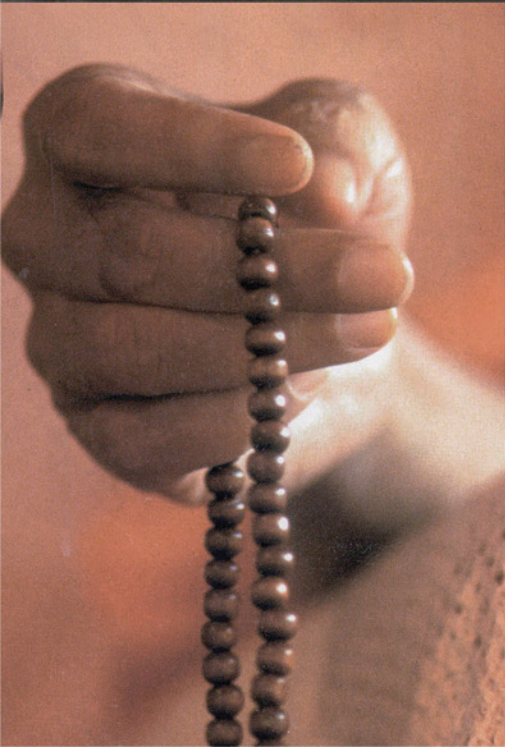
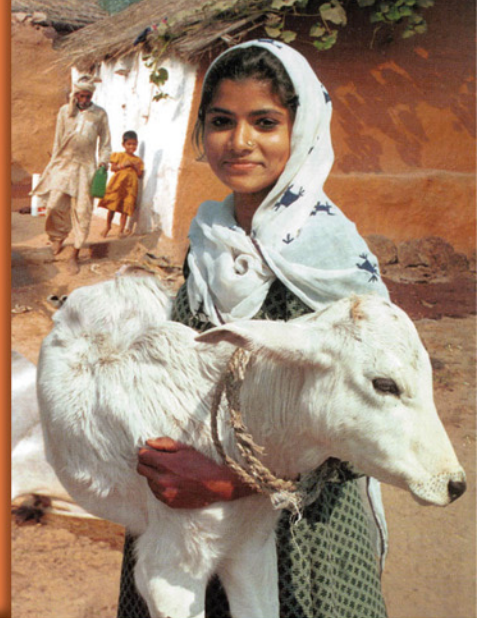




The
Hindu
Youth
Research
Project
2001



The Hindu Youth Research Project 2001

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Foreword

Romila Santosh and Dr Savita Vij, Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies

The information in this booklet comes from an Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies research project undertaken by Romila Santosh and Dr Savita Vij. The research was based on a Hindu Youth survey, which was conducted in July and August 2001 during the Hindu Youth Festival held at Harlesden in London. The results of this survey form a unique snapshot of second and third generation Hindus in the United Kingdom and their attitudes towards their faith. Young people talk honestly about what it means to grow up as a Hindu in 21st century Britain; the things that confuse them about their religious heritage; the challenges faced by Hindus living and working with non-Hindu peer groups; the distinctions that they make between religious and cultural ideas and identity; their experience of worship; their relationship with their parents and other older generation Hindus; and their hopes for the future. The results of this survey should be of interest to Hindus of all ages, leaders of Youth Groups, academic researchers and anyone who has an interest in how young British Hindus think and feel about themselves at the start of the new millennium.

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Introduction

It is well known that religious traditions adjust and reshape themselves to adapt to changes in the cultural environment. If they fail to do so then they fail to meet the needs of their faith community. What is less apparent is the precise manner in which they develop to meet these changing circumstances, and this certainly applies to the case of British Hinduism. Although it is developing and taking on new forms, it is not certain what these forms will or should be.

Previous research on the Hindu community has been limited in sample size and scale, and has been based in very specific locations *e.g.* Coventry (Nesbitt and Jackson 1994), Leeds (Knott 1986) and Edinburgh (Nye 1993). Most studies of Hindus and Hinduism are general in scope and have not considered the voices of young Hindus *e.g.* 'Hinduism in the West' (Burghart 1987) and 'The Hindu Diaspora' (Vertovec 2001).

This survey, the Hindu Youth Research Project, was supported by the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies as part of the Hindu Youth Festival, which aimed to bring together Hindu youths and Hindu groups and organisations from around the UK. The festival was held in Harlesden, London, in July and August 2001. It was split into three parts: a nine-day commentary on the ancient Hindu scripture, the *Srimad Bhagavatam*; an evening stage show aimed specifically at the youth; and a *yagna* (ritualistic ceremony). The project was seen as an opportunity to begin to address the gap in the research literature on second- and third-generation Hindus in the UK, at the academic level. At the community level, the aim was to research the beliefs and attitudes of Hindu youth on religious, social and cultural issues.

Different methods were used to explore the beliefs of Hindu youth, in order to address a range of issues. A sample of 400 participants took part in the survey, each filling in a sixteen-page questionnaire. This was complemented by data from fifteen hours of recorded interviews with groups of Hindu youths. Definitions of 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism' were left open to individuals' own interpretation so that these terms could be viewed from the perspectives of the Hindu youth. This report presents the data with minimal interpretation, so that the attitudes and beliefs of Hindu youth may speak for themselves.

Method

Design

The study was of an exploratory nature, including both quantitative and qualitative methods. A survey was carried out in order to gather information on a large scale, and group discussions were intended to gain further insight into issues raised in the survey.

The survey questionnaire included open-ended questions, and a list of quantitative statements covering a wide range of issues from 'media' to 'moksha'. A provocative style was used to encourage response to some of the topics, chosen from across disciplines including Religious and Theological Studies, Sociology and Cultural Studies. The statements were also influenced to some extent by the researchers' own personal experiences of being young Hindus in Britain.

Participants

The participants included were aged between 13 and 35, the majority (72%) falling between the 14–24 age bracket. Males comprised 53% of the sample, and females 47%. For those that responded to the question, 93% described themselves as heterosexual, 2% as homosexual, 1% bisexual and 4% were unsure. A small number (2%) stated a disability.

A large proportion of respondents was from London (72%), and the rest came from different regions of Great Britain. Most (78%) were born in the UK, and 21% were from abroad, including 10% from India, 7% from Africa and other individuals were from the USA and Europe. Nine per cent had one or more grandparents born in the UK. Therefore, 91% are second-generation.

Half the youth (51%) said they were not members of any Hindu Organisation or group, while 41% said they were members. The mostly common spoken languages, in addition to English, amongst the sample include Gujarati (51%), Hindi (29%) and Punjabi (8%).

Procedure

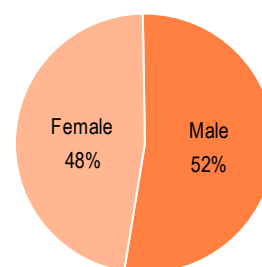
A team of volunteers at the nine-day festival distributed the survey questionnaire. The quantitative data was analysed using Microsoft Excel. The group discussions were carried out semi-formally in an interactive style, which allowed room for young people to talk about issues that were important to them. The interviews were recorded and transcribed manually. Themes were identified from the qualitative data, and have been presented in their narrative format.

Out of the 400 questionnaires, data from 342 questionnaires was eventually included, leaving out data from respondents who were outside of the age band, or where questionnaires were only partially completed.

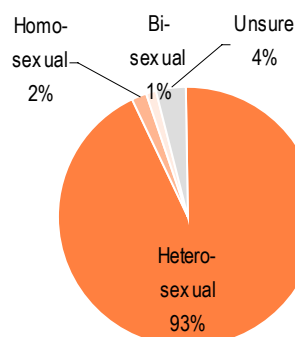
The festival was the first of its kind, organised specifically for Hindu youth by Hindu youth. A number of reasons were given for participants attending the festival, including the following:

Curiosity

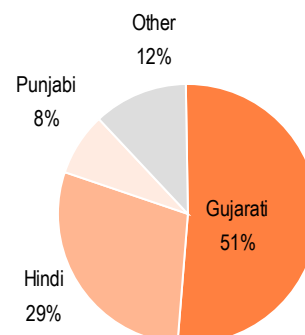
Demographics - Gender Distribution



Sexual Preference



Most Common Spoken Languages



'... Interested to see what London's Hindus are up to; to be completely honest, a mixture of cynicism and scepticism combined with a faint, lingering sense of hope.'

'Heard about it through family, and thought it might be interesting.'

'The main reason is to see what they do in the festival, and to listen to the discussions about our religion.'

'Since it's the first time this kind of festival has been organised. It is a chance to see different cultures within Hinduism, and to meet people from different cultures.'

An opportunity to participate in youth activities

'It's done specially for youth and organised by youth.'

'Very interested in cultural (Hindu) events, especially when targeting the youth who are third generation.'

'To be part of the largest Hindu youth gathering in UK.'

To meet people

'Meet other like-minded people and participate in festival.'

'Meeting new people and socialising with them. Looking and finding out how many youngsters, like myself, are interested in our own culture.'

'To meet other Indian youth interested in spirituality.'

To have fun

'Have fun, listen to a *katha*, yet help others (*seva*).'

'To have fun, socialise with other Hindus and learn more about our culture.'

'To try and get to know a bit more about my culture and religion. To have fun!'

Seva, offering service

'*Seva* at medical camp.'

'To give my spare time to a worthy cause.'

'To do God's work.'

Katha, religious discourse

'To listen to the *katha* and what it's all about. Also, to see the sales and people.'

'To recite the *Bhagavatam* and to grasp a better knowledge of Krishna.'

'Listening to *katha* and obtaining new ways of life.'

To learn

'To gain better understanding of Hindu religion and expand my knowledge.'

'I've never been to a festival. I can learn more.'

'To learn and obtain more about my "Hindu" religion.'

'Wanted to find out about Hinduism. Wanted answers to my many questions.'

Enlightenment

'To do some *darshan* and get a feel of the atmosphere.'

'To be spiritually enlightened.'

'I am an Indian, and this festival is mine and for me. Above all, the major reason is because it lets me touch my soul and comfort my spirit.'

Results

I. What Makes One Hindu?

This section looks at the ways in which young Hindus understand what it means to be Hindu. An important part of carrying out this research was not to suggest what being a Hindu might mean, but to allow Hindu youth to define this term.

Nesbitt and Jackson (1994) have previously attempted to explore this question and found that a sample of young Hindus aged between 8 and 13 when relating what it means to be Hindu 'associated principally with factors related to family life; with mother tongue, family values, and the enjoyment of festivals, domestic worship, traditional food and interactions with relatives' (Nesbitt and Jackson 1994; 41). Overall a greater salience is given to the positive aspects of being Hindu, and it is the reproduction of religious practices that are seen to inform Hindu identities more generally.

This larger sample of slightly older young Hindus were asked, 'Do you describe yourself as Hindu?'. The next part of the question was: (a) 'If yes, what makes you a Hindu?' or (b) 'If no, how do you describe yourself?'. Responses have been collated into the most common categories, which reflect a range of religious, spiritual, ethnic, cultural and organisational affiliations:

1. Roots

Many participants wrote and spoke about their 'roots', in terms of being born as Hindus, and in terms of being part of a Hindu family and having a Hindu upbringing. This suggests that the transmission of certain values, beliefs, practices and roots were linked to 'colour', ideas of 'heritage', culture, tradition, beliefs and 'ancestors':

a) Culture

'My ancestors originate from the Indus Valley, and I follow the teachings of dharma.'

'My roots, my tradition and my cultural beliefs.'

'Culture. I actively take part in it.'

b) Birth

'Born a Hindu. Always a Hindu.'

'Being born into a family: having a *janoi*.'

c) Upbringing

'Because my parents are Hindu.'

'The morals, beliefs and culture I have been brought up with and believe in.'

'Because I have always been brought up saying I am a Hindu.'

d) Race

'Because I love being a Hindu, and plus the colour of my skin is brown.'

'My colour (face colour).'

'My skin!'

2. Beliefs

Connections were made with particular teachings and philosophies, but most commonly general beliefs in teachings, 'Hinduism', 'God', or internal individual beliefs were expressed. A few went on to mention that their beliefs were based upon choice, and being able to identify with 'Hinduism':

'Most kids believe they are born Hindu — no questions asked, but after studying other religions, Hinduism is the one I felt I can mostly identify with culturally and religiously. So I choose to be a Hindu.'

'My belief in Hindu teachings.'

'My internal belief.'

3. Practice

Again 'practice' was loosely defined, from prayers and meditation, festivals and going to the temple, to worshipping a particular incarnation. Many more felt that being Hindu was about 'principles', their 'character' and their everyday deeds and actions:

'The way I treat others, my culture, my morals and values.'

'I'm following our custom and traditions, doing *japa*, meditation, etc.'

'I follow and believe in my religion and strongly believe that, as a Hindu, my duty is to be kind and considerate towards my fellow humans.'

4. Way of life

This was another common expression used, with references made to how the principles of texts and religious scriptures (the most popular were the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Vedas*) were used in every day life, to help others, for self-realisation, etc. 'Hinduness' was perceived as an aspect of day-to-day life, and some suggested 'a state of being':

'I try to take on the basic beliefs, morals and teachings from the *Bhagavad Gita* and other Hindu scriptures into my life.'

'I try to live a Hindu way of life based upon my understanding of the Vedic scriptures.'

'Although I am not as religious as I first was, I still try to live my life according to general Hindu principles: no meat; try not to be materialistic; recognise my journey in life is to purify the soul; strive to help others.'

'What I am, the way I pray, what I believe, my life!'

'Because I am proud of it.'

'My culture, my blood, my knowledge, my soul, my heart. I am a whole Hindu.'

5. Many reasons

This selection highlights the significant mixture in responses. They have been included in this section since it is difficult to categorise them into a particular theme, in terms of what makes a person Hindu. These responses reveal the complexity of explaining 'what makes you a Hindu'. Practice, beliefs, upbringing, way of life; even speaking Hindi and being vegetarian are seen as important:

'I am born into a Hindu family. I believe in karma, reincarnation, the soul as a separate entity to the body and believe in God.'

'1. Born into a Hindu family; 2. Go to temple regularly; 3. Read scriptures often; 4. Have some degree of belief in Hinduism.'

'My birth, *sanskars*, understanding and fulfilling all my duties in life, devotion to God and loving all His creations and Him.'

6. Reasons for not considering oneself Hindu

Both the survey and discussions highlighted that a small number of youth attending the festival did not describe themselves as Hindu, or if they did, group debates often raised further issues about 'what makes you a Hindu'. For those that used an alternative description, 'spirituality', the belief in all religions, the idea of a soul, 'Sanatan dharma', or *sampradaya* categories were seen as more suitable:

'I describe myself as a Sanatanist (Sanatan dharma), as Hindu describes a sector, but Sanatan dharma is eternal spiritual duty.'

'From a Hindu background, but following a more distinct path of spirituality.'

'I consider myself to be Krishna-conscious, as there are many different types of Hindus, and thus I consider myself to be a Vaishnava not a Hindu.'

'As someone with an open mind, desiring to learn about Hinduism in a thorough manner and hopefully embrace it. Parents are Christian, but I class myself as belonging to no religion.'

7. Ambivalent responses

A few ticked both 'yes' and 'no' options for whether they would describe themselves as Hindu. The reason for this is that they see 'Hindu' as part of their self-description, which entailed an understanding of 'religious and cultural' beliefs and practice, but there was ambivalence with the relationship with other parts of their identity and living in Britain:

'Ticked yes and no — not sure yet. Under (a), I pray and carry out some routine religious deeds. I know a lot about our culture and hope to understand more. Under (b), being brought up in England, I would say I have some English cultural beliefs as well.'

'Ticked yes and no. Under (a), my family; the way I live my life; my practices. Under (b), lots of different parts of my identity — being Indian, student, British, etc.'

8. Practice versus birth

A key theme brought up in some of the discussions was whether you are a Hindu by birth or by practice. In the first discussion below, one of the participants argues that you can only be born a Hindu, suggesting that 'Hindu' is more to do with 'roots', rather than practice or belief:

P1: 'Well they say you can only be born a Hindu, so we are "privileged".'

P2: 'I don't think you have to be born a Hindu. Anyone can be a Hindu.'

P3: 'If anyone can be a Hindu, then it breaks the idea of reincarnation ... Like I've been born to a Hindu family. In other religions you can convert, but in Hinduism, the aspect of reincarnation, the way that you have lived your life, and the way that you are going to live your next life ... is a cycle ...'

P1: 'Well it's not about what makes you a Hindu. You're either born a Hindu or not. You can't become a Hindu. You can follow the life of a Hindu, or Hinduism, but you can't be baptised. Whether you practise it or not is irrelevant. You're still a Hindu. You can be a Christian or Muslim, and practise Hinduism. In other faiths, it's an opposite way. You have to be converted in order to practise their ways of life, or beliefs ...'

Alternatively, the following discussion focuses on the aspect of 'practice' and finding out from sources other than their families, such as organisations or *mandirs*, what being Hindu means to them:

'I'm not sure that I'm completely a Hindu, because I don't know enough about it. I would aspire to be a Hindu. Primarily, my interest in Hinduism makes me a Hindu ... I've always been interested, but for a long time I never had any questions answered, so I kind of moved away.'

'Going to the *mandir*, and learning about it ... that's why I joined the Sai group, because it was in English ... only for the last year classed myself as Hindu ... before that didn't really believe in God that much ... but since Sai Baba, I've been more spiritual. They've explained things to me ... Before I didn't know who I was.'

'I still haven't understood what a definition of a Hindu is ... I haven't been brought up in the way you're a Hindu. I was brought up being aware of morality, and went to churches, *gurdwaras* ... which did make it confusing because when people said are you Hindu, I found it difficult ... I now want to find out more about Hinduism.'

9. Identity

In one of the groups, a different issue was brought up linked to identity: Hindus need to assert that they are Hindu rather than Asian, by being aggressive, shouting and protesting. This highlights that being Hindu is not just to do with practice, birth, beliefs, etc., but for some youth, it is also linked to an 'identity'. In the following discussion, 'Asian' is a generic term of little value to describe identity. Some Hindu youth also want to dissociate themselves from the 'Asian thug' image portrayed by the media (see also Part IV, Section 3 on Hinduism and the media):

'I think we should start shouting that we're not Asian, but we're Hindu, like in the riots, and the Taliban March, we shouted that we're Hindus, not Asians.'

'Basically Asian means people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh. Our own youth don't think there's anything wrong with being Asian! Asian — it's not derogatory, it's just like being called white, it doesn't mean anything. It's a label. You have your identity, and we need to focus on that. Not all Asians are thugs that go around bashing up shops, but the media will portray all Asians.'

10. Advantages of being Hindu

Participants were asked the question, 'What are the advantages and disadvantages, if any, of being a Hindu?' Some advantages mentioned were:

a) Family/Community

Family ties and a sense of community were an aspect of Hindu identity for many (see also Part III, Section 2 on the family). Here, community included extended families and friends, as well as a wider 'universal' definition:

'The advantages of being a Hindu may be having strong family links.'

'A part of something larger than yourself.'

'Provides a framework or guidance for making decisions, living outside one's indigenous country.'

Festivals and celebrations were seen as part of these wider networks, and young Hindus saw these as a positive aspect of being Hindu:

'You can go to festivals and be proud. Good weddings.'

'You get out of school at Diwali and there are lots of festivals.'

'Following religious beliefs, and also participating in events: Janmastami, Holi, Navratri.'

b) Religion, spirituality and way of life

Religion and spirituality were the most commonly mentioned advantages, and were seen as positively contributing to a way of life, from helping to deal with problems, as a path to liberation or peace, to 'living life to the max'. These views extended to descriptions of Hinduism as a positive religion:

'A pure, honest, non-violent and peaceful way of life.'

'Consciousness is fun and joyful — intellectually and emotionally satisfying.'

'Have a faith or hope to believe in.'

c) Choice and freedom

This was another popular theme, which captured the 'openness' and 'flexibility' of the individual in Hinduism, for example, choice of incarnation, temple and not having to follow strict guidelines. In some of these responses, comparisons were made to other faiths:

'Having no boundaries in thought.'

