late seventeenth century, the term 'purana' (1696) referring generally to medieval Hindu writings was also introduced in the West. Terms such as 'Vedas' (1734) and 'Rg Veda' (1776) became known in the eighteenth century, but the Sanskrit texts and translations of these writings were only made available to the West in the late nineteenth century through the work of western orientalists. The earliest religious text known in English translation was the *Bhagavad-Gita*, translated directly from

Sanskrit (rather than from Persian translations, as was the case with other writings) before any other religious text in 1785 at the request and with the financial support of the East India Company. It is not a canonical text like the corpus of vedic literature but enjoys a quasi-canonical status in the Vedanta system and for Vaishnava worshippers. In the last hundred years, it has acquired an extraordinary authority beyond sectarian divisions for reasons we shall discuss shortly. The position and importance of this text, even in India today, were greatly enhanced by the fact that since its first translation western people compared it to the Christian *New Testament*. Subsequently, Indian religious reformers gave the *Bhagavad-Gita* a central place in their reinterpretation of Hindu doctrines, necessitated by important social and cultural changes. This brings us to the problem of the doctrinal reinterpretation or modernization of Hinduism which is particularly evident from the treatment given to scriptures and the new understanding of such traditional key concepts as *karma* and *dharma*.

2. Approach at the doctrinal and scriptural level

Modern presentations of Hinduism by Hindus themselves have been deeply affected by a process of reinterpretation which began in the nineteenth century and is often described as 'Hindu renaissance'. The precise meaning and exact temporal onset of this process has given rise to much scholarly debate. The 'Hindu renaissance' does not refer to religion alone but is closely linked to the general transformation of Indian society and culture during the nineteenth century. The composite nature of this renaissance has been characterized as historical rediscovery of an Aryan golden age, linguistic and literary modernisation, and socio-religious reformation.[16] The historical rediscovery of the Indian past in terms of an Aryan golden age was brought about by the work of western orientalists which revealed important features of vedic religion and culture that had hitherto been obscured or forgotten. The linguistic and literary modernisation was made necessary and possible through the introduction of the printing press, first used on a larger scale in the late eighteenth century, especially by the Serampore missionaries, soon followed by Indian entrepreneurs in Calcutta

and elsewhere.[17] Improved modes of communication, whether they were the use of printing, the development of indigenous journalism, or later the introduction of rail and postal facilities, are an important feature of Indian modernity in general, and consequently of the modernization of Hinduism. They enabled religious thinkers and reformers for the first time to address themselves not only to a small group of disciples as in the traditional *sampradaya*, but to a wider public. However restricted such a public may have been, it extended far beyond traditional boundaries and even included people overseas in some cases.[18]

Sociologists have stressed the central role of the Protestant Reformation for the modern development of religion in the West. The Protestant Reformation also provided some Hindus with a model for possible religious reform as much of Protestant missionary preaching contrasted the benefits of the Reformation with the disadvantages of the preceding dark ages of medieval Europe. The preaching of the missionaries, coupled with a strong critique of Indian religious practices, supplied an important incentive to reform Hindu thought and culture. In the past, Indian religious reformers had always primarily been concerned with the search for liberation or *moksha*; the social consequences of their teaching occurred mainly as unintended by-products. By contrast, Hindu reformers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries consciously planned and willed the reform of Indian society and religion as an end in itself. Hindu writers of this period did not so much describe what Hinduism is but, influenced by a western model of religion, they prescribed what Hinduism ought to be. In the analysis of modern Hinduism one has to ask, therefore, first, what aspects of the traditional religious heritage were reinterpreted in a new social and historical situation; and secondly, which western influences provided the tools for such a reinterpretation of Hinduism in the specific culture-contact situation of colonialism.

Whereas Hindu religious practices were traditionally local, regional, sectarian, and exclusive, rather than unitary and universal, the search of the reformers concentrated on the unifying elements of the tradition which could be universalised and applied to people all over India, as well as related to religion outside it. Similar to Christianity, but contrary to Indian tradition, unifying

aspects of religious belief rather than divisive religious practices were stressed whilst sectarian practices, temple ritual and image worship were de-emphasized.[19]

The best test-case in the reform debate is provided by the new understanding of caste. Traditionally a social and religious phenomenon so closely intertwined as to be inseparable, caste was declared by all modern Hindu reformers to be a feature of the Indian social system which had intrinsically nothing to do with Hindu religion and spirituality. The modern reformers largely reached only the urban middle classes. But even in the cities groups of orthodox Hindus reacted sharply to the reformers' attack on the religious tradition. Whilst the reformers stress that caste is *not* a religious phenomenon, traditional Hindu groups continue to insist on the religious importance of caste in all areas of life. Analogous to Christianity, the scriptural basis of religion was now emphasised in a new way even though 'scripture' had never played the same role as in the Christian tradition. Hinduism is not primarily linked to the written word but to *shruti* and *smrti*, to words heard and remembered by sages of old, handed down orally and esoterically over millenia from the guru to the specially initiated disciple, belonging to the upper castes of the 'twice-born'. Thus, the function of these texts in traditional Indian society was not identical with what is understood by 'scriptures' today.

