

## Repositório ISCTE-IUL

---

Deposited in *Repositório ISCTE-IUL*:

2022-11-09

Deposited version:

Accepted Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Cachado, R. & Lourenço, I. (2020). Mother Mary in the Hindu pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families. In Ruben Gowricharn (Ed.), *Shifting transnational bonding in Indian diaspora*. (pp. 123-141).: Routledge.

Further information on publisher's website:

<https://www.routledge.com/Shifting-Transnational-Bonding-in-Indian-Diaspora/Gowricharn/p/book/9781138346840>

Publisher's copyright statement:

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Cachado, R. & Lourenço, I. (2020). Mother Mary in the Hindu pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families. In Ruben Gowricharn (Ed.), *Shifting transnational bonding in Indian diaspora*. (pp. 123-141).: Routledge.. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with the Publisher's Terms and Conditions for self-archiving.

---

### Use policy

Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a link is made to the metadata record in the Repository
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

---

## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

**Abstract:** The South Asian diaspora in Portugal is diverse in nationalities and religious practices. The most prominent population is the Hindu-Gujarati, living in Portugal since the late 1970s. This migration was boosted by the decolonization of a former Portuguese colony, Mozambique, to where Indians had migrated from India. Anchored in long-term fieldwork, this chapter concentrates on Hindu practices that incorporate elements of Portuguese Catholicism, specifically a representation of Mother Mary, Our Lady of Fatima. These practices point to hybridization processes among transnational communities and, in that sense, to challenge dominant visions about Hindu diaspora. To illustrate our argument, we will present this population and its cultural practices, to better understand this interest on Our Lady of Fatima, a Portuguese title for the Virgin Mary.<sup>1</sup> We will specifically make an account of the forms this worship takes.

**Keywords:** Hindu-Gujarati; Portugal; hybridization; religious practices

Running Head Right-hand: Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon

Running Head Left-hand: Rita Cachado and Inês Lourenço

7

## **Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families**

*Rita Cachado and Inês Lourenço*

---

### **Introduction**

---

Gujarati populations throughout the world can be found in diverse East African countries, including South Africa; and in the UK, the US, and in many other countries with less representation. The Portuguese branch of the Gujarati diaspora comprises around thirty thousand people from Gujarati origin living in Portugal, as well as an unknown number of other South Asian residents. South Asian migrations to Portugal are plural,<sup>2</sup> but the Gujarati population is the most stable; thousands of families arrived from Mozambique in the late 1970s and 1980s. The amount of literature produced about this vivid population is high considering the small number of researchers committed to diaspora and transnational studies in Portugal. Nevertheless, despite exceptions, most of the publications are in Portuguese, which is the most probable reason why this population is often forgotten in the international literature about Hindu-Gujarati diaspora.

This chapter presents this transnational population and the literature already produced. Portuguese Hindus reveal cultural specificities as other diasporas according to their migration histories and trajectories. These cultural specificities challenge dominant views on the Hindu diaspora, and confirm the perspective of internal hybridity among the Hindu diaspora, influenced by phenomena such as globalization, glocalization, and variable acculturation and performance

processes. Beyond theoretical frameworks that attribute to the Indian diaspora's almost immobile patterns, the more detailed ethnographic observation may reveal interesting *nuances* that allow us to question this rigidity of Indian diaspora models in general, and Hindu diaspora in particular. For this, it is essential to pay attention to the individual diaspora histories (Mishra 2005: 7).

This chapter presents the devotion to a Portuguese representation of the Virgin Mary as a characteristic of Portuguese Hindu diaspora, clearly visible in their cultural and religious, as well as consumptions, practices (see Gowricharn 2017). This means that the consumption practices of the Portuguese Hindus fuse with original Indian elements with cultural and religious regalia, such as the case of the Lady of Fatima. These are evident not only in Portugal but also in other transnational contact points in this Gujarati community, such as India, Mozambique, and the United Kingdom.

---

## The Portuguese-Gujarati in context

---

The first studies on this population are about Indian merchants both in Mozambique and in Portugal. Susana Bastos opened the field, providing the first studies about Hindu families living in Portugal (Bastos 1990; Bastos and Bastos 2001), and published the first paper in English about the symbolic capital of the UK for Portuguese Hindu-Gujaratis (Bastos 2005). Business networks between Mozambique and Portugal were also the focus of first studies (Ávila and Alves 1993); a topic that remained important, until nowadays, as in an extended study about the socio-economic historical context of Hindu-Gujaratis in the diaspora (Dias 2016), where the author defends the significance of economic aspects over the cultural practices. Also, geographer Jorge Malheiros provided an early overview of South Asian settling modes in the Lisbon metropolitan area, and integration processes including trading traditions (1996).

After these first impressions on the Hindu-Gujarati families in Portugal, the attention became focused on specific topics such as religious music (Roxo 2010); gender and diaspora (Lourenço 2011), housing (Cachado 2011), health (Monteiro 2007), education (Seabra 2010), and

## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

family (Lourenço and Cachado 2012). These authors made fieldwork in India, Portugal, and/or the UK and Mozambique (Cachado 2012). This rather rich literature noted the significant transnational activities of Hindu-Gujaratis in Portugal. They noticed the cultural practices such as religious music groups (Roxo 2010) and ritual practices that must be performed in Mozambique and in India (Bastos and Bastos 2001; Lourenço 2011); and the adaptation processes to social policies such as housing and new waves of migration (Cachado 2014). In sum, the history, economy, and socio-cultural contexts of Hindu-Gujaratis in Portugal and in the other poles of diaspora (India, Mozambique, and United Kingdom), have already been documented, mostly in Portuguese.