'Sanatan dharma is the only 'religion' which offers a way of life rather than a set of rules.'

'That you get to worship God whenever you want.'

d) Tolerance and respect

Lastly, there was a general feeling that an advantage of being Hindu was respect and tolerance for family and friends, other faiths, beliefs and cultures, which implied that the faith could be 'shared':

'Acceptance and tolerance of oneself, family, friends and others.'

'Respecting other cultures, beliefs and views. Helps you get along peacefully with everyone else.'

'Being able to share your religion with others.'

11. Disadvantages of being Hindu

The disadvantages were more varied and revealed issues faced by some second- and third-generation Hindus. This reflects a wider process of reinterpretation of what being Hindu means to British Hindu youth. There is a concern with Hinduism, the way it is practised, difficulties in comprehending certain beliefs, and also with the relationship of Hindu identity to the perceptions of wider society.

a) Understanding Hinduism

Many problems related to understanding the complexities of Hinduism, for instance not knowing reasons behind practices such as festivals. This was linked to difficulties with language, and the number of scriptures. Conflicts were mentioned between culture, religion and science, superstitions and blind faith, which add to difficulties in understanding Hinduism. A few people mentioned caste, which was questioned both in terms of its relevance, and the variation and number of castes. An interesting comment was added on the disadvantage of being 'constantly questioned throughout your life about Hinduism', which suggests that many of these issues become a disadvantage when having to explain them, taking into consideration the immense diversity and complexity of lived Hinduism or 'Hinduisms'.

'Superstition and being constantly questioned throughout your life about Hinduism.'

'Bad practices such as dowry, craving for a male child, etc.'

'Not knowing any of the festivals or what they mean, as I don't understand Hindi or Punjabi fully.'

b) Wider society

Several different themes have been placed within 'wider society'. These include lack of respect for Hindus or Hinduism, misinterpretation, not having political representation, racism and not being able to have pride in Hinduism. Many expressed that a disadvantage of being a Hindu is that Hinduism is criticised, attacked and generally underestimated by people of religions and wider society. A few mentioned the experience of racism. These issues may be linked to the expressed desire for political representation by some (further explored in Part IV, Section 4).

'Thought of as having a vague culture.'

'Not having proper representation in politics and society, and not being understood.'

'Racial discrimination.'

'Not having the same pride or passion as, say, Sikhs/Muslims.'

c) Gender inequality

Gender inequality — men and women being treated differently in terms of freedom, behaviour and expectations — was highlighted by some as a disadvantage (see Part III, Section 2).

'Being on your period, disallowing you to do certain things. Girls are expected to be a certain way: do not drink, do not eat meat, shy, clever, la la la.'

'Inequality between men and women — men being considered higher than women.'

'Limitations on what Hindu females can do with a lack of respect and honour for them.'

d) Limitations within the family, community, work, etc.

A variety of factors were identified relating to narrow-mindedness, high family/community expectations and a lack of unity amongst Hindus:

'Narrow-mindedness of people, *i.e.* keep to community ideas, watch reputations.'

'There are too many expectations.'

'Too many sects preaching the same thing, however, not practising. Lots of hypocrisy.'

e) No disadvantages

For some youth, being a Hindu did not present any disadvantages because they perceive Hinduism as 'spiritual', concerned with humanitarian values:

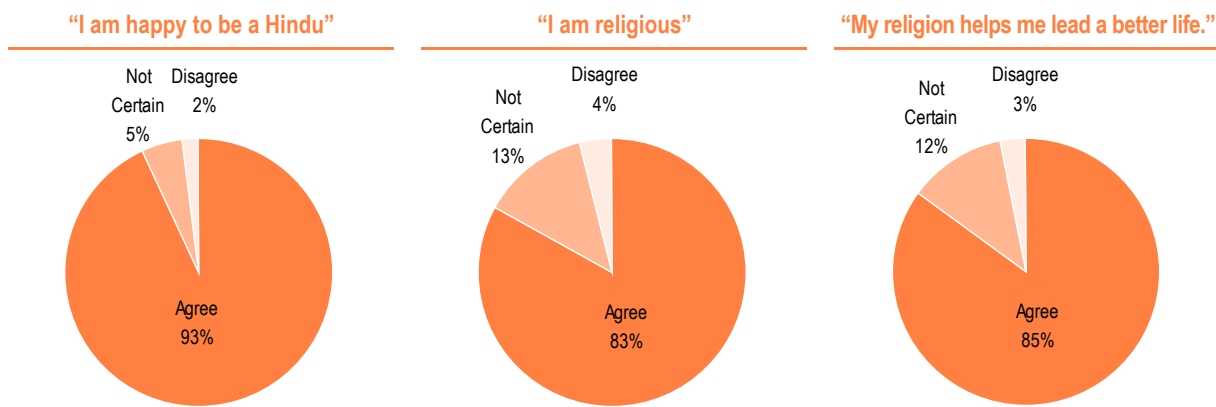
'None. It does not matter what faith you practise.'

'I guess there is no disadvantage, unless a Hindu starts thinking that his religion is the only one and others are all rubbish. Otherwise, it is a spiritual religion.'

'No advantages or disadvantages to being in any religion, as long as you believe in it.'

II. Religion and Spirituality

Hindu youths' attitudes and beliefs about religious and spiritual matters were explored in this section. The variety and complexity of the findings reflect the diverse reasons for why young people may describe themselves as Hindu, as seen in Section I.

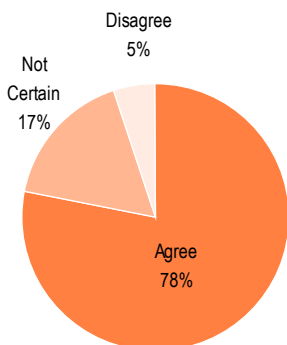


The majority said they were happy to be a Hindu (93%), and described themselves as religious (83%). Many said that their religion helps them to lead a better life (85%). The findings show that the youth perceive Hinduism both as a religion (79%) and as a way of life (83%), as the following extracts show:

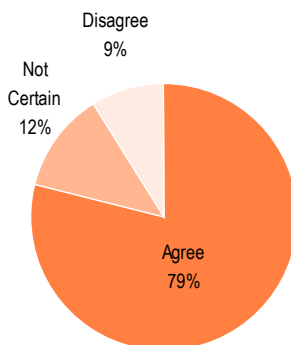
'Sanatan dharma is a lot more diverse than Hinduism. Hinduism is about someone who doesn't eat meat or drink alcohol. Sanatan dharma is about universal righteousness, helping and serving everyone, without looking at caste etc.'

'Religion has rules. That's why Hinduism is a way of life ... Hinduism is unique in itself. Sanatan dharma (universal and eternal truth or way of life) ... on a daily basis, this means be true to yourself ... Religion is a set of values by which you can live your life ... i.e. being vegetarian, doing *mala* etc.'

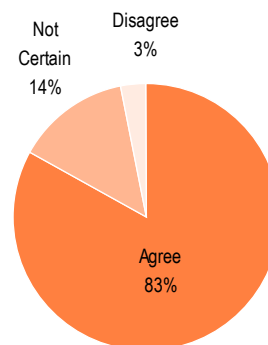
"Hinduism is a way of life"



"Hinduism is a Religion"



"I believe in God"

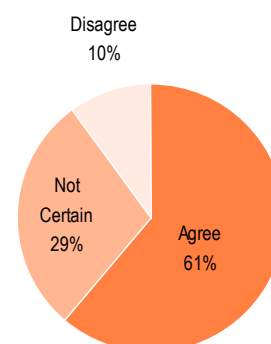


The majority of Hindu youth (81%) indicated that they do believe in God. When the youth were asked which deities they identified with most, a range of deities were mentioned, giving a total of 42 different names. Of these, the most commonly mentioned were Krishna, Shiva, Ganesh, Hanuman and Rama.

1. Relationship with God/Perception of God

Although the majority of youth indicated a belief in God, fewer felt they have a close relationship with God (61%), with over a quarter of the group saying that they were uncertain (29%). In the discussions, the way youth perceive God was explored, and it was found to vary greatly depending on the individual relationship. God was described as a light, as an impersonal part of the person to be found through introspection, as an expansive energy or powerful universal force. For some, the idea of God as the fun-loving, mischievous Krishna was appealing, whom they could relate to and love. Others described God as a source of comfort, someone to turn to in a time of need:

"I have a close relationship with God"



'Being one of the only Asians at school, having discussions about God ..., I've always gone for 'yes he does exist' ... as I've been brought up believing there's a God. I don't imagine God as a person, but more as a light ...'

'I think God is everywhere ... like spiritual, not a ghost, but kind of similar being ... it gives me an inner energy ... when you have a bad day at work, it can create positive energy.'

'I now see God as quite fun, like Krishna ... lots of love ... that's the kind of God that I want to believe in, rather than guilt and sin ... That's why I follow Vaishnavism in an informal way.'

'He's like an agony uncle ...'

'A backbone, if everything goes wrong, it's something to turn to.'

For some, the perception had changed over time, through getting older and developing a different understanding of God:

'It's interesting to think in terms of age groups. When I was young, I saw God as this giant vending machine in the sky, and you go to him with all your wishes, and then when you're older you have a different way ...'

For another, the change was due to the influence of two very different Hindu traditions. The following extract shows how this young person was able to 'pick and choose':

'Seen two different traditions, one of which was Arya Samaj, in which they don't think God is personal. God's just a universal being, and there's no deity worship. I also went to ISKCON, in which God is seen as a very personal thing, with deity worship. Originally, I took the deity worship as the way with the Krishna avatars, but as a teenager I found it difficult ... something that I couldn't explain at school. It was seen as backward ... so I just rejected it ... so for two years I just turned to Arya Samaj beliefs, but late teens, I couldn't accept God as impersonal, so now I've come back to God as personal and, like in the *Mahabharata*, God reveals himself in different forms ...'

This suggests that Hinduism is a 'flexible religion', allowing the individual to make personal choices about belief and practice. This theme was often seen throughout the survey data and discussions.

3. Deity worship

One of the popular images of Hinduism is the colourful temples and varied deities, which are seen to be an important aspect of Hindu worship. For some Hindu sects, the deity is deemed to be non-different from God. Hindu youths' opinions were explored on this topic. Just over half the youth (53%) felt they were directly worshipping God through worshipping deities:

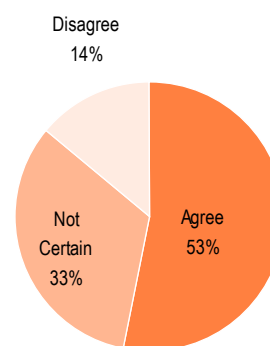
'When I go to Swaminarayan *mandir*, I feel at instant peace. I feel that it's a spiritual atmosphere ... when I pray to the *murtis*, I feel I'm being listened to by God.'

Other youth felt that a deity simply provides a focus, something to concentrate on, but also felt they had to justify the need for requiring a deity, that is made out of materials, by saying that God is within everything:

'A *murti* does provide a focal point. It's like a personification of God. It helps me to focus ... yeah it is a bit of clay, but God's in anything, like a bit of grass.'

'God is everywhere and gives a focus, a connection.'

"By worshipping Deities I am directly worshipping God"



4. Temples

Temples were described as important, providing a special place to focus the mind, with the possibility of collective worship with like-minded people, as well as to meet religious and spiritual teachers who can provide guidance and answer questions:

'I could go to the temple and have a one-on-one session with God. I find it a good place to focus. It's a focal point for the community, people exercise there, and it fulfils many aspects ... The temple is a special place and, with the Maharaj there, we can ask about aspects of the *Gita* ...'

'It's hard to concentrate with our five senses, so the temple helps control the mind ... environment is peaceful ...'

'The priests — the way they chant is different, and you can concentrate with other people who are doing the same thing.'

5. Most important teachings of Hinduism

The youth were asked what, in their opinion, were the most important teachings of Hinduism. It was not suggested that there are any particular teachings that are more important than others are; the object was to discover which teachings, if any, Hindu *youth* consider to be important.

a) God

'We are all divine. Divinity is inherent within us.'

For many, the teachings about God were very important, and different aspects were described:

Belief in the nature of God: 'One God, many forms, the four yogas, concept of Brahman and *atma*.'

Establishing a relationship with and serving God: 'Loving God truly and unconditionally.'

Understanding one's own nature in relation to the divine: 'We are all one. We are all *sat-cit-ananda*.'

Understanding one's daily life in relation to God: 'The fact that there is a Supreme Being who watches over us. Everything that happens is part of destiny.'

b) Scriptures

The Hindu scriptures were seen as a very important aspect of the Hindu tradition and sources of teaching (see Section 6 for further details).

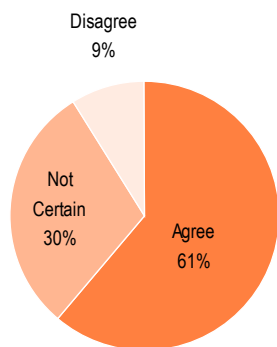
c) Karma, spirit/soul, reincarnation and moksha

These concepts were mentioned by many youth as being the most important teachings of Hinduism. A large number of the youth (61%) felt that the 'Law of Karma' does help them to lead a better life:

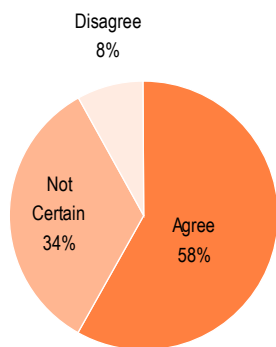
'The karmic bank ... have you heard the saying "you reap what you sow"? The Law of Karma is fair ...'

'But, sometimes I feel that it would be better to be punished for what you do now ... it's irritating to suffer for something you can't remember you did. But when compared to other religious options, it's better, as concepts of heaven and hell are too simple. This is more mediocre ...'

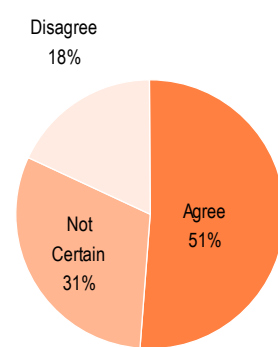
"Knowing about the law of Karma helps me to lead a better life"



"I believe I am an eternal Soul"



"Reincarnation gives me hope"

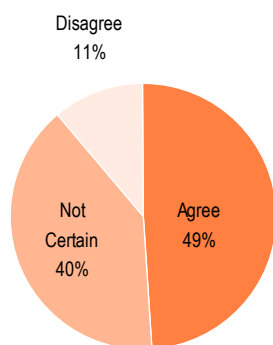


Over half of the youth (58%) said they believe they are an eternal soul. Just over half (51%) said that reincarnation gives them hope, while a large number (31%) stated they were uncertain.

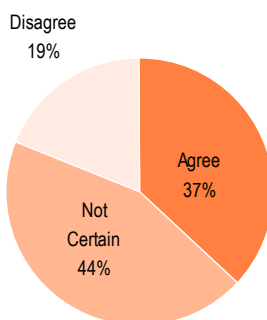
Only half of the youth believed in attaining *moksha* (liberation), with under half (40%) saying they were uncertain. In terms of their opinions about the difficulty in attaining *moksha*, more youth were uncertain (44%) than agreeing with the statement (37%) or disagreeing with it (19%).

'I think that being born into a religious family means that you must have been good in your past life ... Through religion, you have a good chance of attaining *moksha* ...'

“I believe I will attain moksha”



“I think it is difficult to attain moksha”



d) Humanitarian values

Many of the youth felt that it was the humanitarian principles that were, for them, the most important teachings of Hinduism. These included:

Respect: ‘The most important teachings of Hinduism are to respect my religion, other religions and friends and families.’

Honesty: ‘Hinduism teaches me to be honest, to live a pure and simple life and to get along with my neighbours.’

Acceptance: ‘Acceptance of and kindness to all types of people.’

Love: ‘To love all regardless of physical form, to learn that we are eternal and the body passes away, and that our deeds may impact future lives.’

Non-violence: ‘To follow *Ahimsa* — treat others as you would like to be treated, try and live a righteous life.’

Compassion: ‘Compassion to all living beings (no meat-eating), cleanliness, self-control, truthfulness, chanting the holy names of Krishna, and serving Him with devotion.’

Equality: ‘I feel the most important teaching of Hinduism is that of equality and, that in the eyes of God, we are all equal.’

e) Guidelines for life

For some, Hinduism as a whole provided the guidance needed to live life:

‘Be true to myself and understand the importance of life.’

‘Dharma, way of life, way of worship, truth during life and after life.’

‘Live a positive and truthful life.’

6. Scriptures

The youth were asked a number of questions around Hindu scriptures, and the findings are presented in the table below.

Scriptures	I am familiar with	I understand	I have read /studied	Are relevant to my life
<i>Bhagavad Gita</i>	65%	32%	29%	28%
<i>Ramayan</i>	63%	44%	29%	24%
<i>Vedas</i>	36%	9%	8%	9%
<i>Upanishads</i>	24%	5%	5%	7%
<i>Manusmriti</i>	19%	4%	3%	6%

The findings show that youth were most familiar with the *Bhagavad Gita* (65%) and the *Ramayana* (63%). In terms of understanding, 44% of youth said they understood the *Ramayana*, and just under one-third (32%) said they understood the *Bhagavad Gita*. Under a third of the youth (29%) said they had actually read the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Ramayana*. In terms of relevance, 28% said the *Bhagavad Gita* was relevant to their lives, and 24% said the same of the *Ramayana*. The other scriptures (*Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Manusmriti*) were familiar to fewer youth. Only a small number claimed to have studied and understood them, and felt they were relevant to their lives.

Despite the general lack of in-depth knowledge, the majority of Hindu youth finds Hindu scriptures inspiring (72%), and does not think that they are out of date (74%). These findings on the scriptures suggest that, although most youth have limited direct experience of specific scriptures, they have a sense of the Hindu scriptures being important.

The following are a number of reasons given for why there is limited direct experience of the scriptures:

a) Language

'We wouldn't be able to understand those concepts unless they were explained in English, rather than in Hindi, Bengali, etc.'

'I find some texts from *Srimad Bhagavatam* a little difficult. It is mainly because of the language barrier.'

b) Hard to understand

'They're too heavy to digest.'

'A lot of *Gita* is in *shlokas*, and difficult to understand.'

c) Time to study /Original texts

'It would be great to have time and space to study them ... in a low-level way, something you could do in the evening ... you have to read the original texts, otherwise it's always going to be someone else's interpretation.'

The scriptures presented through the visual media had proved popular, and some youth had gained familiarity with the scriptures through TV serials and cartoons. The discussions also highlighted why the Hindu scriptures are relevant to the youth that are familiar with them:

'The philosophy in the *Gita* of selflessness and duty, etc., are major philosophical points and will always have relevance ...'

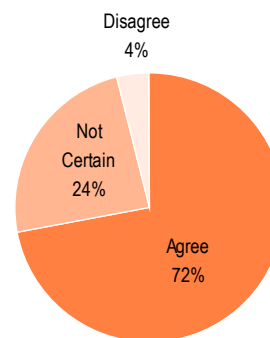
The most commonly cited scripture was the *Bhagavad Gita*, which was described by those who were familiar with it as a 'guidebook for living':

'The *Bhagavad Gita* — I know it as the foundation of dharma, *i.e.*, a manual on how to live life.'

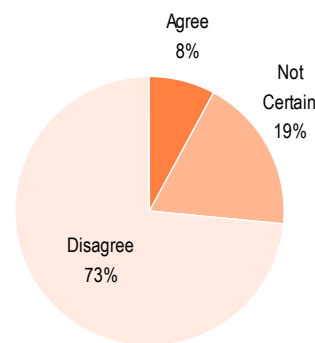
7. Hindu Rituals

The importance and perception of Hindu rituals was explored in the survey. The majority of youth interviewed (80%) do not think that Hindu rituals are a waste of time. However, fewer (40%) felt they are easy to understand. A number of reasons were given for why Hindu rituals and ceremonies were difficult to understand or practise:

"I find Hindu scriptures inspiring"



"I think Hindu Scriptures are out of date"



a) Language

The language in which they are conducted is often not one the young people understand:

'... language a little bit, but if explained in English, after the Sanskrit prayer, then it is really easy to follow. I have learned a lot because I have visited *kathas* with my mum, but to learn myself would be hard because I don't understand Sanskrit.'