As against the polytheistic practices of popular Hinduism, the reformers consciously set out to prove the presence of monotheism in India. The 'unity of the Godhead' was emphasized as an integral part of the Hindu tradition, but support for it was initially not sought in the teachings of Ramanuja and other theistic exponents of traditional Hinduism. On the contrary, evidence for the existence of a Hindu belief in monotheism was first of all drawn from certain passages in the Upanishads and later also from verses in the *Bhagavad-Gita* which lend themselves to a monotheistic interpretation. However, it seems to have been Charles Wilkins who first referred to 'the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead, in opposition to idolatrous sacrifices, and the worship of images' in the 1784 preface to the first translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita*.[20] Early Indian reformers approached the matter differently by taking the view that the 'unity of the Godhead' was primarily proved by the

Upanishads. Both doctrinal reinterpretation and institutional reform can be seen in terms of three major strands developing from the beginning to the end of the nineteenth century, showing in various ways and degrees the combination of Indian and western influences:

1. The importance of the Upanishads was emphasised first as providing a traditional scriptural basis for monotheism in Hinduism. Institutionally, the new understanding of theism culminated in the foundation of the *Brahmo Samaj*, a Hindu society of the believers in one God which, in the words of a later commentator, would not have been but for the presence of Christianity in India.

2. A second strand of scriptural and doctrinal reinterpretation is closely related to the four main collections of the Vedas. Institutionally, this culminated in the vedic fundamentalism of the *Arya Samaj* which displayed a puritanical zeal in purging Hinduism from all post-vedic accretions.[21] The *Arya Samaj* was mainly active in the Punjab and in western India, whereas the *Brahmo Samaj* primarily belonged to Bengal. Both societies developed organisational structures and, in the case of the *Brahmo Samaj*, patterns of worship on the model provided in the Protestant churches. Analogously to Christian teaching, the *Brahmo Samaj* emphatically preached 'the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man'. Both the *Brahmo Samaj* and the *Arya Samaj*, although of basically quite different orientation, were consciously founded to become comprehensive 'Hindu churches'. It was their aim to embrace and religiously unify the whole of India. This aim was not achieved; each movement developed along sectarian patterns.[22]

3. The third strand of reinterpretation is closely linked to the *Bhagavad-Gita* which provided a scriptural legitimation for social action and a much needed work-ethic. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, when Hindus had developed a new identity and self-consciousness vis-à-vis the West, a growing differentiation occurred between the religious and secular aspects of society. In fact, the polarity between spirituality and politics became itself one of the most important themes of the religious reformers. Religiously, the idea of social service as a means of serving God became institutionalised as one of the integral aims of the

Ramakrishna Order, founded by Vivekananda in 1897, after a prolonged stay in the West. In the secular realm, the idea of social action and work provided a strong impetus for the development of nationalism and the movement for political independence. The *Bhagavad-Gita* played an important role in both; it came to be read in a new way as both a religious treatise and a national tract wich emphasized action more than renunciation and taught social justice and service to others as religious duty.

Because of this two-fold importance of the *Bhagavad-Gita* for the development of a religious and secular work-ethic, some comment is called for. The first *Bhagavad-Gita* commentary in modern times was written in 1886 by the well-known Bengali novelist, journalist and early nationalist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94). He was probably also the first to comment explicitly on the interdependence and ambivalence of the religious and secular in Hinduism.[23] He early criticised European writers for their failure to understand Hinduism as a living religion and culture. With a strong interest in the social sciences and a close connection with the Bengal Social Science Association, founded in 1867 on the model of the British Social Science Association, he must be credited for having introduced positivist thought in Bengal. Many of Bankim's ideas were of great influence on other reformers, particularly Tagore, Vivekananda and Aurobindo. But as Bankim wrote mostly in Bengali rather than in English, and also did not institutionalise his ideas through the creation of a *samaj* or mission, his thought is less well known abroad than that of other Hindu reformers.

In his search for new approaches to Hinduism on an indigenous basis, he was particularly influential in his revolutionary reinterpretation of the key concept of *dharma* or duty. He extended the idea of religious duty by universalising the meaning of *dharma*. Traditionally *dharma* is linked to a code of conduct defining the obligations of the individual to his family, caste and immediate community; now it became related to society at large, to one's whole country, and ultimately to the entire world. Thus, *dharma* came to include social and political duties; it presented patriotism as a religious duty and, under certain conditions, even sanctioned social and political revolution. In this way, Bankim not only reinterpreted traditional Hinduism, but he formulated an entirely new *dharma* or

ethic for the modern Hindu, thereby providing a dynamic concept for the development of religious and political nationalism.[24] Besides the concept of *dharma*. Bankim also reinterpreted the symbol of the mother-goddess who protects India as the motherland which becomes divine in turn, an important development which cannot be discussed here, but which provided another powerful symbol for Hindu nationalism.[25]

Bankim was also the first to introduce the modern reinterpretation of the Krishna-figure. Under the influence of Christian theological writings, Bankim tried to prove the historicity of Krishna, however unsuccessfully. Like Christ, Krishna is both God and man, and he also embodies the ideal of human perfection. However, Krishna surpasses other religious teachers as he does not only propound religious teachings, but puts before us a living ideal of action whose comprehensiveness is unparalleled by any other religious figure.