The former studies about this population contributed, then, to literature in post-colonial studies, south Asian diaspora, and transnationality studies. Although transnationality remains a difficult concept (see Introduction to this volume), the basic characteristic first advanced by Basch, Schiller, and Blanc back in 1994 of “living with their feet in two societies” (1994: 7) remains, and was enriched in the case we bring forth in this chapter. The Hindu families we focus on live *with their feet in two or more societies* so to say – India, Mozambique, Portugal, and United Kingdom. Beyond actual “living in” (ideally splitting their time through the year in different countries), they engage in a particular cultural practice that can be noticed in every home, which is the devotion to Our Lady of Fatima. The final aim of this chapter is to challenge the dominant views about Hindu diaspora, mostly focusing on Hindu elements (Knott 1986, 1987; Williams 1992; Venkatachari 1996; Kurien 1998; Coward 2000; Eck 2000).

There are other situations of hybridization amongst Hindu diasporas: cultural expressions such as dance performances (Chacko and Menon 2011; Drissel 2011; Roy 2013) and ethnolinguistic references (Eisenlohr 2006). But in what constitutes religion, some diasporas created hyphenated identities (see Persaud 2013), particularly Hindu-Caribbean, where Hinduism and Christianity intersect in rituals and in funeral practices (Manian and Bullock 2016). This continuity between Christianity and Hinduism is also found in India, where both religious traditions coexist and contaminate each other. This is the case of Goan Christianity, resulting

## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

from the long Portuguese colonial presence in Goa. According to Perez (2011), within the clear distinction between Hinduism and Christianity in Goa, and the opposite theory of syncretism connecting them, it is possible to affirm the existence of a “system, produced by relations that are neither stable nor permanent in time, with exclusions and inclusions, with attractions and rejections, which sometimes even constitute discreet communalism, but which, above all, is composed of great continuities and contiguities” (Perez 2011: 151–152). This is the perspective adopted by the author to understand the phenomena of incorporating elements of Hinduism by Catholicism and, to a lesser extent, the absorption of traces of Catholicism by Hinduism, demonstrated by an “ethnography of the Goa religion” (Perez 2011: 152). Thus, there is a particular form of hybridization between Hinduism and Christianity in the Portuguese context, considering its colonial past to the contemporary Portuguese society.

Coming back to the Portuguese Hindu-Gujarati population, they live in Portugal, the UK, Mozambique, and India. The population in Portugal has been living in Lisbon for the last 35 years. Some people chose to live a part of the year in one country and the other part in another. What links this population together is their Portuguese passport and/or the Portuguese language, learnt either in India before 1961,<sup>3</sup> in Mozambique, or in Portugal for those who were born there. For the Portuguese context, as told before, most families living in Portugal came during the civil war in Mozambique, between the late 1970s and the early 1980s. Before that, the Portuguese Hindu-Gujarati families were mixed with other Hindu-Gujaratis in both Gujarat and Eastern African countries, mostly Tanzania and Uganda, formelrly under British colonial rule. During the East African migration, marriages with men living in Mozambique generated children who attended Portuguese language schools.

While living in “two or more countries,” this transnational population is also a population that lives mainly in urban areas. Although the national paradigm to study transnationality remains central, the urban paradigm is also important (Schiller and Çaglar 2011), because this population choose big cities to live in; urban policies define the places where they live; and it is where their sociabilities are thriving (Cachado 2014). In Lisbon the urban sociopolitical environment is

## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

central, because work opportunities and cultural networks are provided mainly in the metropolitan area. In the UK, the urban factor is even more significant for Portuguese Hindu-Gujarati families. They move mostly between cities (Southall and Wembley in London, Leicester and Reading), where work, religion, and other cultural networks are strong and where education opportunities have a symbolic capital among the community (Bastos 2005).

In Portugal, most Portuguese Hindu-Gujaratis who came in the late 1970s and early 1980s live in the Lisbon metropolitan area. Considering religion, it's difficult to establish the number of Hindu public temples in Great Lisbon. Recently (March 2017), one of our interlocutors pointed out five temples, where the Hare Krishna (ISKON, , International Society for Krishna Consciousness) and the Swaminarayan Temple were included. The other three are well known by the families living in Portugal since the early 1980s. In 1983, in addition to their small domestic shrines, the Hindu population from a so called shanty town, started the construction of the Jay Ambé Temple at the same time as they were building their own houses. The family who manages the temple brought a statue (murti, believed to contain the divine essence) of the goddess Ambé from a previous temple in Mozambique. This was the first Hindu temple built in Lisbon, and remained as the only public temple until 1998. The temple was relocated in 2004 to a nearby social neighbourhood, where Hindu families had been rehoused in 2002. The temple was attended in every religious calendar event for people living in the neighbourhood, and other families living across the Lisbon metropolitan area.

In 1985, the "Hindu Community of Portugal" was formally set up and immediately embarked on building the Radha-Krishna Temple in Lumiar, completed in 1998. This is the most "high-profile" Hindu place of worship in Portugal, located close to central Lisbon. This temple is not located in a Hindu residential area; Hindu families come from various points in the Lisbon metropolitan area to attend ceremonies. The temple complex houses a big hall which is often rented to perform marriages and other ceremonies.

Completing this overview of Hindu religious diversity, the Shiva Temple was launched in Santo António dos Cavaleiros in 2001, but the families that settled there had made creative

alternatives to a formal temple. There was a group of private homes where specific rituals were commonly performed; there was an old school building and a city hall that were often rented or lent to bigger events. The process to build the temple began in 1991 when the Shiva Temple Social Solidarity Association was officially recognised as representing the Hindu residents of Santo António dos Cavaleiros. About 10 years later, it had fulfilled its mission of building its own place of worship. The Shiva Temple nowadays is aiming to build a formal temple format.