'Language. When priest at a temple explains rituals, I don't understand them as they are in Hindi or Sanskrit.'

b) Length

Some were deemed to be too long in length:

'Length of time is too long for the modern world.'

'Length or content of rituals. Not enough time in this country because we go to work.'

c) Relevance

The relevance was not understood, nor the reason or meaning behind the ritual, as the priests conducting the ceremonies do not provide explanations.

'Most rituals are steeped in tradition and superstition. I feel I cannot relate.'

d) Meaning/Reasons

Youth feel it is important for them to understand the meaning or reason behind the ritual:

'Language, and the blind faith. I can't accept aspects without reasoning.'

'Not sure what the purpose is to certain rituals. However, I do believe that every ritual has a purpose, but nowadays people have forgotten what the purpose is and just want to do the ritual.'

e) Confusion

For some, the variances for one ritual caused confusion:

'There are too many different ways of performing one ceremony — no consistency.'

'Contents — many Hindus believe in different things, although they are all Hindus.'

f) Lack of explanations

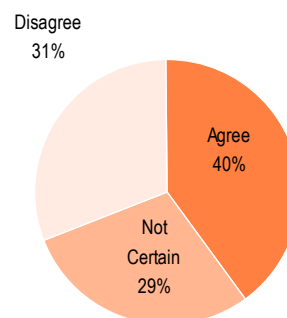
Youth seem to lack trust in the people carrying out the rituals because they have not explained the ceremony, or have not been able to answer questions about it:

'The fact that most people taking part don't know what it's about, and not many people ask what is happening.'

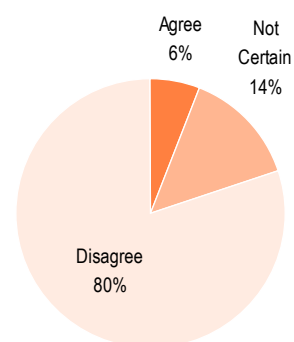
'The fact that when we ask why certain rituals take place, we receive either no answer or an answer that doesn't satisfy our curiosity.'

'Not many priests are able, or even willing, to explain the meaning and significance.'

"It is easy to understand Hindu Rituals"



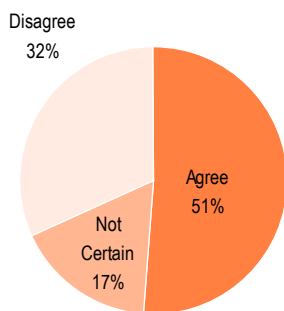
"I think Hindu Rituals are a waste of time"



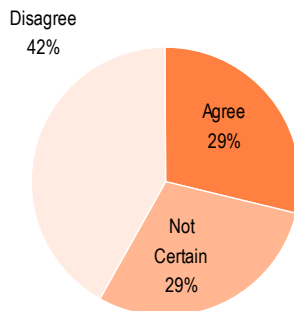
8. Language

Over half the youth (52%) said it is important to know an Indian language in order to understand Hinduism. However, about one third (31%) disagreed. Over half (52%) did not think it is necessary to know Sanskrit. However, 29% were uncertain. Interestingly, the majority of youth (72%) said they would learn Sanskrit if it were convenient. This suggests that they would not necessarily study it in order to better understand Hinduism, as only 18% felt it was necessary for this purpose.

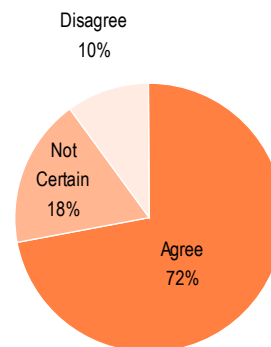
“It is important to know an Indian language to understand Hinduism”



“It is necessary to know Sanskrit to understand Hinduism”



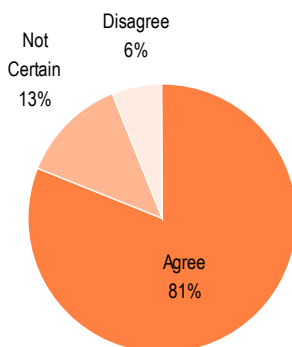
“I would learn Sanskrit, if it was convenient for me to study it”



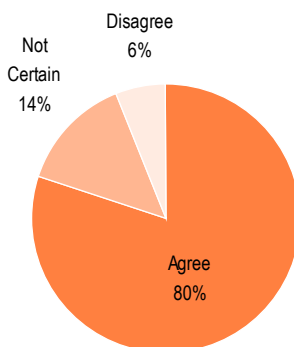
9. Practising Hinduism

The youth were asked about their personal practice. The majority (81%) of the youth agreed that it was important for them to practise their religious/spiritual beliefs. Many (80%) said they benefited from attending services, prayer meetings and places of worship. 87% visit a temple on a daily to monthly basis (daily 6%, weekly 39%, fortnightly 11%, monthly 31%, yearly 13%).

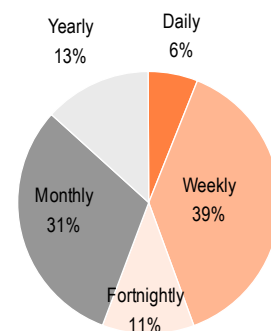
“It is important for me to practice my religious /spiritual beliefs”



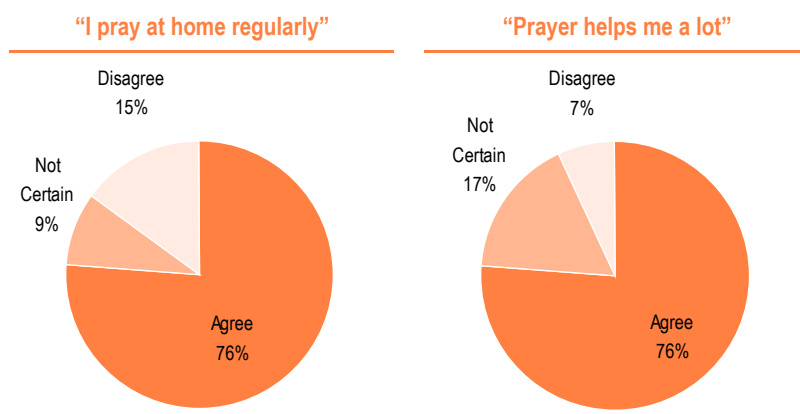
“I benefit from attending services, prayer meetings or places of worship”



“How often do you visit a place of worship?”



The youth were asked about their practices in terms of prayer. The majority (76%) said that they pray regularly, and 77% said that prayer helps them a lot. One young woman had incorporated prayer into her daily routine, while driving to work in the mornings: ‘Well I do my prayers in the car to Shree Krishna ... I do a mantra ... It's just a brilliant start to the day. If I haven't prayed, my whole day is a disaster. It gives positive energy to other people.’ For some, it was a matter of choice: ‘I like having the flexibility of doing *puja* when I want and feel like it ... that's why I have a *mandir* in my room ...’



10. Impacts of Hinduism on life

Participants were asked which aspects of their lives, if any, were affected by their religious beliefs. One summed it up by saying, 'I think that when tackling certain issues, such as relationships, sex, drugs, etc., religion becomes a prominent feature when deciding what to do, and one feels, being a young British Asian, one must compromise religion and society.'

a) Daily life

Some were able to specify certain areas or times in their daily life, generally, when faced with problems and needing a way to solve or overcome them:

'Gives strength and faith during hardships.'

'Way I make decisions and handle situations.'

b) Work/Study

'My duties at home and work — maintaining a balance between them, and doing my work sincerely and honestly.'

'School life — being in a school with multicultural faiths and being able to share it with others.'

c) Socialising and relationships

'Being a better person, understanding people better, being more patient.'

d) God, temple, worship and inner peace

'On a daily basis setting aside time for *puja* and prayer.'

'I think Hinduism teaches me to think of God in all aspects of life, so almost all of my life.'

'Doing *puja* every morning, going to *mandir*, help out at *mandir*.'

e) Personal values and principles

'Letting go of jealousy, materialism and karma.'

'Treat others how I would like to be treated.'

'Leading a good life. Treating everyone well and equally. Following the student stage of life, abstaining from pre-marital sex.'

f) Eating, drinking and smoking

Vegetarianism, abstaining from drinking alcohol and smoking were mentioned in a number of areas throughout the survey, suggesting that these are important issues for Hindu youth.

The statement 'Being a vegetarian makes you a good Hindu' used the stereotypical view that there is a connection between being vegetarian and, therefore, being a 'good Hindu'. The survey results show that under half of the youth (46%) feel that being a vegetarian makes one a good Hindu, and over one-third (35%) disagreed, which may indicate that, for this group, vegetarianism may not be such an important feature. The variety in the survey results was reflected in the discussions, indicating individual opinion about the connection between being vegetarian and being a 'good Hindu':

'It's nothing to do with religion. If you like the food, eat it. I saw a sheep being slaughtered, that's why I don't eat meat.'

'If you're going to be religious, you got to do it properly. It says it in our book that you shouldn't eat meat. I don't see my mums and cousins doing this. The next generation isn't interested. I don't pray, my mum does, and my dad don't.'

Again, the stereotypical statement 'You can drink alcohol and be a good Hindu' was included in order to provoke a response. Forty per cent of the youth felt that one could drink alcohol, and be a 'good Hindu'. Almost the same number (37%) disagreed. The discussions revealed mixed opinions about drinking and Hinduism. For some, Hinduism provides guidance on these matters, leaving the individual to make the choice:

'This is where your perceptions of Hinduism are wrong. It doesn't say anywhere in Hinduism not to smoke and drink full stop. It just advises you not to. It teaches you how to be a better person. It doesn't say that you shouldn't do this. There are reasons behind everything.'

'There's a lot of listening. Then you need to put things into practice ... like smoking — a lot of my friends do, my teachers and parents say it's not good. At the end of the day, it's for me to decide.'

Youths who were members of a particular *sampradaya* were clear about the 'rules' that they should follow around food and drink consumption:

'I'm not really religious, but I pray, but then I do bad stuff like smoke. If you want to be proper religious, you have to obey by the rules.' — 'Whose rules?' — 'Like we've got the *Shikshapatri*. It's like a *Gujarati*, Hindu bible, Swaminarayan book ...'

'One of the main aims of Hinduism is finding yourself, and your own identity. You can then practise it in your own way.'

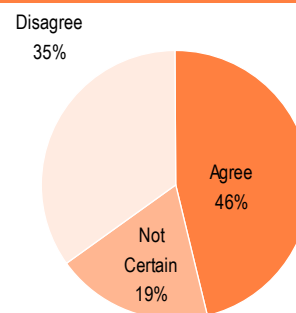
g) All aspects

For some youth, their religious beliefs influenced all aspects of their life:

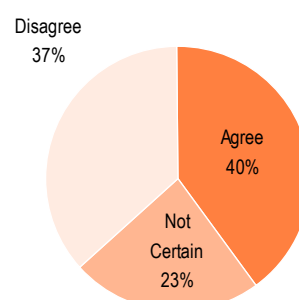
'All aspects of my life. Hinduism is an entire way of life.'

'Whole life and beliefs, gives you confidence to tackle anything.'

"Being a vegetarian, makes you a good Hindu"



"You can drink alcohol and be a good Hindu"



11. Influences upon religious beliefs and practice

Participants were asked who had influenced them most in their religious beliefs and practices. The majority of youth said their family had been the greatest influence: 'I think it's my parents. They are gurus and, because God says your parents come first, I will accept that.'

Some youth also mentioned the influence of a guru, while for others it was friends, being a member of a Hindu organisation or a personal quest: 'Our religion is one in which there is no right and wrong. Everyone has to interpret the scriptures in their own way ... you get quite a lot from your parents, but if you really want to find out stuff, you have to rely on yourself ...'

Youth were then asked if they had experienced any significant 'turning points' in their life, which made them change their attitude or opinion about their religious beliefs or practice. For some it was a matter of becoming older and questioning the purpose of life.

'Well I woke up on my 25th birthday, and thought, in a restaurant with chicken curry, lager, fag ... , and then I just thought "why?", and I stopped.'

Being away at university was an important time when youth began to reflect: 'I mean all religions, OK, they all in some way or the other gonna show its followers some faith ... like the Ganesh milk miracle ... I mean I've always had a one-to-one relationship with God ... but when I really wanted to learn more was when I was away from my culture ...' Another was looking for some answers, and joined a group which had the answers: 'I read an article one day, in a newspaper, about 'Uzman' and how he'd become a fundamentalist and had military training. I'd heard about all these organisations ... but anyway, I found out that the *Sangh* provides many answers to the problems faced by us in British society ...'

'Something that changed me was going to university. Before I went, I had friends from all faiths, and saying that, it never occurred to me that he's a Muslim or whatever. When I went to University, into the Fresher's Fair, the first thing that hit my face was the Islamic Society, trying to encourage me to take this leaflet, and I said "sorry I'm not interested". But it made me think, God these people are so proud to be who they are: "I'm a Muslim and I'm gonna do something about it". I could tell in my Uni that most of the Hindus would rather be in the bar or playing footie or something ... That encouraged me to speak more loudly as a Hindu.'

Other turning points were brought about by a crisis: 'For me, when we were kids, we were dragged to the *mandir*, listening to *bhajans*, whatever was boring. But when they were thinking of closing down the Hare Krishna *mandir*, then it suddenly hit me that the place is gonna be closed down forever, and that I got to do something about it — protests, vigils and marches. There were loads of people that held the same view, and that's when it hit me ...'

III. Personal, Gender and Family Matters

This section highlights the survey results and discussions around personal matters, including opinions of Hindu youth on relationships, varying from friendships through to life partners, and their attitudes to sex and related issues.

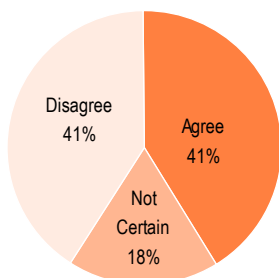
1. Relationships and marriage

a) Friendships and relationships

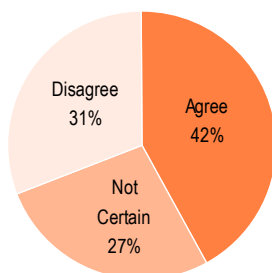
A number of youth (41%) stated a preference for having friends from a similar religious or cultural background. However, an equal number of youth (41%) disagreed, showing that friendship for them is not limited by such a preference.

Forty-two per cent of youth would only have a relationship with another Hindu. However, 31% disagreed, and 27% of youth were uncertain about this issue.

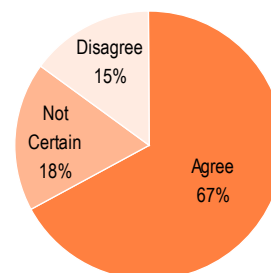
“I prefer to have friends from a similar religious/cultural background”



“I would only have a 'relationship' with a Hindu”



“It is important for me to have a Hindu life-partner”



b) Hindu life partner

Although the youths did not feel it was central for them to be in friendships or relationships with someone from the same religious background, marriage was more easily articulated in religious terms. In terms of having a life partner, 67% said that it was important for them to have a Hindu life partner, suggesting that having the same background and/or beliefs is important for the majority of youth, in terms of a committed, long-term relationship. When asked about dating non-Hindus, some replies were:

‘I don't mind going out with other girls, but when it comes to marriage ... she has to be Hindu ... I'm looking forward to it, because I want my own family.’

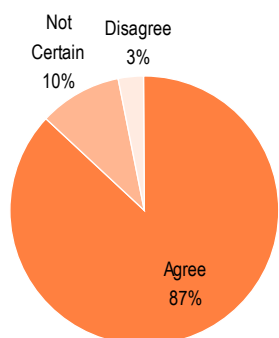
‘I'd like to get married into my caste, but I would like to find someone myself, so at least my parents know about his background ...’

Caste and Religion take on a greater significance in marriage matters, and this may shape the choice of partner alongside other personal considerations. Furthermore, the majority of youth (87%) said that they would still follow their religion even if they had a non-Hindu life partner, with only 3% disagreeing. This is a large percentage and suggests that youth feel that faith will play a part in their future lives.

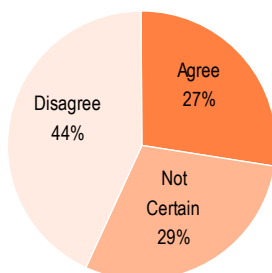
The process of meeting prospective partners was an issue that was raised in relation to a statement about arranged marriage. This was clearly not so popular with just over a quarter (27%), who said that they have had, or would have, an arranged marriage. Forty-three per cent would not, and 29% were uncertain:

‘I think the issue of arranged or a love marriage is irrelevant. It's more to do with finding the right person.’

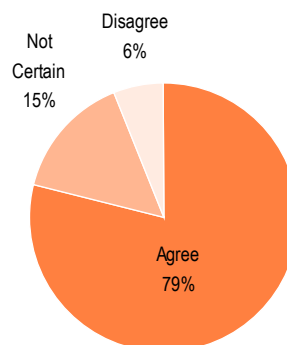
“I would follow my religion even if I had a non-Hindu life-partner”



“I have had/would have an arranged marriage”



“It would be important for me to have a Hindu marriage ceremony”



c) The Hindu marriage ceremony

Most youth (79%) said it was important for them to have a Hindu marriage ceremony. Although for some, the ceremony would be to satisfy the older family and community members, and was seen as a way of being accepted:

'It's important for the older ladies, but to us, it doesn't make a difference. Basically, it's more for the older people. The registry is like an English marriage. That's when you get married, but when it comes to the fire thing, Indian people accept you're married, so we might as well go for it, or they wouldn't think we were married ...'

For some, the familiarity of the marriage ceremony made it important, whilst for others, the ritual itself did hold meaning which they were unable to grasp:

'It would be nice, but not essential. It's your own personal choice ... the Hindu marriage ceremony would be important. Well, if you are going to be Hindu, I feel you would miss out if you didn't.'

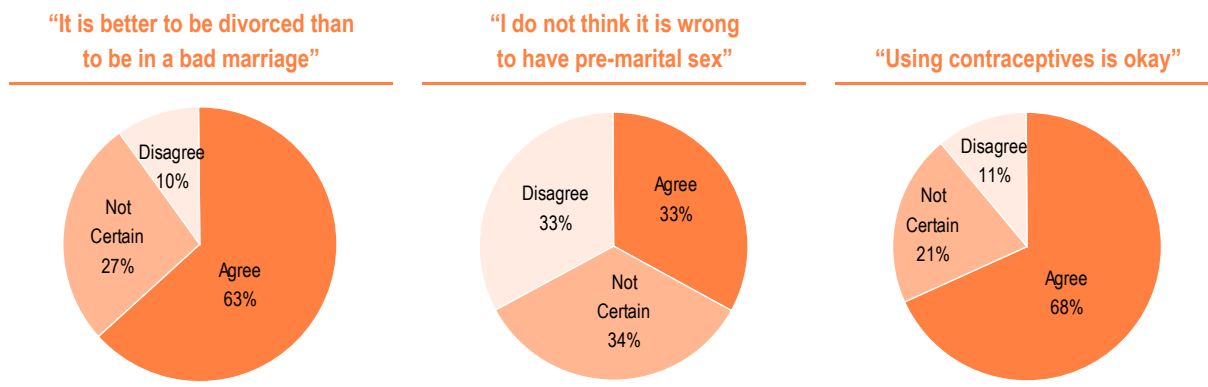
'The marriage ceremony ... even if I'm not marrying a Hindu, I would still prefer a Hindu marriage ceremony because I've always seen people getting married in that way, and unless I did, then it wouldn't feel proper ...'