What Bankim begun anew is now an integral part of the modern neo-Hindu tradition. For all subsequent reformers and religious thinkers a commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gita* has become *de rigeur*, whether one looks at Vivekananda, Tilak, Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan, Gandhi, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, or the leader of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.[26]

The Krishna figure of the *Bhagavad-Gita* has become the personal God *par excellence*. A major part of his message consists in stressing the path of *karma-yoga*, the way of selfless action and work for others, performed in a spirit of inner renunciation by not seeking any reward or fruits of one's action. Krishna, the ideal human being and the ideal God, is also the ideal worker, the *karma-yogin*. Vivekananda used the new symbol of *karma-yogin* to make Hinduism active, work-oriented, and even 'aggressive', to use his own words. Aurobindo used the same symbol as illustration and title for his extremist political journal which called for independence. Today, Gandhi has come to represent for many Hindus the permanent embodiment of the *karma-yogin* ideal of the *Bhagavad-Gita*.[27]

This reinterpretation of *karma* implies considerable conceptual contradictions, however. Traditionally, *karma* means ritual action and, by extension, action in general and even more the accumulated good or bad consequences which result from any

action. As every action always produces new *karma* which, in a cyclical view of life, predetermines future reincarnations, the traditional way to liberation from this cycle has always implied renunciation from all action, including ritual action. Thus the highest and safest way to liberation, which socially remained an esoteric way by being restricted to the upper castes, has always been the way of *jnana*, that is to say, of realization, knowledge and wisdom. The way of devotion or *bhakti*, linked to a theistic faith, and the way of *karma* as the way of works and ritual, have been the way of the masses and were considered less likely to produce the desired result of liberation. In the modern interpretation of the *Bhagavad-Gita* *karma* is given the added meaning of work in a secular sense, of physical labour and social service to others, so that work is interpreted as worship to God.

Strictly speaking, the Krishna of the *Bhagavad-Gita* is not involved in action (except if one relates him to the wider setting of the epic of which the Gita is a part), but performs the traditional role of a teacher instructing the warrior Arjuna on the battle-field about the duty required from him in a situation of war. Even iconographically it can be shown that this understanding of the *karma-yogin*, the charioteer Krishna, is relatively recent. Its pictorial representation does not form an integral part of the traditional scenes of Krishna's life, so richly documented throughout Indian sculpture and painting. On the contrary, Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield is a modern motif, found from the late eighteenth century in Indian miniatures and, with greater frequency, in contemporary popular bazaar art, particularly in the form of calendar pictures and modern book illustrations of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The frequent pictorial representation of scenes from the *Bhagavad-Gita*, particularly of Krishna and Arjuna on the chariot, within the image world of modern Hinduism is only one example indicating a shift of interest in the understanding of traditional themes and their artistic expression.[28]

If one analyses the social locations of the *Bhagavad-Gita* in modern Hinduism, it becomes apparent that the reinterpretation of this text and its use for the scriptural legitimation of social and religious innovations must be seen as the outcome of a cross-cultural process which developed through the contacts between India and the West.

The major historical phases and personalities which contributed to a new universal understanding of the *Bhagavad-Gita* in India and the West have been examined in Eric Sharpe's study *The Universal Gita* (1985).[29] The new interpretations of the *Gita* have by now become so orthodox and quasi-canonical that they are not only used by religious preachers, but also by secular innovators who want to convince their countrymen of the desirability of large-scale industrialisation. As an example a documentary film on 'Four Men of India', produced by the Hindustan Lever group, may be mentioned wherein new jobs in industry are illustrated whilst the commentary repeatedly quotes a verse from the *Bhagavad-Gita*, stressing that 'for the wise man knowledge and action are one' (BG V,2). In other words, the traditional religious goal of liberation can be realised through the way of work or action, whereas in the past it was mainly sought through knowledge and complete renunciation from the world and its activities. The comprehensive message of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which includes the understanding of renunciation in terms of disinterested action rather than total abandonment of action, provides religious support and reinforcement for a new social situation in modern India. It is therefore not surprising that this idea of disinterested action, as preached by the *Bhagavad-Gita*, is central to contemporary discussions on Hindu ethics, as it represents a traditional value which can greatly help and legitimise the modern development of Indian society.

3. Approach at the institutional and societal level

Another area of possible research concerns the cultural interaction apparent in the transplantation of Hinduism to the West. The term 'transplantation' implies the transfer of Hinduism to another culture-area and its missionary propagation as a new faith in a pluralistic society as one religion among others.[30] Traditionally, Hinduism has always been ethnically rooted, particularly through its caste-structure into which an individual must be born to qualify as a Hindu. This social-structure element is far more important than any doctrinal or faith-element requiring personal assent or conversion. Unlike Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity or Islam, Hinduism was not found outside the country of its origin until very

recently. It was only during the nineteenth century that Hinduism, for the first time in its history, became a proselytising religion, a change made possible through the reinterpretation and universalization of its message.