So the Hindu religious landscape (Peach and Gale 2002) in Great Lisbon is relatively small when compared to the Mozambican or British cities where Hindu-Gujarati populations live.

A note on methods before presenting the devotion to Our Lady of Fatima. Our findings come from long-term ethnographic fieldwork. Trained as anthropologists, we engaged in participant observation for pursuing our research, which we systematically registered in field notes (Sanjek 1990) and then indexed into analytic categories (John and Johnson 1990). We also conducted structured and semi-structured interviews (Burgess 1984: 112) the past 18 years, as well as semi-structured interviews conducted recently (2017–2018) specifically to this topic. But our findings about the devotion to Our Lady of Fatima began very early in our research<sup>4</sup> – through the years, field notes include descriptions of this practice at home and through excursions, which we will describe later. Considering ethnographic fieldwork, data was mostly collected through informal conversations with privileged interlocutors (see Foote-Whyte 1943). We have conducted fieldwork in Portugal (Great Lisbon), the UK (Great London and Leicester), India (Diu), and Mozambique (Maputo). Our fieldwork included accompanying families in diverse journeys. Multi-sited ethnography, as Marcus coined it (Marcus 1995), was extremely useful to observe, in practice, the transnational links of our interlocutors in Lisbon, as well as their bonding relations to their place of origin.

---

## The devotion to Our Lady of Fátima

---



## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

Highlighting the idea of diversity of Indian transnational communities, this analysis intends to illustrate how Portuguese Hindus negotiate between the adoption of elements from the host society and bonding with India. This is a clear example of how hybridity and ethnicization are not exclusive; thus, contributing to their adaptations as a form of consolidation of their territorial bonds with their homeland. These phenomena evidence the shift from the old ideas of Indian Diaspora to a vision that privileges transnational connections across the world.

The religious depth found in this community's cultural reference – Hinduism – is not limited to Hindu deities' worship and to the Hindu-Gujarati calendar. Portuguese Hindu-Gujarati families have also approached the Catholic calendar and are particularly devoted to Our Lady of Fatima. This representation of Mother Mary is adopted as an image to Hindu domestic shrines and is worshiped daily, along with Hindu deities. Moreover, Hindu families go at least once a year to the Sanctuary in Fátima (about 120 km north of Lisbon), both in large group excursions or in family journeys.

The cult of Our Lady of Fatima arises from the belief in the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Fatima (a region of central Portugal) during the year of 1917. Devotees believe that three children – three shepherds – had six visions of the Virgin, who gave them a message of peace at the time of World War I, asking them to pray the rosary for world peace and for the conversion of the sinners. The last apparition resulted in what was called the “miracle of the sun,” to which about fifty thousand people attended, and that had been promised to the children by the Virgin in the previous apparitions. In these apparitions she asked the three children to build a chapel in her honour. This place later became the current Sanctuary of Fatima, which includes besides this original chapel – the chapel of the apparitions – two basilicas. It soon became a centre of pilgrimage, receiving visitors from all over the world – not exclusively Catholics – and nowadays is a major centre of international religious tourism.

One of the great connections between popular religion and the Catholic Church is the cult of the saints and the cult of the Virgin Mary. In Portugal, a multiplicity of chapels in honour of Our Lady have proliferated, with the most varied names, often erected on the top of hills. Being

## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

the Portuguese popular religion founded on the image of the mother (Espírito Santo 1990: 16), the proximity to the cult of Mary is privileged, which is shown in the relevance of the devotion to Our Lady of Fatima in the practice of popular Christianity in Portugal. As Fortuna and Ferreira refer: “curses and graces, blessings and vows, together with other verbal expressions such as ‘asking,’ ‘praying,’ or ‘giving thanks’” (Fortuna and Ferreira 1993: 76) are the main elements that accompany the pilgrimage to Fatima. Fatima is known for the promises performed by the devotees, who make requests to the Virgin Mary. In thanking for the graces granted, the pilgrims make offers (money, candles) and sacrifices, the most emblematic being the pilgrimage on foot to the Sanctuary or the kneeling circumambulation of the enclosure.

The same logic of request and return is invoked by the pujari of Siva Temple in Portugal, when asked about Fatima devotion:

We live in Portugal. If we can convey the way for love are the sacred books and the Sanatana Dharma. The message of Fatima is also of love, of affection. That is why we are going on a pilgrimage to Fatima. That is why nowadays, we go in yatra to Fátima, praying and singing religious chants. There, near Fatima, we pray. Our prayers are always rewarded. That is why I appeal to all those who live in Portugal – whether of any religion – who pray with great faith to Fatima to be rewarded.

(Chandresh Sastriji, July 2017)

The universalist character of the pilgrimage (Turner and Turner 1978: xxix) allows us to find some continuities between the practices of popular Catholicism and Hinduism. Thus, this sharing of elements can be two fold, in the Portuguese Hindus’ perspective on Fatima: Fatima as Mother Goddess and Fatima as sacred ground, tirtha.<sup>5</sup> Let us consider the following observations:

## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

For us, to come here, to this country, in Europe. . . . We Hindus have a quality in us that is to respect religion. When you go to India, you go to the temples, right? And you have your belief in something, your family and friends will tell you: ‘This is a great Mandir and is quite famous,’ Fatima is a worldwide phenomenon, because everyone from all over the world goes to Fatima. We have to do yatra, you know . . . a pilgrimage. There are very sacred sites. For us, going to Fatima is like a pilgrimage. We can not go to India regularly; so, we can go to Fatima. It is a very sacred place [the most important place] is near the chapel [of the apparitions].