'Every ritual in a Hindu wedding has meaning ... like going round the fire. Every time you go round it has a meaning ...'

d) Divorce

A large number of the youths (63%) felt it was better to be divorced than in a bad marriage. This may be a reflection of the acceptance of divorce in the wider community, and/or a reflection of living in a society where individualism is given greater importance than a commitment that is causing unhappiness.

'I think you should try and make it work if it's wee things, but if you are in an abusive relationship, you should be able to get divorced.'



e) Attitudes to sex and related issues

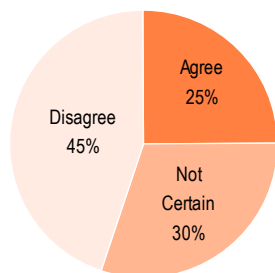
The opinions on pre-marital sex were equally spread across the response categories, with one-third (33%) agreeing with the statement, 'I do not think it is wrong to have pre-marital sex', and one third (33%) disagreeing. However, just over one-third (34%) were uncertain about this issue.

The majority of the youth (68%) felt that contraceptives are acceptable. However, just over one-fifth (21%) were uncertain.

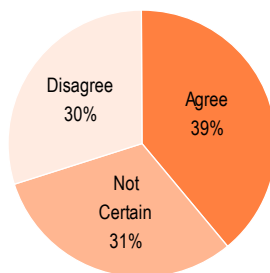
For 45% of the youth, abortion was not acceptable and conflicted with their religious beliefs. Twenty-five per cent agreed with the statement, but a higher number (30%) were uncertain about this issue.

Opinions on homosexuality varied, with 39% saying that it is acceptable, 30% disagreeing, and 31% being uncertain.

“Abortion is acceptable and does not conflict with my religious beliefs”



“I think homosexuality is acceptable”



2) Gender issues and family

Just under half of the youth (49%) felt that men and women had an equal status in the Hindu texts and scriptures, though 25% disagreed, and a similar number of youth (26%) were uncertain.

The majority of youth (71%) said that men and women have an equal status in their family but, in contrast, a much lower number (38%) felt that they have an equal status within the Hindu community. This suggested a difference in perception within the family versus the community context.

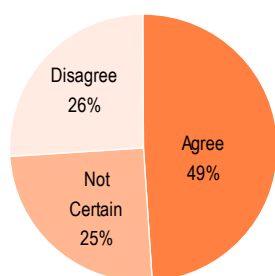
‘Equality for both men and women ... giving women the respect that they deserve, as their right and not as a favour.’

‘More equality amongst men and women. Women should not be given the role of cooking, cleaning, and looking after the children. Both men and women should take on these responsibilities.’

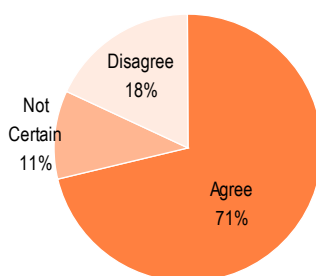
Overall, the opinions on gender equality were not clear (although the findings in Part III, Section 2 suggest that inequality for women is an issue). For one young man, gender and equality were social issues, not specific to any one culture or tradition, and historical changes have influenced the role and status of women within the Hindu culture:

‘It’s a society thing ... not Hindu ... within family, about daughters being secure. In the *Gita* and *Mahabharata*, women are respected. In society, we’ve lost it. A woman is not just a bit of meat. Hinduism started off with women having equal rights, but now they are misrepresented ... parents think girls need to be protected. They fear daughters need to get married.’

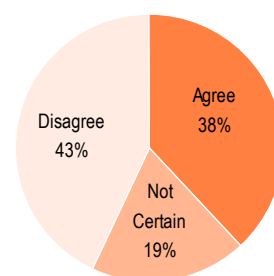
“Hindu men and women have equal status in Hindu texts and Rituals”



“Hindu men and women have equal status in my family”



“Hindu men and women have equal status in the Hindu community”



a) Religious duty of Hindu men and women

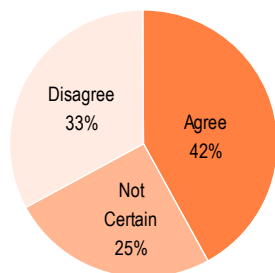
In terms of passing on the religious tradition, as well as protecting the faith, opinions were varied on the role of Hindu men and women. When presented with the statement, ‘Hindu women are responsible for passing on Hinduism to the next generation,’ 42% agreed and 33% disagreed. To the statement, ‘I think it is the duty of Hindu men to protect Hinduism,’ 40% agreed and 35% disagreed.

One young woman said it depended on the context; within the family, the women pass on the religion, while out in the community, it is up to the men:

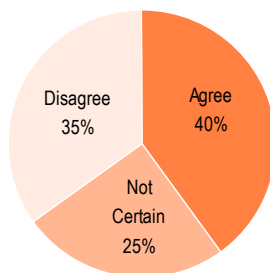
'Generally in families, it tends to be women that carry the faith forward, but in 'Track' organisation, it tends to be men ... so I think within the family, women are more spiritual. The main organisers in Sai are men ...'

The majority of youth were second-generation, possibly describing the gender roles seen in the first generation. Further research into the roles and status of men and women among second- and third-generation couples and families, would help tease out the factors that influence these roles.

"Hindu women are responsible for passing on Hinduism to the next generation"



"I think it is the duty of Hindu men to protect Hinduism"



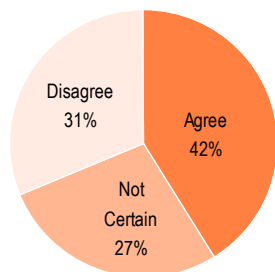
b) Menstruation

Attitudes to menstruation were explored in statements such as: 'I understand why women should not participate in Hindu rituals while they are menstruating,' with which 41% agreed, 31% disagreed, and 27% were uncertain. For the statement 'It is fair that Hindu women cannot participate in Hindu rituals while they are menstruating,' 31% agreed, 34% disagreed, and 35% were uncertain.

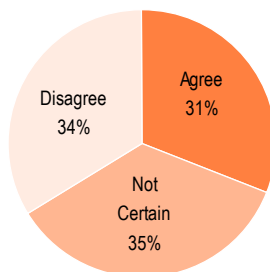
There seemed to be a lack of clarity about the reason why, traditionally, women have been excluded from religious ceremonies, and prohibited from religious practice during menstruation. Traditionally, it was considered to be a time when the women were impure. However, this does not seem to be so widely accepted now. One young woman said her choice not to continue her religious practice, while menstruating, was based on her personal desire and how she was feeling during that time:

'I just tend not to pray then because I don't feel like praying. It's not so much about being impure. I just don't feel like doing it ...'

"I understand why women should not participate in Hindu rituals while they are menstruating"



"It is fair that Hindu women cannot participate in Hindu rituals while menstruating"



c) Family and family influence

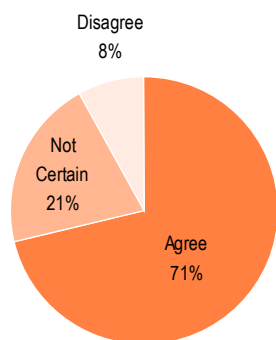
The lack of time, due to leading a busy life, is often given as a reason for not spending more time on pursuing religious interests. However, the majority of youth (71%) felt that it is easy to combine work and family duties, and pursue their religious interests too. However, some individuals noted that difficulties could occur. For one woman, marriage had impacted on her practice, giving her less time than before she was married:

'I'm from Swaminrayan *sampradaya*, so the things that I celebrate are Diwali, Holi and whatever ... Daily, I don't do a lot. I used to do a lot when I was at home. But now I'm married, it's less important. Here (in England), it's harder practically. I have responsibilities like my family and career. I can't just take the day off.'

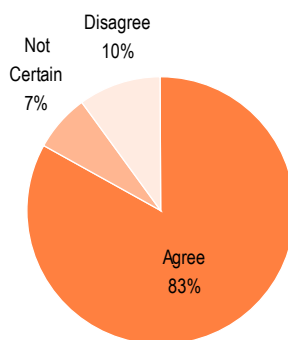
Rather than individual religious practices, a greater emphasis may be placed upon family traditions. The majority of youth (83%) said that they followed their family's religious practice, and although this was not detailed, the importance of the family was made clear by some youth:

'Conflict is experienced at the age of 15 to 16, then you mature ... matter of time until you realise that parents are right. Family is a sure thing. Family comes first ... a lot to do with religion and background that families come together ...'

"It is easy to combine work and family life and follow/practice Hinduism"



"I follow my family's religious practice"



IV. Living in British Society

A number of sections of the survey looked at Hinduism and being Hindu in the wider British society. Issues of caste, science, politics and the media were raised, alongside experiences of growing up in the UK. Whilst the survey results provided different response classifications, discussion groups helped look in more depth at different arguments. 'Racism' and 'inter-faith relations' were commonly mentioned, which had not been expected. Overall, there are many challenges for Hinduism and being Hindu in Britain, ranging from the relevance of caste and the changing relationship between science and religion, to finding a place in British society.

1. Caste

Questions were asked about the caste system to examine its purpose, and its relevance, if any, in the lives of young British Hindus. Thirty-eight per cent said that the caste system influences some of their decisions; a slightly higher number (44%) said that it does not have an influence in their lives, and 18% said they were uncertain. Forty-three per cent agreed with the statement 'The caste system is important to my family', 37% disagreed, and 20% were uncertain. The group discussions revealed that some young Hindus wanted to make a distinction between 'caste' (a social practice) and religion (Hinduism), as they did not see its relevance in contemporary Hinduism. Others saw a fine line in the distinction between religion and culture, and felt the problem was with caste prejudice, which should no longer be practised. Caste was still seen as having an importance in present times with respect to marriage, but even this was questioned for the future. The statements below portray these different lines of argument:

'... caste is not to do with religion and, like *Sati*, Hinduism is about *ahimsa* and non-violence ...'

'Hundreds of years ago, the priests wouldn't touch *Harijans* (untouchables) because they used to clean the toilets, fair enough. In this day and age, the caste system plays no role. I personally believe in it just because there are differences in practising religions amongst the castes. For example, I'm from a very orthodox family, and I would not be allowed to marry outside my caste, but it's more my parents' values ... and I would go with that ... In the future my cousins, nephews, ... they won't give a damn. I don't think the caste system will be a barrier. Thousands of years ago it did have a valid reason ...'

'I don't think the caste system should be associated with Hinduism. I mean, there are four essential castes, but then this shouldn't go further into Patels and Shajs. Muslims and Sikhs have caste systems, but they aren't meant to ... I think it's religion, and culture and time ... I think there needs to be a clear line that separates culture from religion ...'

'There are reasons for me marrying in my own caste that aren't cultural, beyond which I knew ... I know you said that religion and culture should be mutually exclusive, but there's an overlap ... At the moment, I'm sticking by common law, but there are reasons ... but having prejudices are wrong ...'

'Like I'm a Brahmin and I'm sitting here next to you. You're a Patel. I don't look down to you. I don't expect you to look up to me ...'

'Just because you are born a Brahmin, doesn't mean you are a Brahmin ... It's about your action, which should determine your status.'

'Yeah, like I've been born as a Brahmin, but my occupation is not as a Brahmin. From that point of view, I'm not a Brahmin ...'

The following extract focuses upon the relevance of caste stemming from a stage discussion by a religious leader on the previous night. This provoked discussion into the understandings of how 'caste' arose. One of the members of the group associated this with the emergence of caste prejudice and ideas of genetic 'purity', whilst another member of the group associated it with socio-economic and occupational structure:

'I think the caste system is an awful thing in Hinduism. Caste is about suppressing other people for no reason. It's not because they are qualitatively different.'

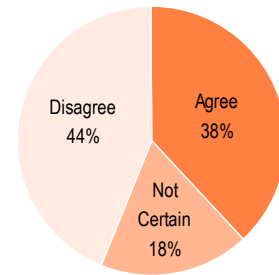
'Before, the caste system was more horizontal, then it was hierarchical ... perhaps he (Swamiji) didn't make it clear that, originally, everyone had a role in society. The occupation would be taken according to what qualities they had ...'

'... but out of the talk, the Swami said that it was more a purity issue, and that caste was in your genes ... He was talking about genetic purity, and mixing of the castes ... rather than mental purity. However, there is no genetic purity because Greeks, Turks ... have all married into the Hindu community so, historically, there was no purity. The current-day caste system is not part of Hinduism. It's a social issue, rather than a religious issue ... In the *Gita*, Krishna says we are all souls and we are equal. Just because Brahmins do things differently, you are splitting yourself up from other people. It doesn't mean that you are any different qualitatively ... that's why I was so against the talk ...'

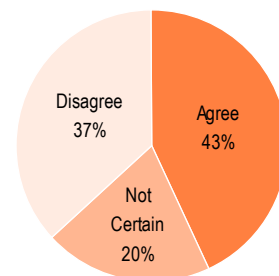
The role of Brahmins, who are seen as the heads of society, was discussed with some Brahmin youth. Caste is seen as a portal for socialising and marriage purposes:

'It's nice to catch up with families and celebrate events together, like Shivaratri (the advent festival of Lord Shiva), and unite on those specific events.'

"The caste system does influence some of the decisions I make in my life"



"The caste system is important to my family"



It gave the youth security and an identity:

'It doesn't make us different, just gives us the security.'

Despite this, most of them felt caste did not make them superior since they didn't 'practise' their caste. Some felt that they should be setting examples to others, and saw themselves as different by wearing the sacred thread, the '*Janol*'.

'Do you feel you have particular duties to Hinduism as Brahmins?'

'I definitely find it different being Brahmin. You have to have the thread ceremony, the '*Janol*', which definitely separates you from all the others. I'm not saying I'm the top caste. You should have unity with all Hindus, but you still feel different with the Brahmin Samaj.'

'... not superior. When you're born, you start at the same level, and then you build up your knowledge. At the end of the day, I could still be Brahmin, but if I don't practise it, I could be down the pub. Just because I'm a Brahmin, doesn't mean I'm higher than you, because you could be practising more than me.'

'It was more in the olden days that we were expected to do certain things, but it's not like that anymore. Someone from another caste might be more practising than a Brahmin, who might be eating meat, drinking alcohol ... Originally, Brahmins were meant to practise Hinduism and teach it to others as well ..., but it doesn't happen anymore ...'

Social functions such as marriage, rather than religious reasons, were given for the preservation of caste:

'Right now, we're looking at caste for marriage. In the future, it will be just Hindus, then after it might be they're a human being ...'

Otherwise, the caste system was not seen as significant in Britain and in the lives of the British Hindus of the next generation.

2. Science and Hinduism

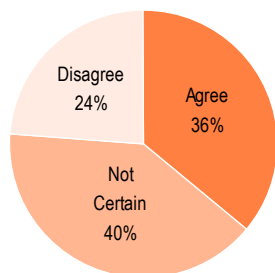
Questions were asked about superstitions, magic, Ayurvedic medicine and the relationship that Hinduism has with modern science. Thirty-six per cent of the youths agreed that there is a conflict between modern science and Hinduism, while 24% disagreed, and 40% were uncertain. Forty-three per cent agreed that there is too much superstition in Hinduism, while 24% disagreed, and 33% were uncertain. The majority (41%) disagreed with the following statement: 'I believe in magic (tantra, jadoo, nazar, etc.),' while 30% agreed, and 29% were uncertain. A positive response (72%) was received for the following statement: 'Ayurvedic medicine can contribute to health care today', with 23% being uncertain. The higher percentage of 'not certain' responses to do with science, superstition and magic (Ayurvedic medicine was the exception) suggests that these are areas that many youths have either not previously reflected upon, do not have an opinion on, or are not sure about. The higher response difference in relation to Ayurvedic medicine, on the other hand, may be connected to the considerable attraction it has, as a form of alternative medicine, in the West.

The relationship between modern science and Hinduism was questioned. Some felt that there was a conflict between the two, in defining 'science' and 'religion':

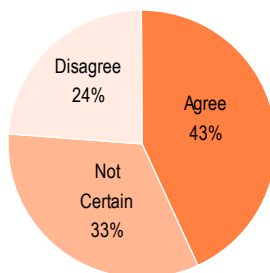
'There's always gonna be conflict between science and religion, like the big bang, Darwin's theory of evolution ... I do feel a bit bewildered ... Science is based upon fact, but religion is something ...'

'It depends on what you define as science. What I see of science, is that it's static. Theories of today will be disproved tomorrow, whereas religion is basically concerned with basic philosophical truths ... so in that sense the concepts are different.'

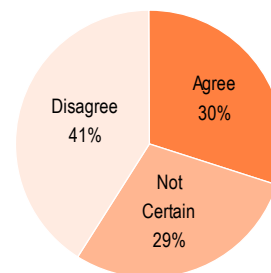
“There is conflict between modern science and Hinduism”



“There is too much superstition in Hinduism”



“I believe in magic (eg tantra, jadoo, nazar etc)”

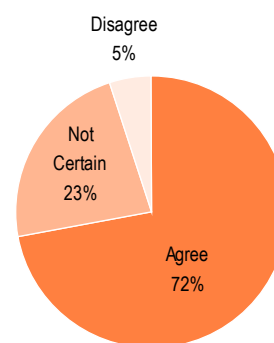


Others felt that they were complementary, and expressed limitations within modern science and in the way that religion and science are portrayed in the media:

‘I think Hinduism actually complements science ... like here there was a talk on science and Hinduism, and uh I think that there are limitations to what the scientists can find out ... like they don't understand the soul ... I think what I heard was that people don't really know how old the Earth is ... and Lord Rama was incarnated on Earth 10,000 years ago, and that goes against other religions ... so I think Hinduism is correct.’

‘I think Hinduism complements science as well. There are angles in the sense of a way Hindus should lead their lives. There are aspects like with Ayurvedic medicine ... um ... again that's complementary medicine ... There are things that are being discovered now that were well known back in the early days. There are a few modern theories that have come out now that were known in Sanskrit ... For example, in terms of pressure, volumes ... The only reason I found out about that was because our Chemistry teacher asked us if we knew any other scientists that had come out with this and to let her know.’

“Ayurvedic medicine can contribute to healthcare today”



In the extracts below, the participants discuss treatments using Ayurveda, Yoga, and precious metals, as examples of limitations of ‘Western’ science and medicine:

‘Initially, I found it a huge conflict, doing medicine and relating that to my religion, but the latest thing at the moment is Ayurveda and Yoga, and using the energies, and this has become central to our medicine, back pains, depression ... You have to draw lines, because there are a lot of Ayurvedic chaps who blindly preserve *haldi* for breast cancer ... You have to have scientific evidence that this will actually do that. *Haldi* is good for anti-inflammation ... but for cancer you need an operation. I mean modern illnesses like cancer are manifestations of poisons of the Western world. In the old days, the Maharishis, leading good spiritual lives and eating good food, didn't get colon cancer ... This is all to do with the modern man, and Ayurvedic medicine can't cope with that ... For poison you don't need antidotes, you need surgery.’

‘You can't mix religion and science until you know about religion. If you go back, thousands of years, until fifty years ago, no one knew why we wore *kanthis* (neck beads) on our neck. Now they know it's to do with pressure points on your neck ... we were the first people to wear gold because it's good for arthritis. There was a documentary on how wearing gold and copper bracelets can prevent arthritis. Science can't explain that because it hasn't fully developed. You'd be surprised how Ayurvedic medicine has become a huge alternative medicine, not Chinese, but herbs etc.’

Personal examples were given of miracles, Indian astrology, and energies felt through listening to devotional music:

'The milk miracle ... the reaction was amazing, and everyone came to the temple that had never been there ... white people, Scottish ...'

'Recently, I've got into Indian astrology, and it's amazing. It's not this 'Mystic Meg' stuff. It's actually mathematical formulas and charts, and the precision is incredible. They told me about my past, present and future ... and like listening to Hanuman Chalisa tapes, you feel full of energy ... Bhajans, the music, it must be more than just tunes ...'

There is a desire to move away from mythological stories and old wives' tales and turn to 'scientific approaches' to religion:

'Hinduism has gone wrong in talking about mythological stories, and not enough on the facts and philosophical meanings.'