The reform movement of the *Arya Samaj* was the first to develop a dynamic missionary activity, but this remained primarily directed at non-Hindu Indians, that is to say, it attempted to win previous Indian converts to Islam and Christianity back to Hinduism and bring outcaste Hindus into mainstream Hinduism. This movement was relativaly unsuccessful, however.[31]

A more universal conception of a worldwide Hindu mission was subsequently developed by the reformer Vivekananda whose preaching exercised considerable influence in India and abroad. During his three years' stay in the West (1893-6) Vivekananda came to reinterpret the traditional understanding of Vedanta in a new, if not to say revolutionary, way. He reconceived it in terms of both a universal as well as eminently practical religion, a 'practical Vedanta' directed to work and social service. In addition, he considered India to have a special mission to preach spirituality to the world. But this was a newly developed understanding of spirituality; it emerged only during the latter part of the nineteenth century in response to certain needs of Indian society defending itself against western dominance.[32] However, even the arguments used in this defence would not have taken the actual form they did without important contributions from the West.

The historical and linguistic researches of western orientalists had helped to discover a common past for nineteenth century Indians; the socio-political reforms of Indians and Westerners established a common present. Both developments were important in creating, beyond the deep-rooted diversities of Indian society, a common consciousness of a racial and cultural as well as a religious, and later political, unity of India. Hindu apologetic, frequently carried out in the English language, first developed as a defence against the incisive criticisms made by western missionaries and civil servants. With growing self-consciousness it grew into a wider justification of Hinduism and its values vis-à-vis the West. By the end of the nineteenth century, Hinduism had become sufficiently reformed and strengthened to affirm its own superiority against the

dominantly material values of the West. In practice, the claim to superior spirituality was first endorsed not in India, but in the West, by gaining western converts to the teachings, if not the social structure, of a new religious message which appeared more attractive than any religion of their own cultural background.

What are some of the factors which help to explain the transplantation of Hinduism to the West? Historically, this transplantation was initiated by two movements, one of Indian, the other of western origin. Vivekananda himself, and later the Ramakrishna Mission founded by him (1897), established the first centres of Hindu teaching, preaching and worship in the U.S.A, England, and elsewhere. The other influential movement in propagating Hindu religious beliefs and practices in the West was the Theosophical Society, founded in New York in 1875. A movement of western origin, it became indianised after its founders, Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, had moved to India in 1879. Its primarily Hindu orientation was further enhanced after its best-known western convert, Mrs. Annie Besant, began to preach 'a new and reformed Hinduism'[33] to both Indian and western audiences. The Ramakrishna Mission as well as the Theosophical Society grew out of the novel, selective blending of Hindu and western ideas. In a sense, both were new religious movements which initiated the key developments in transplanting Hinduism as a religion to the West. Both movements were pioneered by particular individuals who possessed qualities of charismatic leadership. They found a following among Indians as well as westerners, often belonging to a social elite. Both movements interacted and sometimes successively influenced the same individuals.

The wider socio-political context in which Hinduism came to the West requires closer investigation. Strictly speaking, Hinduism in its indigenous setting, as practised by Hindu social groups, had been transplanted to non-Indian societies before, especially with the large numbers of indentured Indian labourers which the British colonial administration had transported around the globe. However, these groups remained in relative isolation from the host-society so that little adaptation took place in the understanding and practice of Hinduism. Such adaptation, however, was required when Hinduism came into close contact with western societies, both in India and abroad.

Generally, it is not sufficiently stressed that the deep transformations involved in the development of modern Hinduism and its transplantation to the West took place in a colonial situation where India was ruled by an alien political power with a different cultural and religious heritage. In this situation, Hinduism was the religion of a subject people and Christianity the religion of foreign conquerors who nonetheless brought considerable material and social benefits to India. The presence of Christianity in India posed a threat to traditional Hinduism, but it also provided a stimulating challenge for the revitalisation and transformation of the indigenous religious heritage. Some of the themes which emerged out of this situation of confrontation and dependence imply the opposition between the indigenous and alien, the ancient and the new, the sectarian and the universal.

The colonial situation is equally important for understanding the western interest in Hinduism. Over the last hundred years or so, a considerable number of western intellectuals have expressed the hope that a moral and spiritual renewal of the West may be brought about by influences from the East. This interest in the East and especially in Indian religions is usually seen in merely spiritual and religious terms, but it has rarely been examined in a wider social and historical context. Taking into account the material preoccupations involved in the socio-cultural relations between East and West, Alex Aronson has said about the western interest in Indian spirituality that

> The coincidence of spiritual and material expansion is far too striking to be merely accidental... Historically speaking, the re-awakened interest in Indian civilization coincided with the economic and colonial expansions of those countries in Europe which required new materials for the products of their factories and workshops...
> The country, therefore, in which the Industrial Revolution first originated, accelerating thereby the rise of the middle classes, was also the first to investigate the civilization of India... The middle classes stood for expansion of empire as well as for the expansion of their mind...
> India was to the rising middle classes of Europe, apart from being one of the main sources of their economic prosperity, an escape from their own spiritual narrowness, a protest against the limitation of a purely classical culture, the romantic dream of a timeless and conflictless existence come true.[34]

The interest of western individuals in Hinduism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was motivated by a disillu-

sionment with Christiantiy, but also by a general discontent with western life, with the growth of industrialisation and new political forces.