(female, 44 years old, March 2018)

We see from earlier how the ritual mechanisms typical of the Fatima Sanctuary show the sharing of certain elements, common to the practice of the popular Catholic and Hindu religions. Let us now detain on the centrality of these two elements: Fatima is both the name of a popular saint, and the name of a pilgrimage town, so Fatima is considered a mother (goddess) and a sacred place (tirtha). Further, we will continue to observe the process of acquisition of faith in Fatima and how the mechanism of promise, typical of Portuguese popular Catholicism, is easily adopted by the Hindu believer:

The Hindus who come here to Portugal: it is always said to them that they must believe in it [Fatima], with her, things go well, for it is quite sacred and that is how you know it – begins with the in-laws, now our children – is something that is put into our minds. And we began to believe her as our goddess. We all have a Fatima at home, and we believe in it. I believe her so much!

(female, 44 years old, March 2018)

There is one last observation that allows us to confirm a strong connection between the two belief systems, Hinduism and Catholicism: the popular belief in Fatima as a saint. Despite the canons of the Catholic Church, according to which believers should not “ask” directly to Our

## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

Lady, but rather require her to intercede with her son, Jesus, Fatima acquires an autonomous status, close to the associated maternal archetypes of the ancient cult of the great goddess that Mary seems to replace (Espírito Santo 1990: 101). The believers, Catholics and Hindus, ask directly to Fatima, as a saint and as a divine mother, to fulfil their requests. This fact leads us to understand with relative ease the proximity to the worship of the Hindu mother goddess, remarking, therefore, the synthesis between Fatima and the Hindu mother goddess.

---

### **Public consumption of Fatima by Hindus**

---

According to Turner and Turner “at the heart of the pilgrimage is the folk, the ordinary people who choose a ‘materialist’ expression of their religion” (Turner and Turner 1978: xiii). Thus, material culture is inseparable from Hindu devotion to Fatima. Statues of Our Lady of Fatima are converted into *murtis* and they can be seen in domestic Hindu temples. Our ethnographic data shows that statues of Fatima are not only found in domestic Hindu temples in Portugal, but also in other contexts with which this population establish ties. Hence, the same phenomenon was observed in Diu, India, as well as in the United Kingdom and in Mozambique. Advantage is often taken on trips between the various poles of the diaspora to purchase representations of Our Lady of Fatima in varying sizes, preferably bought in Fatima, but also from shops selling Portuguese products in either Portugal or the United Kingdom. Fatima items constitute highly valued offers to distant relatives.

During our ethnographic fieldwork, we noticed over the years that families and sometimes large groups of 30 to 50 people go to the Fatima Sanctuary to worship Our Lady of Fatima at its original place. Along with other devotees, they purchase candles in various sizes to offer a permanent flame (see Figure 7.1) and they drink the water from the fountain in the Sanctuary. Worshippers take the opportunity to walk around and buy souvenirs (see Figure 7.2); the most important souvenirs are the Lady of Fatima representations and also the water from the Sanctuary.

## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

**[Insert 15040-3116-007\_Figure\_001 Here]**

**Figure 7.1** Devotee places a candle as a permanent flame. Fatima, Portugal (September 2004)

*Source:* Author's own collection

**[Insert 15040-3116-007\_Figure\_002 Here]**

**Figure 7.2** Souvenir shops. Fatima, Portugal (September 2017)

*Source:* Krishna Carsane

Material culture is a central axis through which communities construct, reconstruct, and reproduce their identity references, often associated with symbolic objects of extreme relevance (Miller 1998, 2005, 2009). The relationship between migratory processes and material culture is clear, and the movement of populations according to the most diverse circumstances is inevitably associated with issues of materiality. Basu and Coleman (2008), analysing how migrant worlds constitute fragile and fragmented sets of immaterial and material resources, demonstrated how transnational mobility affects the symbolic value of travel objects, and how they can also assume different values in migration processes: renegotiation, agency, and ambiguity (Basu and Coleman 2008: 326).

Along with the process of identity maintenance through certain symbolic objects despite the length of time diasporic groups live away from “home,” in the Indian diaspora market (Gowricharn 2017), there are inevitable appropriations of cultural and religious elements.

The processes of adaptation to the host societies sometimes lead to changes. As Williams demonstrated (1992), the strategies of adaptation to the host societies developed by the Hindus in the US were characterised by an adjustment of religious beliefs and practices. These phenomena, however, are often visible in the transformations of Hinduism itself, such as the adoption of pan-Hindu perspectives, for instance the adoption of the *Bhagavad-gita* as a central text, or discourses around the universalist notion of Sanatana Dharma. These are examples of what Williams called the “ecumenical strategy” (1992). The case presented here, however, refers to an adoption of a

## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

Catholic cult – with specifics of popular Portuguese Catholicism – into Hindu practices, such as the daily cult and the pilgrimage (*yatra*). It is in this sense that Our Lady of Fatima is included in the temples and in the pantheon of the Portuguese Hindus.

The links between the diaspora and this consumption and transaction of Our Lady of Fatima representations are easy to find. On the one hand these items are, as other items – such as Hindu deities' representations and national specific food items – part of the material culture that the Hindu diaspora displays (Rosales 2010). The United Kingdom and India provide cloth and Hindu deity representations to the other poles, Mozambique and Portugal. Mozambique is known for specific food items such as cooked peanuts, raw cashews, and material culture (Capulana cloths, ivory crafts, among other). Portugal is known for Our Lady of Fatima items. Before the year 2000, there were more specific items from each of these countries, but after that, when the open market gained a new impetus, the national specific items transacted between families in different diaspora countries became less in quantity. Our Lady of Fátima representations and other Fatima souvenirs are typical gifts to offer from Portugal to other countries where Portuguese Hindu relatives live.

Fatima enters the circuit of religious Hindu consumption, necessarily ethnic, in the sense presented by Gowricharn (2017), demonstrating how, despite a clear maintenance of a common taste, local influences also lead to specificities, according to the characteristics of the host society.