Similar to the issue of caste, young Hindus wanted to make this aspect of Hinduism relevant.

'Religion in its purest form in reference to Hinduism has been muddled up with a lot of old wives' tales ... We couldn't even be able to tell you what Hinduism is in its purest form ... because of all of these cultural influences. Like you should fast so you'll get a good husband. Things like this, well, make reasonably educated youngsters think this doesn't make sense ... Like you said, all these things have been re-interpreted ...'

3. The media

When presented with the statement 'I think the media positively represents Hinduism', only 25% agreed, 35% disagreed, and 40% were uncertain. Similar responses were gained from the statement 'Hindus are poorly portrayed in the media', as 39% agreed, 17% disagreed, and 44% were uncertain. Again, there was a considerably high percentage of uncertainty, which may reflect apathy, or not having reflected on this issue. It is significant that over a third of youth felt Hinduism and Hindus were not positively represented by the media.

The discussions elaborated upon how the media selectively represents Hindus and Hinduism. For example, 'The media picks up on the stupid side of Hinduism. Hindus are shown as idol worshippers', and 'A big misconception is that we pray to lots of Gods.' A House of Fraser advertisement was mentioned several times, as was the Kumbh Mela:

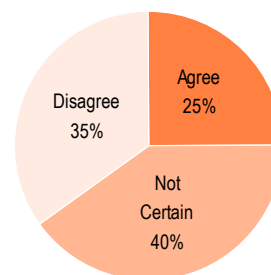
'House of Fraser recently had an advertising campaign, in which they showed some Hare Krishna devotees with a thought bobble emanating from them saying 'if I wasn't a cymbal banging, easily led nutcase of a loony sect I would be wearing House of Fraser Jeans ...' The damage is done, and now people mock them.'

On the Kumbh Mela:

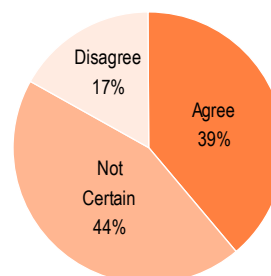
'I think they filmed only what they thought would look good to us and other people, obviously ...'

'They were just showing one aspect of it. They should have brought out realistically what it should have been. Because there were obviously Hindu directors, who knew what it was, they could have shown it in more of a positive way ... 55 million people ... why couldn't Channel 4 really have found out what it was really about rather than taking the piss.'

"I think the media positively represents Hinduism"



"Hindus are poorly portrayed in the media"



The next extract suggests that contacts should be made in media to improve representation, and challenge apathy amongst communities:

'Media are killing us. We have to get contacts, like the festivals ... instead of making their own understandings, we should be able to give opinions. Islam, in 'Ramzaan', for a whole month had a programme, but our people are doing so well, but we have to become more proactive. We need to go mainstream ... There are misconceptions among our own people, and in people that are not Hindu ... We have an attitude of *chalega chalega* (let it be). It's not affecting our business, but we have to encourage the pride that we are Hindu ...'

'Our tolerance has gone too far ... you have to stop somewhere ... at the end of the day, politics ruins everything. We just want to say there's been too many misconceptions ... We want media access and influence in that way ...'

Some changes that participants mentioned they'd like to see in the media included:

'More positive things reported in media about Hinduism.'

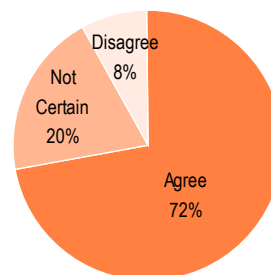
'Better media and political representation.'

'Greater prominence of Hinduism in the media and the general community.'

4. Politics

The majority of respondents said they would like to have more Hindu political representation in Britain (72%), and that 'we need more Hindu MPs, and need people to represent our voices'. This would allow for greater access to resources. One group already formed an Indian Communities Development Association, trying to get funding for Diwali festivals. The group's view was that 'we have no representation in the council. We are not majority groups so our needs aren't considered ...'

"I would like Hindus to have political representation in Britain"



'We need to start making some noise, banging the tables ... whoever shouts the loudest wins ... The Council thinks we're a self-sufficient little community that doesn't actually need a thing. They are not closing doors. We're simply not opening them.'

Suggestions were made for a Hindu Parliament:

'There is a Muslim Parliament. How about we create a Hindu Parliament? There should be a culmination of authorities coming together to make a decision. I mean like VHP. They stand up for Hindu rights than any others ... They're not an authority, but they try to keep Hinduism alive by saying what's right and what's wrong ... and impose a little authority.'

A few felt that 'religion and politics don't mix ... like religion and science', or that political activity should be limited:

'We need to be more active, *i.e.* against the caste system, but I don't think we need political representation as such. It should be more to get funding and representation.'

Suggestions were made for projects that explore the social problems facing the Hindu community, such as drug issues. Changes were needed at a local grassroots level, with people joining local committees, sharing knowledge for funding and creating strong communities:

'We need equal access to funding, and representation, and we have to be active, but need opportunities to become part of these committees. We also don't tend to share knowledge with each other *i.e.* how to get money. We need community support first, and need change at grassroots level ... We need strong leadership, and need to base ourselves on strong communities ...'

Unity was seen as important:

'People are taking advantage of the fact that we are part of so many different groups.'

'We let our differences divide us too much. We are one, but we don't see that. All groups should be supported — Swaminarayan, Iskcon ...'

Attitudes to human rights issues that concern Hindus were briefly examined in the survey. The findings showed that there was uncertainty about Hindu human rights issues (40%). Over half of the youth (54%) felt that Hindus did not stand up for themselves. Again, this was seen to be due to a general apathy in the community:

'... comes back to our apathy ... This is not our problem.'

Fifty per cent of youth were concerned by 'Hindu human rights', and specific examples were given of instances where human rights issues had been abused:

'Like in Afghanistan, where the Hindus have to mark themselves ...'

'Not enough direct action in Kashmir, Afghanistan, Europe, Assam ...'

However, it was argued that this may be a human rights issue, but not necessarily a faith one:

'To a certain extent, if you are a minority in a country, you have to respect the majority culture. If it's a gross abuse then you have to fight this. Human rights are an issue, but not a faith issue ... It doesn't make sense that you are concerned because you share the same background ... You should be active, but it takes more to act non-aggressively than aggressively. I don't think of Hinduism as a sect, so if a particular Hindu temple was demolished, I wouldn't want to react against that ... It's the dharma of Hindus to spread peace and values like that ...'

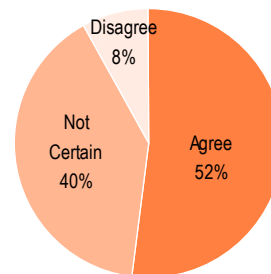
The youths had many ideas about political changes that they would like to occur:

'More Hindu influence on political and world issues, a more supportive attitude towards Hinduism.'

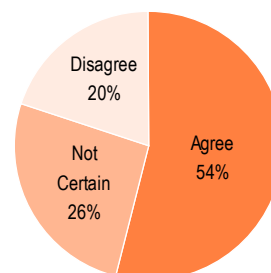
'More political representation.'

'To create more awareness in education and political activities.'

"I am concerned about Hindu Human Rights"



"I feel that Hindus do not stand up for themselves"



5. Inter-faith relationships and conversions

A substantial majority of youth (89%) felt it was important for Hindus to work with people of other faiths. This indicates that religious Hindu youth are positive about developing and maintaining good relations with people of other faiths, and living harmoniously in a social context.

'As far as Hinduism is concerned, we respect other religions, and believe that they are just different paths to the same supreme God ...'

This was also seen as a weakness for two main reasons that were sometimes linked together: 'identity' and 'conversion'. It was also said that Hindus may respect other faiths, but other faiths may not respect Hindus in the same way:

'You can lose a sense of your own identity. You believe in Jesus and Guru Nanak and you find that other religions are so hard-lined into theirs, *i.e.* Islam and Christianity, who don't believe in anyone else. The way they are growing in India is fearful. When the Pope visited India, they were preying upon the poor Hindus that are deluded ...'

Conversion by other faiths was highlighted as a problem, and 50% of youth agreed that conversion of Hindu youth to other religions is a serious problem:

'I mean, a lot of our youngsters are getting converted into Islam ... I know at least four or five girls that have converted. If you look at history, and how people's surnames have been changed ... because people have been forced into conversion ... coerced, forced, and it's basically convert or die ...'

Girls were seen as being more vulnerable for various reasons, but most interestingly, from not having enough knowledge about their religion, and Muslims were seen as 'responsible'.

'They're very reluctant to learn ... yeah, but sometimes they are forced through marriage ... girls feel more that they need to go to another religion.'

'They take advantage of Hindu girls not knowing about their religion. Muslims use their knowledge to their advantage. At the end of the day, the Hindu girls give respect to the guys for knowing so much about their religion. Muslim people always bring their religion in every conversation ... They glorify it, and Hindu girls think wow!'

Another interesting aspect of discussions around 'other faiths', was why other faiths may be held in 'higher esteem', or look down on Hinduism. Firstly, Islam was given as an example of a faith that young Hindus saw as having a 'higher esteem'.

'I think the reason why there are more mosques is that the Christians are more accepting of Islam because it's a more Western religion than Hinduism ...'

'One thing I know is that there aren't many *mandirs* around, but white people still try and stop them ... but they let Muslims have mosques.'

Comments were made about how Hinduism was diverse:

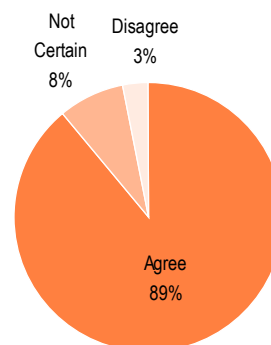
'Hinduism is so vast. There is so much literature and so many deities that people just become confused. They don't think it's applicable to their lives ...'

'It would be nice if people ask us about our religion. It would be nice if we were able to talk about it, and know about it, and you can only know about it if you read about it. I mean one of my best friends is a Muslim, and we've had discussions about religion. He looks down at my religion because I don't know anything. It's the same with other Hindus. They don't know anything ... I guess people just don't devote enough time to religion ... It's their upbringing as well, like a lot of Muslims have mastered the Quran at an early age ...'

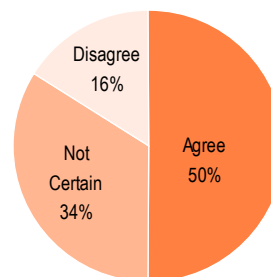
The role that parents played was criticised and questioned:

'Our generation doesn't know a lot about it, and our parents' generation doesn't know much about it either. They teach about culture, but not religion.'

"It is important for Hindus to work with people of other religions"



"I feel that conversion of Hindu Youth to other Religions is a genuine problem"



The following example raises historical issues. The first generation's priority was seen to be education and employment, rather than passing on their religious tradition:

'I think in this country, our parents had a lot of pressure in terms of culture ... They came from abroad, and they wanted to see us do well. Religion does play a part, but it's the cultural aspects that we have turned into religion. We want to find out more about that, but before we do that, we have to get a good education, a good job. You got to do all that, open a shop in the morning, and then after all that, you start asking those questions ... Until then, on the way you might open a book, but you never get round to opening it with all these pressures.'

These factors often prompted young Hindus to 'learn' more about their 'religion'.

'The funny thing is that we, as Hindus, know about other religions more than Hinduism, which prompted me to learn.'

Some felt a sense of urgency to preserve their faith:

'... if we're not careful, Hindus in Britain will be non-existent ... We'll be a minority in a minority in a minority ... It's my biggest fear ... cos like Hinduism itself, Sanatan dharma is like centuries old, ... we're strong, but we need to get focused again. All the other religious groups have a focus, especially the Islamic lot ... Their particular faith system is in the majority, but ours is in a state of flux, and we need to do something about our knowledge before we forget it ...'

Good inter-faith relationships were seen as important, but young Hindus feel these are difficult to maintain with the perceived threat of conversion. On the other hand, some Hindus feel that to improve representation and knowledge of their faith, Hinduism should be more like the other faiths, and want to interpret Hinduism within this multifaith context.

6. Self-image in society

Youth were clear that they want respect, recognition and acceptance in wider society. They wanted this by simply having their voices heard, having recognition and respect for specific beliefs, history, scientists, and other famous personalities. A few wanted to make the position of Hindus explicit, not only within wider British society, but also within the Asian communities, in religious terms and having a political voice:

'More recognition.'

'A greater respect for our tradition and cultural heritage.'

'School curriculum: teach Indian history and not just an hour on Gandhi and British role in India. Show that we, too, have produced eminent scientists, feminists, politicians, authors, poets, etc.'

One was simply not happy with the idea of tolerance.:

'Tolerance is something I have a problem with these days. It's like we're tolerating you, rather than accepting. It's a wrong concept ... It should be more that we accept you as our neighbours.'

There was also the issue raised of acceptance by 'others':

'Accepted more by other religions.'

'More understanding from other communities. They should respect our views and religion without racism.'

'All Hindus to be proud of our culture and being accepted in all societies. There should be a public holiday for Diwali.'

V. Challenges, Changes and Contributions

Living in a multicultural and multifaith society has had many implications for the shape of Hinduism in Britain and of what being 'Hindu' means. The next generation is keen to re-interpret Hinduism in a British context, and find new ways in which they can learn about their traditions. This is a challenge, given the immense diversity of Hinduism, which cannot simply be equated as a 'religious' system of beliefs and can include social, cultural, political, moral and spiritual aspects. 'Hindu' has also been understood by youth as encompassing 'identities', 'beliefs', 'practices' and 'roots'. Therefore, it seems that there is no clear relationship between being Hindu and Hinduism. They can include each other, or be separate; one can be Hindu by birth, but not associate with traditions of Hinduism.

A multifaith environment has meant that Hindus are becoming conscious of Hinduism, its relationship with other faiths, and its relevance for this generation, time and age. As other faiths have stronger relationships between identity and faith, this is seen as a challenge for British Hindus. Contributions to British society are inter-linked with changes amongst Hindus and their faith, and the challenges that they face. The findings highlighted concerns of the community groups and Hindu youths about their future, through responses to the following questions:

- 'What can Hindu organisations in Britain and overseas do to help Hindu youth?'
- 'What is the best way to get more youth interested in Hinduism?'
- 'What changes would you like to see for Hindus in Britain?'
- 'What contribution, as a Hindu, do you think you could make to British society?'

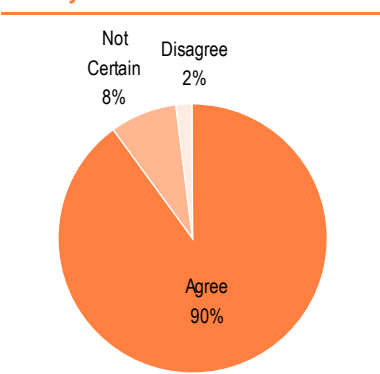
The following thematic sections articulate the issues for the future that were raised.

1. Knowledge, information and education

During a sketch of 'Nilroy' in the festival, (the Hindu equivalent of Kilroy), it was quite amusing and not entirely surprising to hear a girl of 20 respond to the question 'Who is a Hindu?', with the answer 'if your parents are Accountants, Lawyers or Doctors'. This, however, strikes a more serious chord with sentiments expressed by Hindu youths both informally and formally, that whilst encouraged to excel in education, careers, etc., they have not been encouraged by parents to learn about their faith.

Nearly all respondents (90%) agreed with the statement 'It would be important to teach my children about Hinduism', which highlights that 'education' was seen to be crucial for the next generation to maintain their faith, and question existing opinions such as those on caste and gender inequalities. The response to this statement also highlights the fact that respondents may welcome the finding of new and creative ways for 'learning'. Both the discussion groups and the questionnaire show that Hinduism is their way of life, but they feel a need to question it and understand it. Carey points out from his own observation 'in the London area that many young Hindus lack an overall or even vaguely satisfactory conceptual map. Confusion rather than some notion of creative ethnic redefinition seems to be very much the contemporary pattern' (Carey 1987; 91). The youth have a lot of questions which they don't feel have been answered, and the most commonly cited reason for attending the Hindu Youth Festival 2001 (HYF 2001) was to 'find out more about my religion'.

"It would be important to me to teach my children about Hinduism"



2. Relevance of Hinduism in the modern world

Most of the participants (88%) thought that Hinduism is relevant in the modern world, and a few felt that Hinduism had always been relevant:

'Being the oldest religion, other faiths have either developed from Hinduism, altered it or adapted it ...'

However, discussions highlighted a need for greater understanding to 'make Hinduism more relevant to the younger generation', to have 'more meaning and understanding, and not just doing things for the sake of it'. Some of the responses on this issue included 'making all teaching modern and relevant to their life in Britain'. Some examples include:

'Make it realistic and relevant to life today: translate it.'

'Send out the information in a new form so it would appeal to today's youth.'

'Create more awareness, and highlight the importance of continuing the Hindu culture.'

'Get youth's attention by using Western influences.'

More specifically, young people wanted to be more educated about religion, philosophy, history and rituals. They wanted to 'organise activities, talks, debates', ask questions, study their traditions and to have 'reasons for why we worship in the way we do, by making our philosophy accessible'. This was so that 'when a Hindu learns of God and tradition, and is wiser about Hinduism, he/she will realise that Hinduism does enrich your life, and that there are advantages'.

Some of the main issues about practising or learning Hindu culture appeared to arise from a lack of understanding in the significance of ritual and scriptures (see Part II). Firstly, this was related to being given explanations for rituals and philosophy. For example, one young person gave an example of how explanations make a difference:

'If you read the *Shikshapatri*, each verse is simplified. Now, how you understand them is a different thing. Those verses haven't changed since the day they were written. It's about how the explanations are given.'

A few suggested the need to 'give lectures to explain our religion.' There was also an overall concern with the superstitions that were adhered to, which youth wanted to distance themselves from. This can be seen from the following statement regarding what today's youth want from their religion:

'Understanding scriptures properly, not doing things such as *pooja* because one is scared of what others would say if they don't.'

'Having better education on Hinduism in schools, with more philosophy, but less mythology.'

'Making Hindus aware of the philosophy and logic, as that is what they want.'

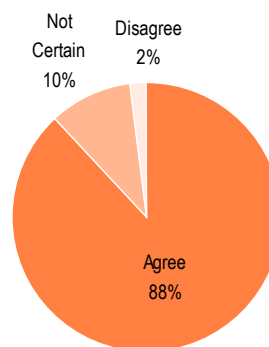
3. Fun

Hindu youth not only want to learn about their religion or culture, and how to apply it to their modern lives, but also want the activities or events to be fun:

'They can make the Hindu youth be more into the religion, and try making the religion fun to learn about.'

'Portray it more interestingly.'

"Hinduism is relevant in the modern world"



Youth feel that the role of Hindu organisations is to provide the resources for communicating Hinduism. This could be done through activities and festivals such as HYF 2001 — fun, modern and conducted in English, which would increase awareness and involvement. These were some of the suggestions:

‘I don’t believe you have to be religious or ritualistic to be a Hindu. You can conduct your everyday affairs in the Hindu way, and inspire others like that. If youth like music, sports and other things, Hinduism can exist in these things. Temples can be a place to go for culture and values, and not just for prayer.’

‘Make it relate to their “modern” life! Pop music, fashion shows, dancing and useful philosophy give them an opportunity to explore openly.’

‘Organise things that they will enjoy, and that will keep them interested in the long run and in their religion, so it can be passed on to the next generation.’

4. Educational resources

Most respondents expressed a frustration with the scant educational resources available about Hindu traditions and suggested alternative mediums:

‘I mean who’s gonna pick up the *Gita*? You need a lot of motivation ... I mean the reason I came today was that I noticed in the brochure that some young people had written an article on the Aryan Invasion. It was so interesting that it was all a myth. It was made up by the Aryans for a supremacy sort of thing. Youngsters doing that will certainly motivate me to come ... I mean you need mentors for motivation. You need structured days out, like Garbas, debates in Universities, get speakers in ...’

‘In this massive library I went to, I found one book on Swaminarayan. There’s nothing on the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, nothing ... so you can’t really trust the media or the Internet. You need good books.’