The number of western people who became followers of or even converts to Hinduism has always been relatively small. Up to the 1950's they mostly belonged to an intellectual and literary elite and, due to their social position, their influence was often greater than one would suspect from their number. During the 1920's, quite a few western intellectuals were attracted by the ideas of neo-Vedanta, described as 'perhaps the first missionary movement of any Eastern religion to the West'. In 1930, an American author even referred to the 'Vedanta's invasion of America' and listed ten Vedanta centres of the Ramakrishna Movement in the U.S.A. besides seventeen other Hindu and Yoga societies.[35]

Since then, the number of Hindu organisations and centres of worship in the West has grown exponentially. What was once an elite interest has now become a much more broadly based phenomenon. Such Hindu institutions as the ashram and the guru-figure are widely known today and so are certain religious practices such as the use of mantras, initiation, and puja. But so far, little work has been done to show how the transfer of these institutions and rituals from one society to another subtly transforms their meaning, function and practice.[36]

This redefinition of the traditional beliefs and practices of Hinduism within a new social context does not only occur among western converts; it is equally observable among the immigrant Hindu communities in the West. Religious practices which were originally rooted in the diverse sectarian and regional traditions of village Hinduism have to be adapted and unified in order to provide small Hindu groups in large urban centres of the West with group cohesion and identity.[37] Even in India, loosely-structured Hindu devotional groups in urban areas often acquire a heightened sense of religious distinctiveness which cuts across the traditional lines of social division and leads to a new interest in organisation and intellectual expression. In Britain researchers have often concentrated their attention more on examining the role of ethnicity and community than on asking what specific function Hindu religious beliefs and practices have in maintaining the identity and

boundaries of Hindu immigrant groups. How far are these beliefs and practices being adapted and changed? How far is their transmission from one generation to the next secured outside formal channels? Or how far are new organisational structures created to guard and propagate a newly defined Hindu 'orthodoxy'.[38] There is the further question of how far are the cultural, social and religious aspects of Hinduism increasingly being more clearly distinguished and separated in a new cultural environment. There is also the question of how far contemporary western converts to Hinduism, especially those belonging to the Hare Krishna movement and modern Hindu meditation groups, help to emphasize selective aspects of Hindus spirituality and through this selective emphasis influence and subtly modify the perception and self-description of Hinduism by Indian immigrants to Britain.[39] Thus, the process of transplantation has not only a historical but also a contemporary dimension wherein the self-understanding of Hindus in the West is influenced and partly reoriented by what western converts understand the essentials of Hinduism to be.

As far as the historical onset of this transplantation to the West is concerned, the most important area for further analysis is the colonial situation itself with its highly complex political, economic, cultural, religious and social factors and its implicit dominance-dependence relationship. In what sense this was of decisive importance in shaping Hindu apologetics, modern Indian self-understanding, and the dynamics of Hinduism today, still awaits further elucidation.

Conclusion

These are some examples of possible sociological approaches to the study of modern Hinduism. It should be clear by now that the term 'Hinduism', like the term 'religion' itself, is primarily a societal rather than a sociological or theological category. To understand Hinduism today, both the historical and contemporary manifestations of socio-religious change in India as well as their relation to developments in western societies require detailed investigation. However, many studies lack the necessary rigour to explain satisfactorily the various factors involved in the reinter-

pretation and modernization of Hinduism. Thus, they cannot convincingly show where points of a creative breakthrough have occurred in modern Hinduism in recent times.

Much research on Hinduism remains at a merely descriptive level and offers little to explain the dynamics of change or the fact of the persistence of Hinduism in spite of profound social changes. In much writing on Hinduism the units of analysis are often insufficiently demarcated in terms of either time-span or subject matter. In order to understand how modern Hinduism arrived at its contemporary self-descriptions and how it operates under new social conditions, one needs to examine the conceptual tools and principles of selection operative in the ongoing re-interpretation and modernization of Hinduism. Here, the term 'reinterpretation' is meant to refer to a new understanding of the conceptual, doctrinal and scriptural aspects of Hinduism whereas 'modernization' is seen to relate to institutional and social innovations and changes.[40] Both terms cannot be applied, however, whithout reference to cross-cultural processes relating to the interaction between India and the West.[41] It is necessary to break down the complexity of historical and social developments into their component dimensions so as to make possible more meaningful empirical and theoretical research. One can say about the study of modern Hinduism what has first been said about Indian sociology in general, namely, that what is required is not merely an elucidation of what is now known, but also an explanation of what may be known wrongly.[42]

The development of modern Hinduism can also be related to important theoretical issues in the sociology of religion. One example concerns the possible future evolution of religion in terms of a progressive differentiation of what is considered to be 'religious' in modern society and the selective emphasis on what are the most essential elements of a religious tradition today. Here the question arises of how far contemporary religions are moving away from their traditional cultural roots in the community by addressing themselves with a special 'message' more directly to the individual. Thus, religion comes to be seen as distinct, although not unrelated, from its cultural and institutional matrix, by emphasizing in a new way aspects of inwardness, of spirituality and mysticism which may elucidate a universal response. This is a new orientation which

dates from relatively recently; it is closely connected with a new concern for selfhood and personality, history and community which can greatly differ from traditional religious worldviews.[43] Cross-cultural influences are now affecting the development of all religious traditions in the contemporary world. Besides large-scale changes one must also consider the cumulative effect of more widely available information regarding the rise and development of religions within a comparative and global perspective. The systematic study and analysis of humanity's religious heritage as well as the growing encounter between people of different religious background may have repercussions on the development of religious awareness and practice which are difficult to foresee at present.