Pilgrimages to Fatima Sanctuary deserve further attention. As is known by many scholars, and as we also witnessed in the field, excursions are very common among Hindu families. It is part of the religious life, to make religious journeys – *yatras*. It is virtually impossible to avoid the parallel between *yatra* and the Fatima pilgrimage. Moreover, the value attributed to the pope is significant, especially if the pope visits the Fatima Sanctuary (the Hindu-Gujarati population in Portugal has known three popes since the 1980s).

While visiting the other poles of the diaspora, Portuguese Hindus go to the existing sacred places. In our fieldwork stays in India, Mozambique, and the UK, we observed the regular journeys made to sacred places. Not only Hindu temples and specific shrines, but also specific

## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

temples with a Hindu (or pan-Hindu) influence, such as the Swaminarayan Temple in Wembley, and the Skanda Valley in Wales, a religious complex run by English (non-Asian) priests. This is the possible yatra in the UK for Portuguese Hindu-Gujaratis. In India, families take the opportunity of making a few days' journey to visit main Hindu temples in Gujarat, where a passage in the Virpur Hindu Temple complex is obligatory, as well as in the neighbor state of Maharashtra, to Sirdhi Sai Baba Temple. In Portugal, Hindu families commonly go to one single temple in their daily lives, but go to the three existing temples for larger ceremonies. And what is also common is to visit the Fatima Sanctuary. They go there to pray for their relatives, and they bring their transnational relatives to the Sanctuary when they visit Portugal – even if the visit lasts a couple of days, a visit to Fatima Sanctuary is felt as obligatory.

This phenomenon which we are including in the yatra concept can be seen as part of the Portuguese “integration” process but should not be thought of as a conversion to the Portuguese cultural patterns. Other authors alert for this pitfall: “Fatima can thus be incorporated into the daily lives of Portuguese-speaking Hindus, without requiring a reorganisation or transformation of the referential symbolic organisers of her non-Catholic devotees” (Bastos 2005: 192).

Nevertheless, the adoption of Our Lady of Fatima as a manifestation of the Hindu mother goddess is certainly the most emblematic example of Hinduism's adaptation process to the Portuguese society, and this adaptation found in ritual practices suggest the flexibility of Hinduism that is clearer in a diaspora situation. What follows is a fieldnote description of one of these pilgrimages:

Today is *amas*, the last day of the month Sravan, the most auspicious month of the Hindu calendar, and it is also the day chosen for a pilgrimage – *yatra* – to Fátima. The departure begins with lives to the gods and Our Lady of Fatima: ‘Jay Ambe ma! Jay Mataji! Jay Fatima mataji!’ When we arrive at Fatima one of the pilgrims announces to the bus microphone that it is time to do ‘Fátima darshan.’<sup>6</sup> The first step is to go and buy candles. M. looks for a place that sells wax body parts to fulfil a promise she made. After throwing the candles into the fire, the flames rise.

## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

Then they buy holy water, along with many images of Fatima, and after that everyone wants to drink water from a drinking fountain.

(Fieldnotes, September 7th, 2002)

From this passage, it's clear that Hindu devotees adopt elements of Portuguese popular religiosity associated with Fatima (candles, promises, holy water), while developing a process of Hinduization of these Catholic practices. The flames that emanate from the place where the candle is placed are a manifestation of Agni (sacred fire, the Vedic fire god of Hinduism).

By the same token, water, one of the central elements of Hindu ritual practice, must be consumed. The referred fountain, which for devout Catholics only serves to quench their thirst, is for the Hindus a source of what is considered sacred water, because it comes from an equally sacred place. Another passage from a family visit to the Sanctuary, also illustrates the type of steps given during a visit:

We arrived at Fátima by 10.30h. . . . I went with C. to buy a full body wax doll (1f. tall), which N., her mother, wanted to give as a promise. We went to buy candles. Presently you can only buy one candle per person. The full body or parts of body are left in another area. After the candle burning, we went to the water fountain to drink water and C. also filled a bottle. Following the example of other devotees, N. knelt and gave seven steps in this body position. After that, we went to the shopping area.

(Fieldnotes, June 4th, 2007)

In a recent organised excursion (September 2017) by bus, the same steps were taken by the devotees: almost everybody bought candles and artificial body parts made of wax (feet, heads, intestines, for example) to be healed by the Virgin; went to the merchandising area to buy souvenirs; gathered in the fountain to drink water and fill bottles; visited the rest of the Sanctuary; gathered in the end for a final picnic. In sum, there is a religious aspect to be



## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

interpreted, but these journeys are also leisure ones, where one takes time to have a different day and to be with relatives and friends.

The devotion of Fatima can be understood by the scope of the adaptation process to the Portuguese context, and goes further than those described in other contexts of the Hindu diaspora, studied by authors like Williams (1992) or Hinnels (1998, 2000).<sup>7</sup> We found in the field frequent translations of Hindu terms from Gujarati into Portuguese, such as *padre* (priest) for *pujari* or *sashtriji*, or *igreja* (church) for temple; ideas are culturally translated and manifested in expressions such as

We also have many of Our Ladies: Our Lady Of heaven, Our Lady of the sea . . . this [I am talking about] was Our Lady of destiny, the goddess of destiny, Vidhati, who writes our destiny with a hand behind her back.

(Fieldnotes, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2002)

or “I asked for the help of the *santinha*” (diminutive of saint, in the feminine), referring to both the goddess and Our Lady of Fatima.