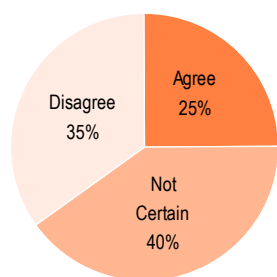
It was important for Hindu youth to have ‘more open spaces/platforms that allow Hindus to discuss what being a Hindu is about’; places to learn and find out information that would be ‘neutral’ and devoid of sectarian interests.

5. Media

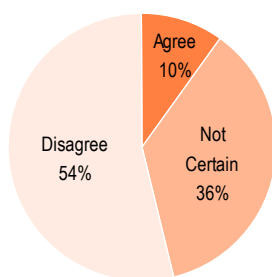
Only 25% felt that the media positively represents Hinduism, and only 10% thought that the British press gave a good source of information about Hindus and Hinduism. Seventy-two per cent thought the Internet was a better source, but again the information provided was seen as quite general.

‘... Like the Internet ... some of these sites are really good, but to find something broadly on Hinduism is very hard ... there’s something on one part of Hinduism or another ... It could be worded in a certain way that you understand something different.’

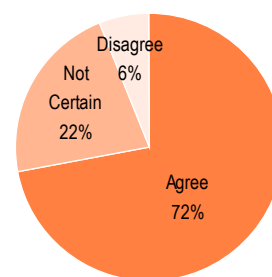
“I think the media positively represents Hinduism”



“The British press give a good source of information about Hindus and Hindus”



“I have found the Internet a useful source for information about Hinduism”



Suggestions for the types of resources needed include the following:

'The launch of a comprehensive Web site ... to give a wealth of information, and give responses to questions by e-mail.'

'A Hinduism magazine or newspaper written in a way that young people can relate to.'

'Make Hinduism more accessible through more television programmes with explanations of Hindu rituals and the true significance of them.'

Television and video were seen as popular ways of communicating, and positive examples were given as seen below with the *Mahabharata*. This was seen as a basis to build educational videos upon:

'It's quite important to learn about it, but you have to know the basics ... we haven't studied any. We've just watched them on TV ... *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* ... you find the *Mahabharata* interesting... like the way it is visualised ... that's the best way. If people look at it visually, they get it, and if they want to pursue it, they can go into it in depth, but at least they get a basic knowledge.'

'You have to watch it quite a few times to understand things.'

'There's a whole episode based on the conversation between Arjuna and Krishna. We watched it and got bored ... but if we keep watching it, we learn something.'

6. Festivals

Most youth were clear that they wanted more 'events and festivals like HYF 2001', and wanted to 'have more gatherings in and around the UK, so that the younger generation can get together and keep the religion going'. Further suggestions were made, such as having drop-in sessions where people can get 'real answers to real questions'. The young people expressed a desire to focus on more practical aspects of Hinduism, such as meditation and Ayurveda. This was alongside providing an opportunity to increase awareness of 'our epics, Vedas, and Gods'. Many wanted the festivals to be organised on a 'large scale', with 'debates' and 'drama', and 'taken to areas where there is not a Hindu majority, like Guildford', and to 'local areas of Hindus'. Furthermore, there was a hope to 'set up international gatherings to discuss each other's views and beliefs'.

7. Language

Regarding language, a lack of English translations posed a problem (identified in Part II, Sections 6 and 7). Many young people expressed a desire to understand aspects of Hindu culture and religion in English:

'Get them out at events like this more. Listen more to what the youth have to say. Hold talks on Hinduism and religion, with topics in English!'

'They could focus more on youth and can do more things in English.'

'More ceremonies in English, or explained in English.'

Not only was there a need for translations and explanations in English, but there was also a genuine interest in 'more good schools and classes to teach the youth about our religion, a good Sanskrit school ... and translation of scriptures without the usual interpretation that all the gurus do.' Greater access to language classes for young people was mentioned, including Sanskrit, Hindi and other South Asian language classes:

'The local *mandirs*, temples could do a whole lot more for the younger Hindus. In my own experiences, they're in a language that you don't always understand, and a lot of South Indians don't understand Hindi. This is nothing against Hindi, it's just not accessible ...'

8. Role models

More positive role models were desired, and an important factor that made HYF 2001 attractive to Hindu youth was the fact that it was organised by youth:

'Bring the youth to the forefront of the organisations! No one is interested in adults preaching to the youth!'

Role models included 'youth speakers and figureheads', as 'youth will only be inspired by seeing others like them'. Also, other young Hindus would be able to relate to them. Others suggested using 'aspects that will appeal to young Hindus', involving 'famous Hindu personalities', attracted 'through the Internet and posters in school', which one youth felt should not include Bollywood actors. Overall, the attitude was that it was up to the youth themselves:

'Rather than the state to provide resources, I think it's up to us. A lot of people blame parents for not teaching, in *mandir* etc.; they don't ask. There's so much information available when going to India. Stop blaming parents, and go and learn ...'

9. Networking and unity

'To come up in the world as one as a big congregation, than single hopeless sections.'

There is a clear feeling among the young people that both individuals and organisations need to unite, network and work together. One young person commented, 'Like you can see in this tent (refers to the tent at the festival with representatives from different organisations) that there's no unity, and no one mixes with each other. More than religion, it's a way of life, so it shouldn't cause divisions.'

Confusion and frustration were expressed at the lack of unity within *Sampradayas*, and the lack of understanding about the existence of divisions:

'There are three branches: Willesden *mandir*, Golders Green *mandir*, and Neasdon *mandir*. They are all different, but we believe in the same God. They are the same scriptures, but we're running them differently ... It is like Premier football divisions, one, two and three. We don't know why the divisions are there. Some people weren't happy with one *mandir*, so the *mandir* in Willesdon has separated itself ... because of the rivalry, because in Willesdon they are preaching Pramukh Swami, and we preach Acharya Maharaj Shree, they have another one. The next generation doesn't really know why the divisions are there. When we're all after the *Shikshapatri* scripture ... we know it is written by the Lord. I've been brought up in our own *mandir*, and I would never change. There is only one Swaminarayan ...'

Youth want 'more intra-community work', 'more cohesion and integration between communities and castes, e.g. between Punjabis and Gujaratis'. Also, it was felt that different sects and *Sampradayas* should have a greater awareness of each other. This was seen as both 'unity' and 'diversity':

'Divided we fall, united we stand ... the uniting factor is Sanatan dharma, but we let our differences divide us too much. We are one, but we don't see that. All groups should be supported, such as Swaminarayan, ISKCON ...'

'The Universalism, and everyone's equal. That's what all the scriptures start off with. It's very good to turn away from sectarianism, and we need to come together and say that we have diversity, but that we are all one.'

'Unity' was seen as important for different reasons, from having 'a network, or a way to communicate with or meet with others' to 'a sense of direction and information'. Some young Hindus felt overwhelmed and confused between the numerous organisations and their beliefs:

'I have noticed that what one organisation says about Hinduism is different to the other organisation, i.e. different beliefs.'

Others felt isolated in practising their beliefs in areas where there were no community - or Hindu-based organisations.

'I'm from Wales, so I know a limited number of Asian people there and, to be honest with you, I've never stuck up for myself in relation to my religion because those who want to know will ask you, and those who don't will just take the piss, so you can't fight that really ... My views are shaped by my experiences in Wales, but here I've seen people talking about Holi and Diwali openly, and it's rare. Now they have families that have come together ... When I was in school, in nursery, I had nothing ...'

A few felt that Hindus were too apathetic, and needed to unite and act as a pressure or lobby group, and become more vocal and visible. As the second extract below shows, some want unity amongst young Hindus and feel this is necessary, as they haven't been taught enough about their 'culture':

'We should be uniting, and need a pressure group ... like we recently went to the Taliban march (referring to a march organised by the Hindu Human Rights group against the treatment of Hindu minorities in Bangladesh), we need to have some responsibility as Hindus, and need to get rid of apathy ... We are living in Kaliyuga, in a world of darkness, and the world is going to pop.'

'We've basically been taught the culture, but not explained it ... and basically it's up to the youngsters to take a stance, to attract other youngsters, to make sure we learn, and that we unite with each other ... Just call yourself a Hindu ...'

Eighty per cent felt it is important to link up with other Hindus around the world, but weren't quite sure how these links would be made. Only 43% agreed that they used the Internet to connect up with other Hindus. Discussions revealed that the Internet and e-mail would be a useful medium, which suggests that the Internet may take a more prominent role in future 'networking':

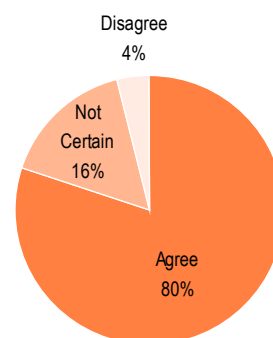
'Now, we are all going to e-mail each other. This is a great way to get the ball rolling. The medium is here. I actually found out about this event on the Internet. The Hindu Human Rights Bulletin has been set up in light of the Taliban.'

Events like the Hindu Youth Festival were seen as progress 'where all Hindus get together and preach about God, and ... to help each other out instead of all being segregated'. It was hoped that there would be future 'united' events, where Hindus could come and 'work together':

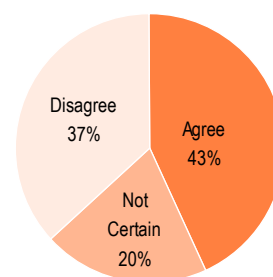
'We've got the tools, we just need people to start using them in a more cohesive and effective manner. We need to tell everyone, and get a bit of a network going ... like this festival. I thought we could support it so I brought my whole family down ... things like this are a starting point. How many of us would have sat down together otherwise? From now this will develop every year ...'

Overall, Hindu youth want unity amongst organisations and groups. For the future, youth wanted to 'maintain, if not initiate, channels of communication between organisations and youth' and 'merge and hold joint events', even though it was mentioned that to do this, 'there needs to be less moral judgement' from organisations. It was felt that this could be an easier way for youth to learn about their culture and religion. This unity could be used to 'learn from each other, guide all Hindu youth and produce educational literature that is cheap and available'.

"It is important for British Hindus to link up with other Hindus around the world"



"I use the Internet to connect up with other Hindus"



10. Future

'Just to conduct myself with pure intentions. In my job and private life, to be recognised for my achievements, while acknowledging that I am a Hindu and that it has helped me to be who I am.'

The youths felt they could contribute to British society in many ways as individuals, as families and as communities. 'Multiculturalism' was brought up as one of the issues, and how youth 'could make Britain a culturally rich and prosperous country'. 'Spirituality' was seen as a way of achieving this, whereby you 'learn to live in unity, not on the basis of what colour or creed you are from ... treating people as soul'. This was through encouraging a 'live and let live attitude'. Some wanted to be part of Britain's national pride, but without the racism.

It was felt that principles of Hinduism could have 'a positive impact' on British society, by influencing or encouraging 'peace', 'vegetarianism' and 'yoga':

'Hindus can also help people of this country to find themselves spiritually and religiously, which this country lacks.'

This influence was felt to come mainly through individual behaviour and being a 'better person':

'The Hindu faith promotes how to be a better person. Therefore, this is beneficial to society in all aspects.'

'I feel the best way to contribute is by setting a good personal example, and telling others about the great spiritual wisdom of the *Vedas*.'

Hindu 'ethics' and values were seen as a good basis for creating a better environment. For example, 'everything is here today, gone tomorrow'. *Seva* (charity) was mentioned as an important principle as 'service to the needy, providing a better atmosphere, and helping to improve life in general', through 'donations, volunteering, organising', helping 'neighbours and those less fortunate', and 'serving the community at large':

'I think I am already starting to make a contribution by taking handicapped children and old folk out on day trips, and also visiting a local hospital and nursing home on behalf of the Sai Centre. Therefore, as Hindus we are giving and showing an act of kindness.'

Other contributions to British society were centred on changing the representation of Hindus and Hinduism. Contributing 'towards helping others understand and, therefore, bringing Hindu culture to the British', and educating 'others'. This could be done by explaining the 'tolerant virtues of Hinduism', how a Hindu way of life is 'compatible with other cultures', and 'making people understand the meaning and reasons for the variety of our religious occasions'. Overall, youth wanted to make Hinduism and Hindus well known to challenge misconceptions.

'I think I have many qualities to offer British society, such as redefining their "typical" views of Hindus or Asians in general.'

Discussion

The festival, being the first of its kind, achieved a number of aims. At a social level, many youth were keen to meet other Hindu youth, make connections, and network, as well as to have fun or help with the youth activities. On a religious level, youth were drawn to the festival by the *katha*, the opportunity to learn about aspects of their religion, perform *seva*, as well as become spiritually enlightened. Almost half of the youth came from a temple or community-based organisation, and tended to come in their already established groups. This meeting of groups was an especially important portal for research, as these groups may never meet for such an extended period of time, in such an environment. Hinduism by nature is sectarian, and the differences, although appreciated, lead to a great deal of ambiguity. Separate *Sampradayas* (traditions) within Hinduism could sometimes be described as separate religions. Although they share some basic tenets, they often have totally different ideas as to who God is, how to worship, and ideas of liberation and salvation. Having so many second-generation Hindus from such organisations practically under one roof encouraged the youth to discuss spirituality, Hinduism in Britain, and the sub-groups within it. Those youth who weren't linked to any group had the opportunity to meet other youth from a number of Hindu traditions, build friendships and discuss Hinduism in an open environment.

The participants held a diverse range of attitudes and beliefs about what makes them 'Hindu', and how they understand Hinduism. Connections were made to roots, beliefs, practices, and way of life. Some did not use the term 'Hindu' to describe their faith, while others placed a greater importance on 'being Hindu', which suggests that for them it is a part of their 'identity'. Being a Hindu on a day-to-day basis was seen to have both advantages and disadvantages. This shows that even though most are happy to be Hindu, it is difficult to pinpoint the boundaries of what being Hindu means. One of the main problems for Hindus was the inability to describe themselves as religious, as people from other faiths may do. Additionally, facets such as sects, caste system, and gender discrimination were blamed for Hindus being judged harshly by the wider society. This could lead to a situation where young Hindus feel under-confident in discussing their faith. On the other hand, youth felt proud of qualities such as tolerance, family ties, freedom of belief and expression. The larger part of participants was positive about maintaining scriptures and rituals, and held the perception that Hinduism is relevant in the modern world.

Although Karma, reincarnation, *moksha*, spirit and soul were described as some of the most important teachings of Hinduism, many were not certain about these beliefs. Youth described values of honesty, respect, compassion, etc., in terms of their daily lives, suggesting that some relate better to these concepts. It is very difficult to paint a single picture of Hindu youth and their religious beliefs. Some follow their own path, as Hinduism is flexible and allows for individual choice, whilst others who are members of a *Sampradaya* or group are guided by regulations and guidelines, perhaps a specific code of conduct.

Difficulties, especially the language barrier, were highlighted around understanding scriptures and rituals. These have resulted in the youth having little personal experience or understanding. However, the youth have high regard for these aspects of Hinduism, perceiving them as inspiring and important. This may indicate that the perception is linked to and contributes to their identity as Hindu.

The youth were less concerned with *moksha* (liberation) than with the attitude and behaviour that Hinduism encourages. An important finding was the clear need to learn more about the religion. This was stated for a number of reasons, from not following blindly, to being able to talk to others about it. One of the main problems here was the language barrier — being unable to understand the scriptures, and not getting clear answers from priests. University was a turning point for many, a situation where Hindus are exposed to the youth of other religions who seemed to know much more about their own religions, and being able to discuss it. Not knowing enough about their faiths can lead to Hindus seeking answers from organised Hindu groups, or preferring to turn inwards and develop their own faith style, with a blend of humanitarian values and basic principles.

The majority of youth interviewed placed great importance on relationships and marriage, for instance the importance of having a Hindu life partner, a Hindu marriage ceremony and following their faith even if they had a non-Hindu life partner. This reflects a concern for the future of Hinduism. By living by the values

instilled within them by their parents, temples, groups, etc., marriage for the youth is not simply an individual choice, but has a clear bearing on the family and community. By declaring their determination to continue the line of Hindus and Hinduism, they show an almost certain desire for the preservation of faith and culture. Even the Hindu wedding ceremony itself, though not seen as essential, is something that the respondents aspire to participate in. However, while its vague social importance is appreciated, like many of the other Hindu ceremonies it is seen as a tedious, time-consuming affair.

There were very mixed attitudes to gender, sex and related issues. This may result from a belief in personal choice in these matters and/or confusion around how these issues (*e.g.*, abortion) are shaped by their faith. Attitudes were more clearly formed in some areas of discussion. An example of this is the shift in gender roles. Housework and educating the future are expected to be a joint responsibility, and gender inequality within the community is recognised with the desire for change. Overall, further research is required to explore the ambiguity of attitudes towards these personal issues. An important consideration remains the religious environment and background of the *katha* in which the sample of respondents were interviewed. The results from minimal-practising or non-religious Hindus might be very different.

British Hindu youth want changes in the British media and politics, in terms of how they represent Hinduism, Hindus and Asians. There is a desire to use these mediums to implement change for more positive representation, and to increase visibility and have their voices heard in Britain. Suggestions were mainly about having more Hindus and Asians involved in the media and political system. The use of 'Asian' and 'ethnic' suggest that this is not simply an issue of fairer representation and inclusion of Hindus, but also an issue of minorities. Media and politics can play an important role in enabling Hindus to have greater 'acceptance' and 'respect', which is seen as crucial to maintaining good multicultural and inter-faith relationships. The lack of media representation, and sometimes misrepresentation is seen to be irritating, and further fuelling stereotypes of Hinduism as an illogical religion. The respondents hinted that the only way this can be rectified is by having better and fair representation, by more Hindus in the media and political spheres of influence.

Participants indicated that they would like to see further unity amongst Hindus in Britain. This is to gain greater respect and recognition in British society. Living in a British multicultural and multifaith society, many feel it necessary to question existing practices of caste, relationships between science and Hinduism, etc. It is in regard to these issues that youths feel that Hinduism is misrepresented by the media and political institutions in wider British society and within inter-cultural and inter-faith relationships amongst Asian communities.

The lack of unity is also seen as a hindrance to effective communication and learning for themselves and the next generation. More education and information is needed to understand the relevance of Hinduism. Youth want adequate explanations, educational resources in English, fun activities and youth role models. Poor resources and facilities, for religious and cultural education, are seen as a serious problem if the tradition is to maintain its stability and develop in the future. It is significant, however, that they want to learn in order to develop their self-identity, their community, and make a positive contribution to the quality of life in the UK.

Living in British society has made Hindus reflect upon the traditions that are affiliated with Hinduism. The relevance of the caste system is strongly questioned. The youth are appreciative of the Hindu organization of society by qualification/profession; however, the hierarchical idea of caste is seen as irrelevant. The respondents highlight that the caste system needs to be redefined to preserve Hindu heritage in a British environment. The interview with Brahmin youth was very interesting because traditionally, the Brahmins would be the highest caste: religious advisors, priests and teachers. The present-day Brahmin youth also agreed that it is important to be seen as a Brahmin according to one's qualification, rather than birth.

There are aspects of Hinduism that young people want to learn more about, such as the relationship between Hinduism and science. This also entails some desire to make a sharper differentiation between myths and the more factual and philosophical aspects that young people understand. The other side of this reflection has been about challenging stereotypes and representations, and gaining greater acceptance as

Hindus in wider British society and amongst other Asian communities. There was lots of comparison with the Muslim community, who are noted for their commitment to teaching their young, who in turn are able to preach. This is perhaps one reason why young Hindus feel threatened. Due to parents and community placing great emphasis on being cultured and educated, they feel worried that they do not have a firm religious backing and the community as a whole are prone to conversion by stronger communities.

Although this study gives the first indication of the trends likely to emerge as a new generation of Hindus comes of age in a Western cultural context, it is limited by the fact that it was conducted only amongst young Hindus attending a specifically Hindu festival, and hence one must presume that these are the representatives of youth who maintain the strongest commitment to the traditions of their community. Nonetheless, it would be quite wrong to dismiss the findings as being wholly unrepresentative or unnecessarily sanguine about the level of commitment amongst the second generation. The challenge for the future is to understand this changing need to learn about being Hindu and desire to maintain a heritage for their own offspring, without losing the diversity of their attitudes and beliefs.