Some sociologists have discussed the future of religion in terms of the two poles of sectarianism and ecumenism. These terms themselves may be too culture-bound, however, and too much shaped by the past history of religion in the West. To suggest a more open-ended model, one might pursue the comparative analysis of religious traditions in terms of the tension between a growing differentiation, i.e. a search for particularity and separate identity, and an equally growing universalisation of those elements in each tradition which can be correlated with similar elements in other traditions. Historically, this process first began in the culture-contact situation experienced by Hinduism, but it now affects all religious traditions. However, the development of modern Hinduism provides a particularly illuminating paradigm showing the transformation of ancient religious beliefs and practices under new social, political, and economic conditions. A detailed cross-cultural analysis of this ongoing transformation can furnish the sociology of religion with ample data for further conceptual and theoretical refinement, and it is to be hoped that an increasing number of scholars will turn their attention to studying the complex socio-religious processes which characterise the historical emergence and contemporary dynamic of modern Hinduism.

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[1] See for example Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Anti-religiöse Bewegungen im modernen Südindien*. Eine religionssoziologische Untersuchung zur Säkularisierungsfrage, Bonn: Röhrscheid Verlag, 1971; idem, *Der politische Hinduismus*. Indische Denker zwischen religiöser Reform und politischem Erwachen, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1981, or the analysis of modern Hinduism in R.J.Z. Werblowsky, *Beyond Tradition and Modernity*. Changing Religions in a Changing World, London: Athlone Press, 1976; see especially his chp. V 'Affirmation through Renunciation: *Dharma, Moksha* and *Nirvana*'. See also the essays in K. Ballhatchet and D. Taylor, eds., *Changing South Asia: Religion and Society*. Papers presented to the Seventh European Conference on Modern Asian Studies, Hong Kong: Asian Research Service, 1984. The ideas of this paper were first developed in a sociology of religion seminar at the London School of Economics and later published in *Social Action* (New Delhi), vol. 32, 1982: pp. 427-448. They are presented here in a revised version.

[2] The Ninth European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, held from 9-12 July 1986 at the South Asia Institute of Heidelberg University, devoted a whole panel to 'Hinduism Reconsidered', but the methodological papers were mainly concerned with definitional issues of the term 'Hinduism' rather than with wider sociological perspectives. This is also true of Arvind Sharma's article 'What is Hinduism? A Sociological Approach', *Social Compass* XXXIII/2-3, 1986: pp. 177-182. I shall consider the issue of definition, but also a number of other issues.

[3] See G. Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1964 (second edition): pp. 609-25.

[4] S.K. Das, *The Shadow of the Cross*. Christianity and Hinduism in a Colonial Situation, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1974.

[5] This was shown in detail in Trevor Ling's Inaugural Lecture 'Max Weber in India', *The University of Leeds Review* 16/1, 1973: pp. 42-65. For further treatment of this topic see his book *Karl Marx and Religion in Europe and India*, London: Macmillan, 1980, especially chp. 6, 'Weber and Indian Religion'.

[6] The literature on Weber's treatment of Indian religion is too vast to be listed here. For recent discussions see Ling, op. cit. and David Gellner 'Max Weber, Capitalism and the Religion of India', *Sociology* 16/4, 1982: pp. 526-541. See also D. Kantowsky, 'Max Weber on India, and Indian interpretations of Weber' in K. Ballhatchet and D. Taylor, op. cit. pp. 11-35 (see note 1 above).

[7] W. Cohn, 'On the Problem of Religion in Non-Western Cultures', *International Yearbook for the Sociology of Religion*, vol. 5, 1969: pp. 7-19.

[8] Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in J.Ch. Bagal, ed., *Bankim Rachanavali*, Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1969, p. 231. For recent Indian discussions see the special issue of *Seminar* 313, September 1985, on 'The Hindus and their isms'.

[9] See note 2 above. Papers concerned with definitional issues given to the panel 'Hinduism Reconsidered' included one of that title by R. Burghart, R. Frykenberg 'The Emergence of Modern "Hinduism" as Seen in the Light of changing Historical Knowledge: A Reappraisal of Concepts with Special Reference to South India', David Shulman 'Reconsidering Hinduism, or: What I might have said (in part) if...', G.D. Sontheimer 'Hinduism: The five components and their interaction' and H. von Stietencron 'Hinduism: on the proper use of a deceitful term'.

[10] A separate analysis would be required to show in detail why the connotations of these terms are embedded in different social, historical and linguistic traditions in the West and in India. F. Staal has provided a brief, lucid statement on 'The

Concept of Scripture in the Indian Tradition' in M. Juergensmeyer and N.G. Barrier, eds., *Sikh Studies*, Berkely: The Graduate Theological Union, 1979: pp. 121-4.