These adaptations and translations result in hybridizations, due to the contact with the Portuguese society, whose popular religiosity where Portuguese Hindus found affinities were adopted and transformed through a process of the Hinduization of a Catholic cult, in common practices of popular Hinduism. We could also mention the inclusion of the image of Jesus Christ, crucifixes, or various Catholic saints in Hindu domestic temples. However, the example of Fatima is more emblematic since it presents elements that go beyond the inclusion of new gods in the pantheon and relates to devotional and ritual practice itself. Ethnography gives us more details. The pilgrimage described earlier was complemented by a stop, back to Lisbon, on a beach where devotees bathed in the sea, considered purifying, and performed different rituals on the beach, which included the use of coconuts, incense, and flowers and ending with religious chants

## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

(see Figure 7.3). Moreover, the majority of the organised excursions to Fatima that we attended were complemented with this kind of stop at a beach site.

**[Insert 15040-3116-007\_Figure\_003 Here]**

**Figure 7.3** Ritual on the beach. São Martinho do Porto, Portugal (September 2004).

*Source:* Author's own collection

Diasporic Hinduism comprises different adaptations, according to each country's cultural characteristics. In Portugal, popular Catholicism is a strong reference to Hindus, who adopt some elements appropriating them to their Hindu practices. The cult of the Virgin evidences show some parallels with the cult of Durga and the great goddess; as with Mother Mary, Durga is both a virgin and mother. This central concept is pivotal in the devotion to whom they consider to be their divine mother as well.

In this context, other matches can be drawn: water and fire – central elements of the Hindu cult – from Fatima are venerated: water from the various taps distributed in the Sanctuary enclosure are considered part of sacred Ganga River, and fire from the pyre is worshiped as Agni, the vedic God of fire; the pilgrimage is taken as a *yatra*, with Fátima considered a *tirtha*, a sacred location. In this process, spiritual concepts connected to India's territory are transferred to Portugal. This territorial transposition of holy sites goes along with transnationalization of Hinduism. In fact, in the pilgrimage to Fatima, the incorporation of a passage by the sea coast to perform a ritual of worship to Ganga, which includes a sea bath, reinforces this idea of transnational and trans-continental migration of Hindu practices.

At the same time, parallels are constructed among Christian and Hindu practices; new ritual elements are incorporated. It is the promises that consist of burning wax body parts in exchange for the healing of the corresponding body part that is practiced in Fátima. In sum, these are also the specificities of the Hindu diaspora in Portugal, a common phenomenon that evokes the religious nuances and variations (Oonk 2007), which are often omitted by the unifying versions of the diaspora concept.

## Final remarks

---

In this chapter we presented a branch of the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora, which has a strong attachment to Portugal. They are known as the Portuguese Hindu-Gujaratis because of their national identity and their history related with the former Portuguese colonies in Mozambique and in India.

With no certainty about its origin, most Hindu Portuguese families are also devotees to Our Lady of Fatima. This Mother Mary's representation may be found in virtually every Hindu home. The devotion is extended to a public domain through organised excursions to Our Lady of Fatima Sanctuary. Although contributing to the reproduction of a common taste of the Hindu diaspora spread throughout the world, the ethnographic case presented here reveals specificities influenced by local cultural, religious, and consumption practices, contributing to the degree of internal diversity of each diaspora.

The long contact with the Portuguese society makes the hybridization process plural in cultural practices. On the public level, the devotion to Our Lady of Fatima by Portuguese Hindu-Gujarati population may also be related with the smallness of the Hindu religious landscape in Great Lisbon, compared with the Great London or Leicester. This fact does not necessarily increase the detachment from India, it only broadens the range of religious practices as well as reveals the flexibility of Hinduism and Hindu practices and beliefs. On the private level, Our Lady of Fatima devotion can be found in virtually every domestic shrine, either in Lisbon, London, Leicester, Maputo, or Diu, provided that Portuguese family ties exist. The hybridization process of this vivid population we presented through ethnographic impressions shows that the inclusion of other religions practices does not mean that the "home" religion is disregarded. Instead, Fatima is integrated in the Hindu Pantheon and her powers are believed to be similar to those of the Hindu maternal goddesses. This ethnographic analysis sought to illustrate the coexistence between hybridization – represented by the adoption of Fatima as a Hindu deity – and bonding strategies with the homeland. In fact, the "journey" of the Virgin of Fatima's statues

to the places of origin of these Hindus, in Gujarat, is a reflection not only of the incorporation of Portuguese cultural and religious elements in their lived religious culture, but also of the impact of this adaptation in their places of origin.

The “complexities and contradictions of the South Asian diasporic experience” (Van der Veer 1995) are present in the discussed subject of Hindu cult of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal. As the quoted author demonstrated, it was the different and divergent historical backgrounds that contributed to the fragmented nature of this population and to complicate the use of South Asian diaspora as a transparent category as well (*idem*). Thus, the dynamics around Our Lady of Fatima devotion continue to challenge dominant views about the Hindu diaspora through perspectives that allow us to observe Indian diasporas, as Oonk (2007: 24) suggested, “with an eye for nuance and variation.”

## Notes

## References

- Ávila, Patrícia and Mariana Alves. 1993. ‘Da Índia a Portugal – trajetórias sociais e estratégias colectivas dos comerciantes indianos’, *Sociologia – Problemas e Práticas*, 13: 115–133.
- Basch, L., N.G. Schiller and C.S. Blanc. 1994. *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects: Post-Colonial Predicaments and Deterritorialised Nation-States*. Basel: Gordon and Breach Publishers.
- Bastos, Susana Trovão Pereira. 1990. *A comunidade hindu da Quinta da Holandesa. Um estudo antropológico sobre organização socio-espacial da casa*. Lisboa: LNEC.
- Bastos, Susana Trovão Pereira. 2005. ‘Our Colonizers Were Better Than Yours: Identity Debates in Greater London’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31: 79–98.
- Bastos, Susana Trovão Pereira and José Bastos. 2001. *De Moçambique a Portugal: Reinterpretações Identitárias do Hinduísmo em Viagem*. Lisboa: Fundação Oriente.

## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

- Basu, Paul and Simon Coleman. 2008. 'Introduction: Migrant Worlds, Material Cultures', *Mobilities*, 3(3): 313–330.
- Burgess, R. 1984. *In the Field: An Introduction to Field Research*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Cachado, Rita. 2011. 'Samosas and Saris: Informal Economies in the Informal City among Portuguese Hindu Families', *Urban Anthropology Studies*, 40(3, 4): 417–444.
- Cachado, Rita. 2012. 'Transnacionalidade e História de Vida. Uma mulher Hindu de regresso a Maputo', *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos*, 24: 141–163.
- Cachado, Rita. 2014. 'Locating Portuguese Hindus: Transnationality in Urban Settings', *Sociologia Problemas e Práticas*, 76: 109–124.
- Chacko, E. and R. Menon. 2011. 'Longings and Belongings: Indian American Youth Identity, Folk Dance Competitions, and the Construction of "Tradition"', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36(1): 97–116.
- Coward, H., J. Hinnels and Raymond Williams (eds.). 2000. *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Dias, N. 2016. *Remigração e Etnicidade: Trânsito Colonial entre a África de Leste e a Europa*. Lisbon: Mundos Sociais.
- Drissel, David. 2011. 'Hybridizing Hip-Hop in Diaspora: Young British South Asian Men Negotiating Black-Inflected Identities', *The International Journal of Diversity in Organizations, Communities, and Nations: Annual Review*, 10(5): 199–222.
- Eck, Diana. 2000. 'Negotiating Hindu Identities in America', in Harold Coward, John Hinnels and Raymond Williams (eds.), *The South Asian Diaspora in Britain, Canada and the United States*, pp. 219–237. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Eisenlohr, P. 2006. *Little India: Diaspora, Time, and Ethnolinguistic Belonging*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Espírito Santo, M. 1990. *A Religião Popular Portuguesa*. Lisboa: Assírio and Alvim.

## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

- Foote-Whyte, W. 1981 [1943]. *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*, 3rd edition, Revised and Expanded, pp. 300–367. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Fortuna, Carlos and Claudino Ferreira. 1993. 'Estradas e Santuários: Percurso sócio-religioso e motivações dos peregrinos-caminhantes a Fátima', *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 36: 55–79.
- Gowricharn, Ruben. 2017. 'Practices in Taste Maintenance: The Case of Indian Diaspora Markets', *Journal of Consumer Culture*, DOI: 10.1177/1469540517717784.
- Hinnells, John R. 1998. 'Comparative Reflexions on South Asian Religion in International Migration', in John Hinnells (ed.), *The New Penguin Handbook of Living Religions*, pp. 819–148. London: Penguin.
- Hinnells, John. 2000. 'Introduction: South Asian Religions in Migration', in H. Coward, J. Hinnells, and R. Williams (eds.), *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States*, pp 1-12, New York: State University of New York Press.
- John, Allen and Orna R. Johnson. 1990. 'Quality into Quantity: On the Measurement Potential of Ethnographic Fieldnotes', in Roger Sanjek (ed.), *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*, pp. 161–186. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.
- Knott, Kim. 1986. *Hinduism in Leeds: A Study of Religious Practice in the Indian Hindu Community and Hindu-Related Groups*. Leeds: Monograph Series, Community Religious Project/University of Leeds.
- Knott, Kim. 1987. 'Hindu Temple Rituals in Britain: Reinterpretation of Tradition', in Richard Burghart (ed.), *Hinduism in Great Britain: The Perpetuation of Religion in an Alien Cultural Milieu*, pp. 157–179. London/New York: Tavistock Publications.
- Kurien, Prema. 1998. 'Becoming American by Becoming Hindu: Indian Americans Take Their Place at the Multicultural Table', in Stephen Warner and Judith Wittner (eds.), *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*, pp. 37–70. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

- Lourenço, Inês. 2010. 'Anthropological Perspectives on Female Identity: The Hindu Diaspora in Portugal', *International Social Sciences Journal Collection*, 5: 43–52.
- Lourenço, Inês. 2011. 'Religion and Gender: The Hindu Diaspora in Portugal', *South Asian Diaspora*, 3(1): 37–51.
- Lourenço, Inês. 2013. 'From Goans to Gujaratis: A Study of the Indian Community in Portugal', CARIM-India Research Report, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. European University Institute.
- Lourenço, Inês and Rita Cachado. 2012. 'Hindu Transnational Families: Transformation and Continuity in Diaspora Families', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 43(1): 53–70.
- Lourenço, Inês and Rita Cachado. 2018. 'The Role of Diu in the Hindu-Gujarati Diaspora in Portugal', *South Asian Studies*, 34(1): 47–56.
- Malheiros, J.M. 1996. *Imigrantes na região de Lisboa: os anos da mudança. Imigração e processo de integração das comunidades de origem indiana*. Lisbon: Colibri.
- Manian, Sabita and Brad Bullock. 2016. 'Sensing Hinduism: Lucian-Indian Funeral "Feast" as Glocalized Ritual', *Religions*, 7(1): 8, DOI: 10.3390/rel7010008.
- Marcus, George E. 1995. 'Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24: 95–117.
- Miller, Daniel. 1998. 'Why Some Things Matter', in Daniel Miller (ed.), *Material Cultures*. London: UCL Press/University of Chicago Press.
- Miller, Daniel (ed.). 2005. *Materiality*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Miller, Daniel (ed.). 2009. *Anthropology and the Individual: A Material Culture Perspective*. Oxford: Berg.
- Mishra, V. 2005. *The Diasporic Imaginary and the Indian Diaspora*. Wellington: Asian Studies Institute, Victoria University of Wellington.
- Monteiro, L. 2007. *Ser mãe Hindu. Práticas e Rituais Relativos à Maternidade e aos Cuidados à Criança na Cultura Hindu em Contexto de Imigração*. Lisbon: ACIDI.

## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

- Oonk, Gijbert. 2007. 'Introduction', in Gijbert Oonk (ed.), *Global Indian Diasporas: Exploring Trajectories of Migration and Theory*, pp. 9–30. Amsterdam: IAS/Amsterdam University Press.
- Peach, Ceri and Richard Gale. 2002. 'Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs in the New Religious Landscape of England', *Geographical Review*, 93(4): 469–490.
- Perez, R.M. 2011. *The Tulsi and the Cross: Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter in Goa*, 2nd edition. ISBN: 9788192304601. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.
- Persaud, P.K. 2013. *Hyphenated Hindus: A Study of the Relationship between the Formation of an Indo-Caribbean Hindu Identity and the Development of the West Indian Temple in Trinidad and in the United States*. MA Thesis, Syracuse University.
- Rosales, Marta. 2010. 'O Verdadeiro Caril Moçambicano. Transnacionalismo, quotidianos e materialidades goesas na África colonial', in Susana Trovão and Marta Rosales (eds.), *Das Índias: gentes, movimentos e pertenças transnacionais*, pp. 59–80. Lisboa: Edições Colibri.
- Roxo, Pedro. 2010. 'Negotiating Identity through Expressive Culture: Hindu-Gujarati Portuguese in Mozambique, Portugal and England', in Susana Trovão and Marta Vilar Rosales (eds.), *Das Índias. Gentes, movimentos e pertenças transnacionais*, pp. 169–206. Lisboa: Edições Colibri.
- Roy, Anjali Gera. 2013. 'Black Beats with a Punjabi Twist', *Popular Music*, 32: 241–257.
- Sanjek, R. 1990. *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.
- Schiller, Nina Glick and Aise Çaglar. 2011. 'Locality and Globality: Building a Comparative Analytical Framework in Migration and Urban Studies', in Nina Glick Schiller and Aise Çaglar (eds.), *Locating Migration: Rescaling Cities and Migrants*, pp. 60–81. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.
- Seabra, T. 2010. *Adaptação e Adversidade. O desempenho escolar dos alunos de origem indiana e cabo-verdiana no ensino básico*. Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais.



## 7 Mother Mary in the Hindu Pantheon among Portuguese Gujarati families

- Turner, V. and E. Turner. 1978. *Image of Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Van der Veer, Peter. 1995. 'Introduction: The Diasporic Imagination', in Peter Van der Veer (ed.), *Nation and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora*, pp. 1–16. USA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Venkatachari, K.K.A. 1996. 'Transmission and Transformation of Ritual', in Raymond Williams (ed.), *A Sacred Thread: Modern Transmission of Hindu Traditions in India and Abroad*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Williams, Raymond. 1996 [1992]. 'Sacred Threads of Several Textures: Strategies of Adaptation in the United States', in Raymond Williams (ed.), *A Sacred Thread: Modern Transmission of Hindu Traditions in India and Abroad*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- 
- 1** In Catholicism the Virgin Mary has several titles, according to popular devotions. the apparitions in several countries are also associated with the Marian titles, as is the case of Fatima in Portugal.
- 2** A summary of the history of South Asians in Portugal: Goans came during the dictatorship (1933–1974), mostly to study in the Portuguese universities; Gujarati from diverse religious creeds came from Mozambique, a Portuguese colonial country (until 1975) in the late 1970s and early 1980s; other Indians came in the late 1990s; South Asians came sparsely from the early 2000s onward, profiting from the Schengen space.
- 3** The year of 1961 marks the end of the Portuguese rule in Diu, Daman, and Goa. After centuries of colonization, and 14 years after India's independence from the British colonial rule, these territories were annexed by the Indian Union in 1961.

- 4 The authors dedicated their researches to diverse aspects of transnationality among Portuguese Hindu-Gujaratis (Lourenço 2010, 2011, 2013; Cachado 2011, 2012, 2014; Lourenço and Cachado 2012, 2018).
- 5 Spiritual concept of a sacred location associated to a pilgrimage site, which means a holy junction that can be physical such as a junction of rivers, or symbolic, evocating the junction of earthly and divine worlds.
- 6 Darshan means looking and receiving the divinity's gaze. This exchange of looks implies a deep relationship between the deity and the devotee resulting in blessings received by the devotee, such as well-being and prosperity.
- 7 Diaspora Hinduism has been characterised as a changing religion as a consequence of adaptations to the new social contexts, included in a process of transformation called "new Hinduism" (Eck 2000), "American Hinduism" (Eck 2000; Kurien 1998), "British Hinduism" (Knott 1986: 58) or "Ecumenical Hinduism" (Williams 1996: 238). The change in worship and ritual is expressed more clearly in some contexts, as is the Canadian case, in the preponderance of the guru's role, which has replaced the ritual and devotional variety of Hinduism, simplifying it and concentrating on the figure of the guru and his spiritual doctrines (Coward et al. 2000; Williams 1992). In the United Kingdom, the new meanings of Hindu ritual are characterised by changes in performance times and the roles of specialists (Knott 1986, 1987). The search for new answers to external pressures led to the transformation of the ritual, in order to preserve the religious tradition and to adapt it to the aspects of the new surrounding cultural context, considered essential for the vitality of any religion (Venkatachari 1996: 198). Likewise, the inclusion of new

holidays in the religious calendar, the adaptations made to the lunar calendar (so that the celebrations conform to the times and the western calendar) and the transformation of the festivities according to the conveniences of the communities, characterize the religious life of the Hindu communities scattered throughout the world.