Conclusion

What then are the main lessons that can be learned from this initial survey? First, that there are real grounds for optimism over the future of Hinduism in Britain. What is overwhelmingly apparent is that these young people are utterly committed to maintaining their Hindu identity, regardless of the waves of Western cultural influence that inevitably sweep across their lives. Equally apparent is the hunger for greater enlightenment regarding the complex pattern of beliefs that comprise the Hindu religious tradition. Consistently the survey shows up respect for Hindu values and an enthusiasm for the perpetuation of the tradition in the UK. Above all, it is quite clear that their Hindu identity is vitally important to these young people who are maintaining their commitment to traditional beliefs and values in spite of the allure undoubtedly offered by the secular culture of modern Britain. They are not saying that the tradition should be maintained in exactly the same form as that practised by their parents, and it is interesting to note that there is only limited support for arranged marriages, the caste system, and the traditional role of Hindu women, but they undoubtedly see themselves as inheritors of a pattern of beliefs which they want to nourish and pass on to their own children.

Alongside the optimism that these findings undoubtedly give rise to, a note of caution must also be sounded. It is apparent that the Hindu community cannot afford to be complacent as a result of these findings. The young people surveyed at this festival undoubtedly represent those most committed to their religion, but there is a clear suggestion that many of their peers do not share this level of commitment. Thirdly, the hunger for understanding that they express is a clear indication of the urgent need for educational provision in culture and religion. These young people enthuse about the significance of Hinduism in their lives, but they need the education that can provide them with the means to perpetuate the beliefs and values they so revere. Here the onus shifts to the older generation of British Hindus. All too often complaints are heard concerning the indifference and lack of respect amongst the younger generation for the traditions of their parents. However, if their elders are truly committed to the culture and religion they brought to this country then they must act now to create meaningful educational programmes that will genuinely meet the aspirations and needs of the youth as they attempt to make sense of Hindu dharma. The Hindu community in Britain is by no means impoverished and it must be recognised that funds should be allocated as a matter of urgency to ensure that the second and third generations of British Hindus become experts in the beliefs, values and spiritual insights of the wisdom that India has offered to the world.

Finally, it must be urged that this survey does not represent the final word on research in this area of study. Rather it is an indication of where future work must be undertaken. Perhaps most crucial is the need to examine a genuine cross-section of young Hindus in order to learn the extent of secular and westernising influences on this generation. This initial research highlights only the voice of a committed minority within the tradition. Therefore it is of vital importance to establish a sample that is genuinely representative of young Hindus as a whole. Furthermore, their needs must be discovered in order to properly nurture the aspirations found here. How do they feel that the strength of Hinduism in Britain can be enhanced? What facilities do they require from the wider community so that they can effectively construct a vibrant expression of British Hinduism? It is only when this information becomes available that the way forward can be properly identified.

Measuring Attitudes: the Santosh-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Hinduism

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The Santosh-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Hinduism has been designed to facilitate research concerning the psychological correlates of religiosity among young people growing up within the Hindu tradition. Data provided by 330 individuals between the ages of 12 and 35 support the reliability and validity of this instrument and commend it for further use in studies conducted within the Hindu community.

Introduction

The social scientific study of religion has long recognised that religiosity itself is a multidimensional concept and that specific aspects of this concept need to be operationalized separately to form the basis for empirical enquiry. Attempts to map the dimensionality of religiosity have resulted in a number of conflicting models and the development of a wide range of instruments, as clearly evidenced by Hill and Hood's (1999) thorough review and critique. Francis (1978a, 1978b) advanced the view that the attitudinal dimension of religion offered a particularly fruitful basis for co-ordinating empirical enquiry into the correlates, antecedents and consequences of religiosity across the life span. The attitudinal dimension appears particularly attractive for four reasons.

First, at a conceptual level, social psychologists have developed a sophisticated and well-established understanding of attitude as a deep-seated and relatively stable and enduring covert predisposition, in contrast with more volatile surface behaviours and opinions. To access attitude toward religion is to get close to the heart of religion in an individual's life.

Second, following the pioneering analysis of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), Francis (1978a, 1978b) argued that attitudes are concerned primarily with accessing the affective dimension of religiosity. The affective dimension is distinguished from the cognitive dimension (concerned with beliefs) and from the behavioural dimension (concerned with practice). The affective dimension is able to transcend the divisions between denominational perspectives, while beliefs tend to polarise such divisions. In a Christian context, for example, Catholics may believe one thing about the nature of God and Protestants may believe another, but both Catholics and Protestants may agree on the assessment of the extent to which their faith exercises a positive or negative influence on their lives. The affective dimension is less likely to be distorted by personal and contextual factors, while practice tends to be subject to all kinds of personal or social constraints. Whether an individual attends a place of worship may be influenced by personal factors (like state of health) or social factors (like pressure from parents), but negative and positive feelings about faith are much less likely to be contaminated by such factors.

Third, the affective dimension of religiosity can be accessed by instruments that can function in a comparatively stable manner over a wide age range. While the sophistication with which beliefs are formulated and tested clearly develops over the life span (see, for example, Fowler, 1981), attitudinal statements concerned with positive and negative affect can be formulated in ways which are equally acceptable during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood (Francis, 1989; Francis and Stubbs, 1987).

Fourth, at an operational level, social psychologists have developed a range of sophisticated and well-established techniques for assessing and scaling attitudes, including the pioneering work of Thurstone (1928), Likert (1932), Guttman (1944), Edwards (1957) and Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum (1957). By testing the performance of these various methods among different age groups, Francis (1978a, 1978b) identified the Likert technique as providing the most reliable and consistent scaling properties from the age of 8 upwards through childhood and adolescence into adulthood.

As well as being multidimensional in the sense of embracing many dimensions (like belief, practice, and attitude), religiosity is also multifaceted in the sense of embracing many traditions (like Christianity, Islam and Hinduism). Francis (1978a, 1978b) argued that the attitudinal dimension of religion could best be accessed through the specific traditions by which it is expressed. Working within a Christian context, therefore, Francis proposed a scale of attitude toward Christianity which was found to function reliably and validity among children from the age of 8 years, among adolescents, and among adults.

The 24-item Likert scale, originally published by Francis (1978a), contains both negative and positive items concerned with an affective response to five components of the Christian faith accessible to and recognised by both children and adults, namely God, Jesus, bible, prayer and church. Each item is assessed on a five-point scale (agree strongly, agree, not certain, disagree, disagree strongly), producing a range of scores from 24 to 120. The reliability and validity of the scale have been supported by studies among school pupils

in England (Francis, 1987, 1989), Kenya (Fulljames and Francis, 1987), Nigeria (Francis and McCarron, 1989), Northern Ireland (Francis and Greer, 1990; Greer and Francis, 1991) and Scotland (Gibson, 1989; Gibson and Francis, 1989). Another series of studies have supported the reliability and validity of the scale among adults in Australia and Canada (Francis, Lewis, Philipchalk, Brown and Lester, 1995), England (Francis and Stubbs, 1987; Francis, 1992), the Republic of Ireland (Malbty, 1994), Northern Ireland (Lewis and Malbty, 1997) and the USA (Lewis and Maltby, 1995).

During the second half of the 1990s a series of attempts has also been made to translate the Francis scale of Attitude toward Christianity into other languages, recognising that integration of cross-cultural, quantitative studies in the psychology of religion has been hampered by the lack of common instrumentation. Examples are provided by editions in Welsh (Evans and Francis, 1996), German (Francis and Kwiran, 1999), Greek (Youtika, Joseph and Diduca, 1999), Dutch (Francis and Hermans, 2000), Arabic (Munayer, 2000), Swedish (Eek, 2001), Chinese (Francis, Lewis and Ng, 2002), Czech (Francis, Quesnell and Lewis, 2003), French (Lewis and Francis, 2003), and Norwegian (Francis and Enger, 2002).

By the mid 1990s over 100 independent studies had employed this scale to examine a wide range of correlates of religiosity during childhood, adolescence and adulthood. These studies were summarised and synthesised by Kay and Francis (1996). During the second half of the 1990s the scale has been employed in over 100 further studies exploring the correlates of religiosity. One theme of particular interest within the broader context of the psychology of religion concerns the potential psychological benefits or the potential psychological costs of religion in respect of individual differences in terms of unhappiness as happiness. Empirical evaluation of this relationship has been facilitated through the development of the Oxford Happiness Inventory by Argyle, Martin and Crossland (1989). A series of six recent studies has employed the Oxford Happiness Inventory alongside the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity. The first study, reported by Robbins and Francis (1996), was conducted among 360 undergraduates in the UK. The second study, reported by Francis and Lester (1997), replicated the original study in a different cultural context among 212 undergraduates in the USA. The third study, reported by French and Joseph (1999), was conducted among 101 undergraduate students in the University of Essex. The fourth study, reported by Francis, Jones and Wilcox (2000), employed three separate samples drawn from the UK: 994 secondary school pupils during the final year of compulsory schooling attending four state-maintained secondary schools in the north east of England, 456 first-year undergraduate students attending one institution in Wales, and 496 members of a branch of the University of the Third Age in the south of England, a relatively informal education network for senior citizens. The fifth study, reported by Francis and Robbins (2000), was conducted among 295 participants attending a variety of workshops and courses on the psychology of religion, ranging in age from late teens to late seventies. The sixth study, reported by Francis, Robbins and White (2003) was conducted among 89 students in Wales. All eight samples demonstrated a significant positive correlation between happiness and attitude toward Christianity, after controlling for the possible confounding influence of personality.

In order to test whether the growing body of evidence regarding the correlates, antecedents and consequences of attitudes toward religion (established in a Christian context by means of the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity) also held true in a Jewish context, Francis and Katz (2003) developed a comparable instrument, the Katz-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Judaism. In order to achieve a proper comparability between the two instruments the attempt was made to translate each of the original 24 items appropriately for a Hebrew-speaking Jew living in Israel.

Two studies have recently employed the Katz-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Judaism alongside the Hebrew version of the Oxford Happiness Inventory. The first study, reported by Francis and Katz (2002), was conducted among 298 Hebrew-speaking female undergraduates. The second study, reported by Francis, Katz, Yablon and Robbins (2003), was conducted among 203 Hebrew-speaking male undergraduates. Both studies demonstrated a significant positive correlation between happiness and attitude toward Judaism, after controlling for the possible confounding influence of personality.

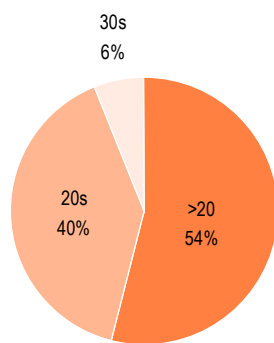
More recently Sahin and Francis (2003) have extended this tradition into an Islamic context by developing the Sahin-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Islam. This instrument has been used to profile the religious attitudes of young Muslims living in England (Sahin, 2002). Against this background, the aim of the present study is to develop a comparable instrument designed to assess attitude toward Hinduism.

Method

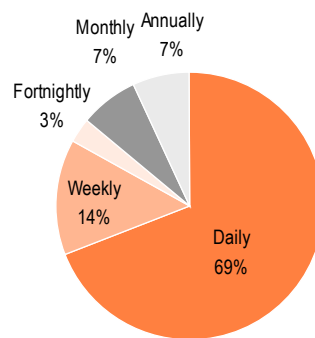
Participants

The questionnaire component of this study was completed by 330 young people between the ages of 12 and 35 attending the Hindu Youth Festival 2001 in London. The sample comprised 172 males and 158 females; 54% were under the age of twenty, 40% were in their twenties, and 6% were in their thirties (mean = 19.8, sd = 5.1). Of the total sample, 69% reported that they engaged in prayer or worship at home on a daily basis, 14% weekly, 3% fortnightly, 7% monthly, and 7% yearly; 44% reported that they visited a place of worship at least on a weekly basis, 12% fortnightly, 31% monthly, and 13% yearly.

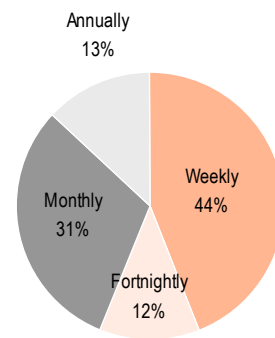
Demographics - Age Distribution



Engaged in Prayer or Home Worship



Visiting a place of worship



Materials and Procedure

Drawing on the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity, a large set of items was compiled to reflect the attitudinal response toward Hinduism. The items were arranged for response on a five-point Likert-type scale: agree strongly, agree, not certain, disagree, and disagree strongly. The questionnaires also sought information about sex and age.

Religious practice was assessed by two questions concerning frequency of prayer or worship at home and frequency of visiting a place of worship. Responses to both questions were assessed on a five-point scale: daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, and yearly.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the item-rest-of-test correlations and the factor loadings on the unrotated solution proposed by principal component analysis for the 19 items of the Santosh-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Hinduism, together with the alpha coefficient and the percentage of variance explained by the factor. Both sets of statistics support the conclusion that the scale is characterised by homogeneity, unidimensionality and internal consistency reliability within the sample. The alpha coefficient is established as 0.89, while the proportion of variance accounted for by the first factor is established as 33%.

Table 1. Scale of attitude toward Hinduism: item-rest-of-test correlations and factor loadings

	Factor loadings	
I find it hard to believe in God*	0.5193	0.6045
Spirituality is important in my life	0.6436	0.7074
I have a close relationship with God	0.6464	0.7247
I find it easy to understand Hinduism	0.3434	0.3924
I think Hindu rituals are a waste of time*	0.3239	0.3793
Knowing about the law of Karma helps me to lead a better life	0.5979	0.6696
I am happy to be a Hindu	0.3034	0.3616
My religion helps me to lead a better life	0.6795	0.7600
I find Hindu scriptures inspiring	0.5301	0.5918
It is easy to understand Hindu rituals	0.2912	0.3241
I benefit from attending services, prayer meetings or places of worship	0.5562	0.6384
Prayer helps me a lot	0.6556	0.7314
I am religious	0.5382	0.6246
Reincarnation gives me hope	0.4094	0.4872
It is important for me to practise my religion/spiritual beliefs	0.6526	0.7430
In my experience meditation does have a positive impact	0.4087	0.4658
I have noticed the benefits of practising yoga	0.2700	0.3119
I think Hindu scriptures are out of date*	0.4179	0.4861
Hinduism is relevant in the modern world	0.4081	0.4823
alpha / % variance	0.8697	32.7%

* These items are reverse-coded

While the formal statistics of reliability are relatively easy to calculate for an attitude scale, the question of assessing validity is more problematic. Steps towards assessing the construct validity of this scale can be made by assessing the extent to which certain predictions about the theoretical variations in attitude scores are reflected empirically (Orton, 1987). While attitudes alone may not be simple or direct predictors of behaviour (Ajzen, 1988; Eiser and van der Pligt, 1988), substantial evidence suggests a relationship between attitude towards religion and religious behaviour, as demonstrated by repeated studies using the Francis scale of attitude toward Christianity among children and adolescents (Francis, 1989). In the present study attitude scores correlated +0.3603 ($p < .001$) with frequency of prayer and worship at home, and +0.3720 with frequency of visiting a place of worship. These statistics support the construct validity of the attitude scale within the sample and clearly indicates that although significantly correlated attitude toward Hinduism and indices of religious behaviour access different aspects of religiosity.

Table 2 presents the mean scale scores recorded on the Scale of Attitude toward Hinduism by sex. These statistics demonstrate that there are no significant differences between the mean attitude scores recorded by males and females in this sample.

Table 2. Mean attitude scores by sex

Group	N	Mean	sd	t	P <
Male	172	76.3	9.9		
Female	158	74.9	9.7	1.3	NS

The finding that there is no significant difference between the attitude scores of males and females in the sample is worthy of further exploration and comment. In their classic review of the social psychology of religion, Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi (1975) conclude that the finding that women are more religious than men is one of the most securely based empirical findings within the psychology of religion. A similar conclusion is drawn in the more recent review by Francis (1997). The problem with this conclusion, however, is that the empirical evidence reviewed is very largely grounded in a Christian context. In their challenge to this conclusion, Loewenthal, MacLeod and Cinnierella (2001) assess gender differences in religious activity across four faith groups in the United Kingdom. Their data demonstrated that there was a differential effect of religious groups on gender differences in religious activity, such that Christian women were slightly more active than men, while Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim women were less active than men. Using attitude as an index of religiosity, studies using the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity consistently have reported higher scores among girls and women than among boys and men (Kay and Francis, 1996). On the other hand, the foundation study reporting on the Katz-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Judaism found higher scores among males than among females (Francis and Katz, 2003) and the foundation study reporting on the Sahin-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Islam also found higher scores among males than among females (Sahin and Francis, 2003). The present finding from the present study concerned with attitude toward Hinduism provides a further challenge to the generalisation of findings in the psychology of religion established in a Christian context to religiosity in general.

Conclusion

The present study has explored the scale properties of the Santosh-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Hinduism among a sample of 330 Hindu young people between the ages of 12 and 35. The data support the unidimensionality, internal consistency reliability and construct validity of this instrument. The scale can, therefore, be recommended for further use and should lead to valuable cross-cultural comparisons in an empirical psychology of religion. A connected programme of empirical research employing this instrument within a Hindu context would be capable of building up a secure knowledge about the empirical correlates of religion comparable with the knowledge generated by the programme of research using Francis' original instrument within a Christian context.

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Mental Health and Religion among Hindu Young People

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A sample of 330 young people attending the Hindu Youth Festival in London completed the Santosh-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Hinduism together with the abbreviated form of the Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire which provides measures of neuroticism and psychoticism. The data indicated that a more positive attitude toward Hinduism was associated with lower psychoticism scores but unrelated to neuroticism scores. There is no evidence, therefore, to associate higher levels of religiosity with poorer mental health among young people within the Hindu community.

Introduction

The psychology of religion has long been concerned with establishing and discussing the relationship between religiosity and mental health. Some psychological traditions, broadly speaking, posit a negative association between religion and mental health (see, for example, Freud, 1950), while other psychological traditions, broadly speaking, posit a positive association between religion and mental health (see, for example, Jung, 1938). Empirical research designed to test these competing theories has been frustrated by two major problems: the problem of defining and operationalizing mental health, and the problem of defining and operationalising religiosity.

One attempt to address these problems has been proposed by Francis and his colleagues in a series of studies which has examined the relationship between Eysenck's dimensional model of personality and attitude toward Christianity. There are two main strengths and one significant weakness to this series of studies. The first strength is that Eysenck's dimensional model of personality (Eysenck and Eysenck, 1985) provides an appropriate way in which to test these two conflicting theories regarding the relationship between psychological health and attitude toward Christianity. Eysenck's dimensional model of personality maintains that abnormal personality is not discrete from, but is continuous with, normal personality. Accordingly neurotic disorders lie at one extreme of a dimension of normal personality, ranging from emotional stability, through emotional lability, to neurotic disorder. Similarly, psychotic disorders lie at one extreme of another dimension of normal personality, ranging from tendermindedness, through toughmindedness, to psychotic disorder. Therefore it is possible to define and operationalize the dimensions of neuroticism and psychoticism so that they appear to be orthogonal and independent of each other.

The second strength is that assessment of the attitudinal dimension of religiosity accesses an aspect of religion which may get closer to the heart of an individual's religiosity than can be achieved by measures of behaviour or belief. Behaviours (like attendance at worship services) may be subject to so many external and contextual constraints. Beliefs may be held in a purely cognitive or cerebral manner. Attitudes, on the other hand, are concerned with deep-seated affective predispositions to respond. As underlying covert predispositions, attitudes are able to exercise both conscious and unconscious influences.