[11] J. Wach, *Sociology of Religion*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967, pp. 127-130: 'The "Sampradaya" of Hinduism'.

[12] See A. Eschmann, 'Religion, Reaction and Change: The Role of Sects in Hinduism', International Workshop Seminar on 'Religion and Development in Asian Societies', December 1973, Kandy/Sri Lanka. Different channels of social and religious dissent and their transformative effect on Indian society are discussed in S.N. Eisenstadt, R. Kahane and D. Shulman, eds., *Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy and Dissent in India*, Berlin, New York, Amsterdam: Mouton Publishers, 1984. Religion and Society Series No. 23.

[13] G. Subha Rao, *Indian Words in English*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.

[14] This is briefly discussed in A. Bharati, *A Functional Analysis of Indian Thought and its Social Margins*, Varanasi: Vidya Vilas Press, 1964, p. 53.

[15] I am dealing here especially with the contact between India and England. Further work would be required to show how much knowledge about India was earlier transmitted to Europe, particularly by the Jesuits, through Latin and Portuguese writings. But their works would have been mainly accessible to a small ecclesiastical elite rather than to a wider western public.

[16] See D. Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*. The Dynamics of Indian Modernization 1773-1835, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

[17] It is well known that the Jesuits used a printing press earlier in Goa, and there is also evidence of some printing activity in South India. But these activities remain isolated examples which did not affect Indian society at large whereas the introduction of printing presses on a large scale from the late eighteenth century onwards brought with it a revolution in the diffusion of secular and religious knowledge. For a detailed description of this process see A.K. Priolkar, *The Printing Press in India*, Bombay: Marathi Samshodhan Mandala, 1958; see also the impressive evidence gathered in G.W. Shaw, *Printing in Calcutta to Eighteen Hundred*. A Description and Checklist, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981. See also B.S. Kesavan, *History of Printing and Publishing in India*. A Story of Cultural Re-awakening. Vol. I, South Indian Origins of Printing and its Efflorescence in Bengal. New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1985.

[18] See D. Killingley, 'Vedanta and Modernity' in C.H. Philips and M.D. Wainwright, eds., *Indian Society and the Beginnings of Modernisation*, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1976, pp. 127-140.

[19] See B.S. Cohn, *India: The Social Anthropology of a Civilization*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1971, especially ch. IX on 'Urbanization, Education, and Social and Cultural Change'. See also Hal W. French and Arvind Sharma, *Religious Ferment in Modern India*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981.

[20] Ch. Wilkins, *The Bhagvat-Geeta* (1785), New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1972, p. 24. An early reference to the Gita is found in a Portuguese letter of 1560; see G. Gispert-Sauch, 'Notes for a History of the Bhagavad Gita', *Indica* 42, 1985: pp. 17-27.

[21] The importance of the *Arya Samaj* for the development of modern Hindu consciousness is extensively analysed in K.W. Jones, *Arya Dharm*. Hindu Consciousness in 19th-Century Punjab, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976. For a detailed study of the founder of the Arya Samaj, including an extensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources, see J.T.F. Jordens, *Dayananda Sarasvati*. His Life and Ideas, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978.

[22] See G.S. Bhatt, 'Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, and the Church-Sect Typology', *Review of Religious Research*, vol. 10, 1968, pp. 23-32.

[23] For a fuller discussion of Bankim's understanding of Hinduism, especially as developed in his unfinished *Letters on Hinduism*, see U. King, 'True and Perfect Religion: Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Reinterpretation of Hinduism', *Religion*, vol. 7, 1977, pp. 127-148.

[24] For the understanding of *dharma* in the ancient, medieval and modern period see the symposium edited by W. Doniger O'Flaherty and J. Duncan M. Derrett, *The Concept of Duty in South Asia*, Delhi: Vikas, 1978.

[25] See E.J. Sharpe, 'Avatāra and Śakti: Traditional Symbols in the Hindu Renaissance' in H. Bizais, ed., *New Religions*, Stockholm: Alquist and Wilksell, 1975, pp. 55-69.

[26] See Robert N. Minor, ed., *Modern Indian Interpreters of the Bhagavadgita*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986 for interpretations provided by theosophy, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Tilak, Sri Auribondo, Gandhi, Vinoba, Swami Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan, Swami Sivananda, and Swami Bhaktivedanta. A thought-provoking analysis is found in A. Bharati, 'Ghandi's Interpretation of the Gita—An Anthropological Analysis', in S. Ray, ed., *Gandhi, India and the World*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1970, pp. 57-80. For earlier commentaries see Arvind Sharma, *The Hindu Gītā*. Ancient and Classical Interpretations of the Bhagavadgītā, London: Duckworth, 1986.

[27] See U. King, 'Der Karmayogin als Symbol eines neuen Lebensverständnisses im modern Hinduismus' in G. Stephenson, ed. *Leben und Tod im Lichte religiöser Symbolik*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980: pp. 301-316. Second edition Darmstadt 1985. Also 'Adapting to a Colonial Economy: The Ideal Karmayogin as a Symbol of Hindu Revival' in W. Fernandes, ed., *Inequality, its Bases and Search of Solutions*. Dr. Alfred de Souza Memorial Essays. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1986: pp. 229-247.

[28] I have discussed this at length in 'Iconographic Reflections on the Religious and Secular Importance of the Bhagavad-Gita within the Image World of Modern Hinduism', *The Journal of Studies in the Bhagavadgita* V-VII (1985-1987): pp. 161-188. See also U. King 'The iconography of the Bhagavad Gita. The visual theology of a Hindu scripture', *Journal of Dharma* VII/2, 1982: pp. 146-163.

[29] E.J. Sharpe, *The Universal Gita*. Western Images of the Bhagavad Gita. A Bicentenary Survey. London: Duckworth, 1985. See also G.J. Larson, 'The *Bhagavad-Gita* as Cross Cultural Process: Toward an Analysis of the Social Locations of a Religious Text', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. XLIII, 1975: pp. 651-68. The variety and complexity of Gita translations is amply documented by W.M. Callewaert and Shilanand Hemraj, *Bhagavadgītānuvāda*. A Study in Transcultural Translation, Ranchi: Satya Bharati Publications, 1983.

[30] The theoretical implications of the process of transplantation are discussed in M. Pye, 'The Transplantation of Religions', *Numen*, vol. XVI, 1969: pp. 234-9.

[31] See U. Sharma, 'Status Striving and Striving to Abolish Status. The Arya Samaj and the Low Castes', *Social Action*, vol. 26, 1976: pp. 214-36.

[32] For a closer examination of this new understanding of Indian spirituality see U. King, *Indian Spirituality, Western Materialism*. An Image and its Function in the Reinterpretation of Modern Hinduism, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute 1985, Ideas for Social Action Series, Monograph No. 1.

[33] Sri Prakasa, *Annie Besant as Woman and Leader*, Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1962, p. 220.

[34] A. Aronson, *Europe looks at India*. A Study in Cultural Relations, Bombay: Hind Kitab, 1946, pp. 7, 8 and 9.

[35] W. Thomas, *Hinduism invades America*, New York: The Beacon Press, 1930, pp. 16 and 21; for a directory of Hindu organizations, see pp. 287-9.

[36] The difficulties of transferring Hindu institutions to a different social structure are discussed by P.L. Brent, *Godmen of India*, London: Allen Lane, 1972, especially ch. 5 'The Godmen's Meaning'; see also A.K. Saran, 'Religion and Society. The Hindu View', *International Year-Book for the Sociology of Religion*, vol. V. Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1969, pp. 41-67.

[37] See the essays in R. Burghart, ed., *Hinduism in Great Britain*, London: Tavistock, 1987, and in D.G. Bowen, ed., *Hinduism in England*, Bradford: Bradford College, 1981. Also K. Knott, 'Hinduism in England: The Hindu Population in Leeds', *Religious Research Papers* No. 4, Department of Sociology, The University of Leeds, 1981.

[38] The maintenance of traditional religious beliefs and practices, their transmission and reinterpretation is of central concern to the 'Community Religions Project' undertaken by the Department of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Leeds/England. This Project encourages research into the different religious and ethnic communities of the West Yorkshire region. See K. Knott, *Hinduism in Leeds*: A study of religious practice in the Indian Hindu community and in Hindu-related groups. Monograph Series, Community Religions Project, University of Leeds, 1986; S. Barton, *The Bengali Muslims of Bradford*: A study of their observance of Islam with special reference to the function of the mosque and the work of the Imam. Monograph Series, Community Religions Project, University of Leeds, 1986; and D. Bowen, *The Sathya Sai Baba Community in Bradford*: Its origin and development, religious beliefs and practices, Leeds, 1988.

[39] Some of these aspects are discussed in K. Knott, *My Sweet Lord*. The Hare Krsna Movement, Wellingborough/Northhamptonshire 1986.

[40] I differ from A. Bharati here who applies the term 'modernization' to all aspects of Hinduism, whether doctrinal, social or operational; see A. Bharati, 'Hinduism and Modernization' in R.F. Spencer, ed., *Religion and Change in Contemporary Asia*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971, pp. 67-104.

[41] This interaction between India and the West is well brought out in T.N. Madan's article 'The quest for Hinduism', *International Social Science Journal*, vol. XXXIX/2, 1977: pp. 261-78. But on the whole the article does not go beyond a discussion of well-known historical facts and their sociological interpretation. It does not take sufficiently into account what one might call the specifically religious elements of Hinduism which are becoming increasingly important through being universalised. It also overlooks the intrinsic stength and resources of Hindu faith and spirituality. Madan makes only passing reference to the confidence of this faith which he brands as 'naivety', but is he not as or more naive when he states in the same sentence that 'modern science, as a philosophy and as a technology, is fundamentally opposed to all religions'? See op. cit., p. 275.

[42] See the preface to R. Mukherjee, 'Trends in Indian Sociology', *Current Sociology*, vol. 25, 1977.

[43] See the chapter on 'Religious Evolution' in R.N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief*. Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World, New York: Harper and Row, 1970, pp. 20-50. An examination of these new concerns in Hinduism is found in M.M. Thomas, 'Modernisation of Traditional Societies and the Struggle for New Cultural Ethos', *International Yearbook for the Sociology of Religion*, vol. VI, Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1970, pp. 45-64.