The significant weakness to this series of studies is that it has been conducted largely in a Christian or post-Christian context. The attitudinal dimension of religiosity accessed has been explicitly that of attitude toward Christianity. The aim of the present study is to review the evidence so far available from this body of research conducted in a Christian context and then to extend this research tradition among the Hindu community in England.

Eysenck and Eysenck (1975) defined high neuroticism scorers as being anxious, worrying, moody, and frequently depressed individuals who are likely to sleep badly and to suffer from various psychosomatic disorders. They are seen as overly emotional, reacting too strongly to all sorts of stimuli, and finding it difficult to get back on an even keel after emotionally arousing experiences. Strong reactions interfere with their proper adjustment, making them react in irrational, sometimes rigid ways. Highly neurotic individuals are worriers whose main characteristic is a constant preoccupation with things that might go wrong, and a strong anxiety reaction to these thoughts. A series of studies reported by Francis, Pearson, Carter and Kay (1981), Francis, Pearson and Kay (1983), and Francis and Pearson (1991) examined the relationship between Eysenck's neuroticism scales and the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity. After controlling for the expected sex differences, according to which females score more highly than males on both indices of religiosity (Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi, 1975) and neuroticism (Jorm, 1987), these studies found no significant relationship between neuroticism scores and a positive attitude toward Christianity.

Eysenck and Eysenck (1976) defined high psychoticism scorers as being cold, impersonal, hostile, lacking in sympathy, unfriendly, untrustful, odd, unemotional, unhelpful, lacking in insight, and strange, with paranoid ideas that people are against them. They also use the following descriptors: egocentric, self-centered, impersonal, lacking in empathy, solitary, troublesome, cruel, glacial, inhumane, insensitive, sensation-seeking, aggressive, foolhardy, making fools of others and liking odd and unusual things. Eysenck and

Eysenck (1975) maintained that emotions such as empathy and guilt are characteristically absent in people who score high on measure of psychoticism. In spite of recognized theoretical and empirical difficulties associated with the earlier editions of both the adult (Eysenck, Eysenck and Barrett, 1985) and the junior psychoticism scales (Corulla, 1990), repeated analyses demonstrate a significant negative relationship between psychoticism scores and a positive attitude toward Christianity (Francis and Pearson, 1985; Kay, 1981; Francis, 1992). This finding lends support to the theory that Christianity is associated with higher levels of psychological health and contradicts the theory that Christianity is associated with lower levels of psychological health.

The consensus of these focused analyses is given further support by studies conducted among children, students, and adults, including studies in the UK (Francis, 1991, 1993, 1999; Francis and Bennett, 1992; Carter, Kay and Francis, 1996; Bourke and Francis, 2000; Shuter-Dyson, 2000), Australia and Canada (Francis, Lewis, Brown, Philipchalk and Lester, 1995), Northern Ireland (Lewis and Joseph, 1994; Lewis, 1999, 2000), Republic of Ireland (Maltby, 1997; Maltby and Lewis, 1997), the USA (Lewis and Maltby, 1995; Roman and Lester, 1999), France (Lewis and Francis, 2000), and Greece (Youtika, Joseph and Diduca, 1999). The basic pattern was confirmed that attitude toward Christianity was negatively correlated with psychoticism, but unrelated to either extraversion or neuroticism.

The opportunity to extend this research to the Hindu community has been afforded by the development of the Santosh-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Hinduism (Francis, Santosh, Robbins and Bhanot, 2003) which has operationalised the attitudinal construct employed in Francis' original research in a way appropriate within the Hindu community.

Method

Participants

A sample of 330 young people, between the ages of 12 and 35, attending the Hindu Youth Festival 2001 in London, completed a questionnaire. The sample comprised 172 males and 158 females; 54% were under the age of twenty, 40% were in their twenties, and 6% were in their thirties (mean = 19.8, sd = 5.1).

Materials

Psychoticism and neuroticism were assessed by the two six-item scales proposed by the abbreviated form of the Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Francis, Brown and Philipchalk, 1992). This instrument also contained a six-item measure of extraversion and a six-item lie scale. Each item is assessed on a dichotomous scale: yes and no.

Procedure

Attitude toward Hinduism was assessed by the 19-item Roshan-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Hinduism (Francis, Santosh, Robbins and Bhanot, 2003). The items are concerned with affective responses toward Hindu beliefs, rituals, and scriptures. Each item is assessed on a five-point scale: agree strongly, agree, not certain, disagree, and disagree strongly.

Results

The Santosh-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Hinduism recorded an alpha coefficient of 0.87. The four scales of the abbreviate form of the Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire recorded the following alpha coefficients: neuroticism, 0.67; extraversion, 0.72; psychoticism, 0.47; lie scale, 0.58. The lower alpha coefficient reported by the psychoticism scale is consistent with the known difficulties in operationalising this dimension of personality and with the performance recorded in other studies (Francis, Philipchalk and Brown, 1991).

Table one presents the correlation matrix between attitude toward Hinduism, the four Eysenckian scales and sex. Table two presents the partial correlations between attitude toward Hinduism and the four Eysenckian scales, controlling for sex differences.

Table 1. Correlation matrix

	sex	L	E	P	N
Attitude	-0.0171	+0.0185	-0.0136	-0.1958	-0.0927
NS	NS	NS	.001	NS	
Neuroticism (N)	+0.2191	-0.1962	-0.2669	+0.1218	
.001	.001	.001	.05		
Psychoticism (P)	-0.0410	-0.2948	+0.0220		
NS	.001	NS			
Extraversion (E)	+0.0405	-0.0034			
NS	NS				
Lie scale (L)	+0.0433				
NS					

Table 2. Partial correlations controlling for sex differences

	L	E	P	N
	+0.0292	-0.0152	-0.2031	-0.0763
	NS	.001	NS	
	-0.2133	-0.2878	+0.1313	
	.001	.05		
	-0.3009	-0.0441		
	NS			
	-0.0102			

Conclusion

The correlation matrix and the partial correlations demonstrate that the same pattern of relationship exists between the four Eysenckian scales and attitude toward Hinduism as have been reported in earlier studies between the four Eysenckian scales and attitude toward Christianity. Among Hindu young people higher scores on the Scale of Attitude toward Hinduism are associated with lower psychoticism scores, but unrelated to both neuroticism scores and extraversion scores. In other works, young people within the Hindu community in England who take their religion seriously (in the sense of holding a positive attitude toward Hinduism) show no signs of experiencing poorer mental health and some signs of experiencing better mental health (in terms of lower psychoticism scores), when compared with their peers within the Hindu community who take their religion less seriously (in the sense of holding a less positive attitude toward Hinduism).

The present study has been the first to explore the relationship between attitude toward Hinduism and Eysenck's dimensional model of personality. The generalizability of the findings are restricted by the self-selected nature of the sample and by the poor psychometric performance of the edition of the psychoticism scale employed. Replication studies should attempt to access more representative samples of the Hindu community and employ a longer and more reliable form of the Eysenck psychoticism scale.

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Appendix



Hindu Youth Research Survey 2001

Dear Friend,

We would like you to take part in this Hindu Youth Survey 2001. It is aimed at finding out about your social, cultural and religious beliefs as a Young Hindu.

The information that we collect from yourself and others will contribute to a better understanding of the attitudes and beliefs of Hindu Youth, and help to raise awareness of your views and needs.

We would appreciate it if you could spare a few minutes to answer ALL the questions in this booklet. There are no right or wrong answers, we just want your honest responses.

The results of this survey will be available from the Oxford Centre for and Hindu Studies (www.ochs.com) or the Hindu Youth Festival web site (www.hinduyouthuk.org). If you would like any further information about this research project please e-mail us at research@hinduyouthuk.org.

We hope you find this questionnaire interesting and enjoyable.

Thank you for your help.

Romila and Savita

PS This Hindu Youth Research Survey 2001 is being carried out on behalf of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies and in collaboration with The Welsh National Centre for Religious Education.

First some information about you

1. Date of Birth (DD/MM/YYYY): / /
2. Gender: Female Male
3. (a) City/Town: _____ (b) Postcode:
4. (a) Were you born in the U.K.? Yes No
 (b) If no, please specify country of birth _____
 (c) How many years have you lived in the UK? Years
5. (a) What is your Mother's Country of birth? _____
 (b) If India Please Specify Region _____
6. (a) What is your Father's Country of birth? _____
 (b) If India Please Specify Region _____
7. How many of your grandparents were born in the UK?
 0 1 2 3 4
8. Which of the following Education levels have you obtained?
 none GCSE/O Levels A Level/AS Level
 Degree/HND/GNVQ Post Grad Others (*please specify*)

9. What Occupation are you in or what are you hoping to do after you finish studying?

10. How would you describe your sexuality?
 Heterosexual Homosexual Bisexual Other
11. (a) Do you have a disability? Yes No
 (b) If, please specify: _____

12. (a) Are you a member of any Hindu organisation(s)/group(s)? Yes No

(b) If yes, please specify:

13. Which, if any, caste do you identify with? _____

14. Which Indian language(s) do you speak, read, write?

Language	Speak	Read	Write

Section A:

Please Write in Block Capitals

1. What are your main reasons for attending the festival?

2. Do you describe yourself as a Hindu? Yes No

(a) If yes, what makes you a Hindu?

(b) If no, how do you describe yourself?

3. Do you belong to a particular sect/ group/ *sampradaya*?

e.g. ISKCON, Swaminarayan, Chinmaya Mission, Arya Samaj etc.

4. For you, what are the most important teachings of Hinduism?

5. Which aspects of your life, if any, do your religious beliefs impact on?

Below are a Series of Statements and a Choice of Responses

AS **Agree Strongly**

A **Agree**

NC **Not Certain**

D **Disagree**

DS **Disagree Strongly.**

Please **Circle One** response, for each statement.

Please feel free to add in any further comments after any of the statements (but please write neatly so we can read them, thanks).

Section B: Personal Questions

6. I am religious	AS	A	NC	D	DS
7. Hinduism is a way of life	AS	A	NC	D	DS
8. Hinduism is a Religion	AS	A	NC	D	DS
9. I find it hard to believe in God	AS	A	NC	D	DS
10. Spirituality is important in my life	AS	A	NC	D	DS
11. I have a close relationship with God	AS	A	NC	D	DS
12. I find it is easy to understand Hinduism	AS	A	NC	D	DS
13. Knowing about the law of <i>Karma</i> helps me to lead a better life	AS	A	NC	D	DS
14. I believe I am an eternal Soul	AS	A	NC	D	DS
15. Reincarnation gives me hope	AS	A	NC	D	DS
16. I have had deep spiritual/religious experiences	AS	A	NC	D	DS
17. I feel my life has a sense of purpose	AS	A	NC	D	DS
18. I am happy to be a Hindu	AS	A	NC	D	DS

Section C: Practicing Hinduism

19. It is important for me to practice my religious /spiritual beliefs	AS	A	NC	D	DS
20. My religion helps me to lead a better life.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
21. Being a vegetarian, makes you a good Hindu	AS	A	NC	D	DS
22. In my experience meditation does have a positive impact	AS	A	NC	D	DS
23. I have noticed the benefits of practising yoga	AS	A	NC	D	DS
24. You can drink alcohol does practice Hinduism	AS	A	NC	D	DS
25. I believe I will attain <i>moksha</i> (liberation from the cycle of birth and death), by practising my religion	AS	A	NC	D	DS
26. I think it is difficult to attain <i>moksha</i> (Liberation)	AS	A	NC	D	DS

Hindu Scriptures

27. Which of the following Hindu scriptures: (a) are you familiar with, (b) understand (c) have read/studied (d) is/are relevant to your life?

Scriptures	I am familiar with	I understand	I have read /studied	Are relevant to my life
The Bhagavad Gita				
The Ramayan				
The Vedas				
The Upanishads				
The Manusmriti				
Other				

28. I find Hindu scriptures inspiring	AS	A	NC	D	DS
29. I think Hindu Scriptures are out of date	AS	A	NC	D	DS

Hindu Rituals

30. It is easy to understand Hindu Rituals	AS	A	NC	D	DS
31. I think Hindu Rituals are a waste of time	AS	A	NC	D	DS
32. By worshipping Deities I am directly worshipping God	AS	A	NC	D	DS
33. I benefit from attending services, prayer meetings or places of worship	AS	A	NC	D	DS
34. I pray at home regularly	AS	A	NC	D	DS
35. Prayer helps me a lot	AS	A	NC	D	DS

Languages

36. It is important to know an Indian language in order to understand Hinduism	AS	A	NC	D	DS
37. It is necessary to know Sanskrit to understand Hinduism	AS	A	NC	D	DS
38. I would learn Sanskrit, if it was convenient for me to study it	AS	A	NC	D	DS
39. It is easy to get good information about Hinduism	AS	A	NC	D	DS

Section D: Relationships & Friendships

40. It is important for me to have a Hindu life-partner	AS	A	NC	D	DS
41. I would follow my religion even if I had a non-Hindu life-partner	AS	A	NC	D	DS
42. It would be important for me to have a Hindu marriage ceremony	AS	A	NC	D	DS
43. I have had/would have an arranged marriage	AS	A	NC	D	DS
44. It is better to be divorced than to be in a bad marriage	AS	A	NC	D	DS
45. I would only have a 'relationship' with a Hindu	AS	A	NC	D	DS
46. I do not think it is wrong to have pre-marital sex	AS	A	NC	D	DS
47. I think homosexuality is acceptable	AS	A	NC	D	DS
48. Using contraceptives is okay	AS	A	NC	D	DS
49. Abortion is acceptable and does not conflict with my religious beliefs	AS	A	NC	D	DS
50. I prefer to have friends from a similar religious/cultural background	AS	A	NC	D	DS
51. It is/would be important to me to teach my children about Hinduism	AS	A	NC	D	DS

Section E: Gender Roles

52. Hindu men and women have equal status in:					
a. Hindu Texts and Rituals	AS	A	NC	D	DS
b. My family	AS	A	NC	D	DS
c. The British Media	AS	A	NC	D	DS
d. The Indian Media	AS	A	NC	D	DS
e. The Hindu Community	AS	A	NC	D	DS
53. Hindu women are responsible for passing on Hinduism to the next generation	AS	A	NC	D	DS
54. I know that Hindu women in particular, need to be protected from pressure to convert to other religions	AS	A	NC	D	DS

55. I think it is the duty of Hindu men to protect Hinduism	AS	A	NC	D	DS
56. I understand why women should not participate in Hindu rituals while they are menstruating	AS	A	NC	D	DS
57. It is fair that Hindu women cannot participate in Hindu rituals while menstruating	AS	A	NC	D	DS
58. 'Raksha Bandhan' is a significant and meaningful festival for me	AS	A	NC	D	DS

Section F: Family & Community

59. I follow my family's religious practice.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
60. The caste system is important to my family	AS	A	NC	D	DS
61. The caste system does influence some of the decisions I make in my life	AS	A	NC	D	DS
62. It is important for me to be part of a Hindu Community	AS	A	NC	D	DS
63. I feel I am part of a large Hindu community	AS	A	NC	D	DS
64. It is important for Hindus to work with people of other religions	AS	A	NC	D	DS
65. It is easy to combine work and family life and follow/practice Hinduism	AS	A	NC	D	DS

Section G: Society

Hinduism in the Modern world

66. Hinduism is relevant in the modern world	AS	A	NC	D	DS
67. Hinduism is better than other religions	AS	A	NC	D	DS
68. It is important for British Hindus to link up with other Hindus around the world	AS	A	NC	D	DS
69. I am concerned about Hindu Human Rights	AS	A	NC	D	DS
70. I think Hindu Human rights are ignored	AS	A	NC	D	DS
71. I feel that Hindus do not stand up for themselves	AS	A	NC	D	DS

Hinduism and Politics

72. I keep up with political issues/events that effect Hindus in Britain or Overseas AS A NC D DS

73. I would like Hindus to have political representation in Britain AS A NC D DS

Hinduism and the Media

74. I think the media positively represents Hinduism AS A NC D DS

75. Hindus are poorly portrayed in the media AS A NC D DS

76. The media represented Hinduism/Hindus fairly in;

a. Kumbha mela AS A NC D DS

b. Ganesh and the 'milk miracle' AS A NC D DS

c. Goodness Gracious Me AS A NC D DS

d. Soaps AS A NC D DS

77. The following give a good source of information about Hinduism and Hindus.

a. Local Radio AS A NC D DS

b. National Radio AS A NC D DS

c. British Press AS A NC D DS

d. Community Press AS A NC D DS

e. International Papers AS A NC D DS

78. I have found the Internet a useful source for information about Hinduism AS A NC D DS

79. I use the Internet to connect up with other Hindus AS A NC D DS

Hinduism and Science

80. There is conflict between modern science and Hinduism AS A NC D DS

81. There is too much superstition in Hinduism AS A NC D DS

82. I believe in magic (eg *tantra, jadoo, nazar* etc) AS A NC D DS

83. Ayurvedic medicine can contribute to healthcare today AS A NC D DS

Hinduism in British Society

84. I know from experience that young Hindus do face problems in the U.K. AS A NC D DS

85. I support the idea of having State-run Hindu Schools AS A NC D DS

86. There is less interest in Hinduism amongst the 2nd and 3rd generations AS A NC D DS

87. There is less of an interest in Hinduism in India today AS A NC D DS

88. I feel that conversion of Hindu Youth to other Religions is a genuine problem. AS A NC D DS

Section I: More on Your Beliefs and Practices

Please Write in Block Capitals

89. How often do you pray/worship at home? (Please Indicate)

Daily Weekly Fortnightly Monthly Yearly

90. How often do you visit a place of worship? (Please Indicate)

Daily Weekly Fortnightly Monthly Yearly

Please Specify Place(s) of Worship

91. For you, what are the main difficulties with understanding and practising Hindu Rituals/Ceremonies? e.g. Language, Length or Content of Ritual (Please Specify)

92. Which Deities do you identify with most?

e.g. Krishna, Durga, Shiva, Kali, Ganesh, Hanuman etc. (Please Specify)

93. Which recent historical and contemporary personalities do you identify with most?

e.g. Vivekananda, Morari Bapu, Sai Baba, Gandhi, Aurobindo, Shivaji etc.(Please Specify)

94. Who has influenced you most in your religious beliefs and practices?

e.g. Guru, family, friends, organisation etc. (Please Specify)

Section J: Your Views on the Needs of Hindu Youth

95. What is the hardest thing about growing up in the U.K?

96. What are the advantages and disadvantages if any, of being a Hindu?

97. What changes would you like to see for Hindus in Britain?

98. What contribution as a Hindu, do you think you could make to British society?

99. What can Hindu Organizations in Britain and Overseas do to help Hindu Youth?

100. In your opinion, what is the best way to get more Hindu Youth interested in Hinduism?

Last few questions about you

Please answer each question by ticking 'Yes' or the 'No'. Work quickly and do not think too long about the exact meaning of the questions.

- | | | | |
|----|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Does your mood often go up and down? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | Are you a talkative person? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | Would being in debt worry you? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | Are you rather lively? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 | Were you ever greedy by helping yourself to more than your share of anything? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 | Would you take drugs which may have strange or dangerous effects? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 | Have you ever blamed someone for doing something you knew was really your fault? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8 | Do you enjoy co-operating with others? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9 | Do you often feel 'fed-up'? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 | Have you ever taken anything (even a pin or button) that belonged to someone else? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11 | Would you call yourself a nervous person? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12 | Do you think marriage is old-fashioned and should be done away with? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13 | Can you easily get some life into a rather dull party? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14 | Are you a worrier? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15 | Do you tend to keep in the background on social occasions? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16 | Do you try to be rude to people? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17 | Have you ever cheated at a game? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18 | Do you suffer from 'nerves'? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19 | Have you ever taken advantage of someone? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21 | Do you often feel lonely? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22 | Would you like other people to be afraid of you? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23 | Do other people think of you as being very lively? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24 | Do you always practise what you preach? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please Check to see that you have Answered all the Questions

Thank you for taking the Time to Complete this Questionnaire

If you would like to take part in further research, please fill in your contact details below. These will be detached from your responses.

Your name:

Your postal address:

Your contact telephone:

Your e-mail address:

