

# Introduction

## Making an Invisible Diaspora Visible

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The closing decades of the twentieth century witnessed a new and growing interest in diaspora studies. The growing number of doctoral dissertations on various South Asian diaspora communities attests to this new trend and interest in the academy. The numerous regional, national and international conferences as well as the steady flow of new literature on South Asian diaspora suggest that South Asian immigrant communities in Europe and North America are not only here to stay, but diaspora studies is a legitimate and important sub-field in South Asian Studies. However, all such scholarly efforts focus almost exclusively on Hindu, Jain and Sikh diaspora communities, with little or no attention to Christian immigrants from South Asia. Christian immigrants from diverse ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds have largely been overlooked by academics. Consequently, this important constituency has largely been a silent and invisible community, under-represented in scholarly literature and public academic discourses. We believe that diaspora studies and scholarship on South Asia ought to truly represent and mirror the true complexion and the rich internal plurality and diversity of the South Asian religious landscape. The present volume is therefore a response to the serious current imbalance in diaspora studies, not unlike the imbalance in the field of Religious Studies and South Asian Studies in general that to date have privileged Hindu, Sikh and Jain immigrants from South Asia. Through a careful study of a select number of South Asian Christian immigrant groups in North America and Europe, the present volume is a first step in remedying the current lacuna in South Asian diaspora studies.

In our view, several factors account for the current scholarly disinterest in and the consequent paucity of studies on South Asian Christian communities settled in the West, whether in Europe or North America. First, South Asian Christians look Hindu, indistinguishable in their physical appearance, speech, dress, and to some extent even customs and habits, from their South Asian religious counterparts. While understandable, this has led to the homogenization, however mistaken and false it might be, of South Asian immigrants. Second, Western scholars of South Asian religions, most of whom have strong cultural and/or religious ties to Christianity, seem less interested in the study of Christianity and Christians, whether at home or abroad, and more interested in such exotic South Asian religious groups as Hindus, Jains and Sikhs. An underlying yet mistaken assumptions here is a homogenized understanding of Christianity, namely that Christianity is the same everywhere, irrespective of cultural and geographical differences. However,

a close look at the ritual life of these traditions would convince us otherwise. For example, animal sacrifices so popular in South Indian Catholic devotional life are by no means a universal Catholic phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> While widespread among non-specialists, even serious academics subscribe to this assumption, a related second, again unspoken, assumption is that there is nothing interesting or exotic about South Asian Christianity. However, the religious life of the practitioners tells a different story. For example, the complexities of Indian Christianity that include numerous Eastern Orthodox churches like the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara churches and their liturgical traditions that have found North American and European homes challenge any such simplistic constructions.<sup>2</sup>

A third reason is related to the influential perspective of Louis Dumont, who interpreted an upper-caste version of Hinduism as the ideology of India and defined caste as its essence.<sup>3</sup> Although caste is found among Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists in South Asia, it is in Hinduism that caste is given a religious justification, and the other religions were therefore seen as peripheral to the essence.<sup>4</sup> India was Hindu India, and the study of India therefore meant the study of caste. In the cities, caste had become less important, and researchers were therefore encouraged to do fieldwork in village India. In the villages, the caste system was thought to be preserved in its original authentic state. Even if these villages had populations belonging to the minority religions, these groups were often treated as unimportant or made invisible. Or when they were studied,

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<sup>1</sup> Selva J. Raj, 'Transgressing Boundaries, Transcending Turner: The Pilgrimage Tradition at the Shrine of St. John de Britto', in Selva J. Raj and Corinne G. Dempsey (eds), *Popular Christianity in India: Riting between the Lines* (Albany, NY, 2002), pp. 85–111.

<sup>2</sup> A new generation of emerging scholars is helping to nullify even the 'exotic' argument. See Corinne G. Dempsey, 'Lessons in Miracles from Kerala, South India: Stories of Three "Christian" Saints', in Raj and Dempsey (eds), *Popular Christianity in India*, pp. 111–39; Eliza F. Kent, 'Redemptive Hegemony and the Ritualization of Reading', in Raj and Dempsey (eds), *Popular Christianity in India*, pp. 191–209; Eliza F. Kent, *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India* (New York, 2004); Margaret Meibohm, 'Past Selves and Present Others: The Ritual Construction of Identity at a Catholic Festival in South India', in Raj and Dempsey (eds), *Popular Christianity in India*, pp. 61–83; Selva J. Raj, 'The Ganges, the Jordan, and the Mountain: The Three Strands of Santal Popular Catholicism', in Raj and Dempsey (eds), *Popular Christianity in India*, pp. 39–60; Mathew N. Schmalz, 'Charismatic Transgressions: The Life and Work of an Indian Catholic Healer', in Raj and Dempsey (eds), *Popular Christianity in India*, pp. 163–87. See also Clara A.B. Joseph, 'Rethinking Hybridity: The Syro-Malabar Church in North America', in Knut A. Jacobsen and P. Pratap Kumar (eds), *South Asians in the Diaspora: Histories and Religious Traditions* (Leiden, 2004), pp. 220–39, and Anna Lindberg, 'Transformation of Marriage Patterns in the Kerala Diaspora in the United States', in Jacobsen and Kumar (eds), *South Asians in the Diaspora*, pp. 203–19.

<sup>3</sup> Louis Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus: An Essay on the Caste System*, trans. Mark Sainsbury (Chicago, IL, 1970).

<sup>4</sup> Rowena Robinson, *Christians of India* (New Delhi, 2003), p. 17.

it was with the question, ‘Is there caste in non-Hindu communities?’ Robinson argues that scholars as well as politicians have collapsed the ‘Indian philosophical outlook’ with a Hindu or Brahmanical one, and as a consequence the Christians were perceived as representatives of traditions that were alien and foreign to the land of India.<sup>5</sup> The Indian tradition was defined in a way that made it impossible to link Christians to this tradition.<sup>6</sup>

Fourth, the Western academic privileging of the dominant religion of the sub-continent palpable in South Asian studies in general is also reflected in diaspora scholarship and literature. Fifth, the study of South Asian Christianity and Christian communities from an ethnographic and non-theological perspective is a relatively new sub-field in religious studies.<sup>7</sup> This accounts in part for the lack of academic interest in South Asian Christian immigrant communities in the West. Finally, since Christians form a tiny minority in India, it is difficult to know the numerical strength of Christian immigrants in the West since most available national statistics on South Asian immigrants in the West invariably classify them under the convenient rubric of national origin rather than religious affiliation.

The study of Christian immigrants from South Asia becomes even more complicated when we realize that the South Asian Christian community is by no means a monolithic or homogenous group. In terms of ethnic origins, cultural heritage and religious praxis, it is as variegated and diverse as the sub-continent. Christian immigrants from South Asia come in various stripes and shapes. There are Sinhalese Christians, Sri Lankan Tamil Christians, Nepalese Christians, Bangladeshi Christians, Pakistani Christians and Indian Christians. In the Indian sub-continent itself, there is striking internal religious diversity based on ethnic, linguistic, geographical, denominational and liturgical considerations and factors. A similar diversity defines the ethnic composition of Indian Christian immigrants. Thus, there are Goan Christians, Tamil Christians, Malayalee Christians, Dalit Christians, Mangalorean Christians, and *adivasi* (tribal) Christians. Not all Christian immigrants share the same religious history. While some trace their Christian roots to the first century CE, others are recent converts. In addition, while some hail from higher castes, others come from modest social backgrounds. Denominational affiliations further complicate the complexion of Christian diaspora, since there are orthodox Christians, Protestant Christians affiliated to various denominational sub-sects, and Catholics of different liturgical rites. The intra-religious plurality

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Robinson also argues that because of this, Christianity in India has too often been viewed through the lens of conversion (*from* Hinduism), with negative consequences for the understanding of the Christian communities.

<sup>7</sup> Corinne G. Dempsey, *Kerala Christian Sainthood: Collisions of Culture and Worldview in South India* (New York, 2001). Raj, ‘Transgressing Boundaries, Transcending Turner’; Selva J. Raj, ‘Dialogue “On the Ground”’: The Complicated Identities and the Complex Negotiations of Catholics and Hindus in South India’, *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies*, 17 (2004): 33–44.

characteristic of South Asian Christianity in the native context is faithfully replicated in the diaspora setting. These facts suggest that the diasporic experience of South Asian Christian immigrants is, to say the least, quite complex and complicated, defying any simplistic conclusions. A minority group in South Asia, Christian immigrants in Europe and North America share a common religious faith with the majority group. In this regard, their diasporic experience is quite distinct from that of other South Asian religious groups. None the less, like other South Asian immigrants, they too wrestle with a sense of religious liminality and alienation, leading them to carve out – through their churches, associations, and worship services – a distinctive cultural space to reinforce and strengthen their distinctive religious identity.

### **Inherited Identities**

The largest groups of Christians from South Asia living in Europe and North America are from Goa, Kerala, Puducherry (Pondicherry), Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. But there are also Christians from Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, other areas of India, and also second-time diaspora Indians such as South Asian Christians from Suriname living in the Netherlands. Some are recent converts to Christianity (see Chapters 1 and 13), but for the great majority, being Christian is an inherited religious identity. It is part of the cultural heritage. Much work is invested in generational transfer of this heritage.

In the diaspora setting, religion often gains some new functions. Religion gets involved in the maintenance of linguistic and cultural identities in the minority situation. In the multi-cultural Roman Catholic churches in Norway, separate masses are performed for a number of ethnic groups and nationalities. A similar practice is reported from Lutheran churches in North America (see Chapter 12). The church space is shared between the groups, but they do not worship together. The religious tradition is identified with linguistic, cultural and ritual traditions. The weekly Tamil Catholic masses in Norway are ritual events meant for the Tamils. Tamil Catholics do not identify with the ritual performance of Vietnamese Catholics presented in Vietnamese or of Polish Catholics presented in Polish and so on. In the diaspora, religion may gain renewed importance since it becomes a marker of difference. Participation in the worship that is organized specifically for one ethnic group is important for identity formation. Participation confirms ethnic identity and belonging. Other Christian communities such as the Syro-Malabar Catholics in Chicago organize their own churches. The churches become cultural comfort zones on which members, especially among the lower economic groups, depend for cultural survival and social networks (see Chapter 10). But others might be opposed to identifying religion with the ethnic tradition. Some have left South Asia to escape oppression. Caste continues to be a problem also in the diaspora (see Chapters 2 and 13). Dalit Christians often prefer ‘mainstream’ congregations where they become known as Indians rather

than Dalits, or mixed congregations where the effort is to unite (see Chapter 13). The level of integration and assimilation varies. Assimilation characterizes the integration of Goans in Portugal, while for Roman Catholics from Sri Lanka in Germany, Norway and Switzerland, religion is a vital part of the ethnic identity formation (see Chapters 4–7).

Christianity is a pluralistic religion with a large number of churches and sects and a large number of different ethnic and cultural identities. Being Christian might mean being Roman Catholic Malayalee in Germany, Lutheran Telegu in Chicago, Baptist from Punjab in London, Pentecostal Tamil from Sri Lanka in Oslo, Norway, and so on. Being a Syro-Malabar Catholic in Chicago or Tamil Roman Catholic in Norway (a predominantly Lutheran nation) means your religious identity lies with a minority tradition, and this is quite different from being a Roman Catholic from Goa living in Portugal, a predominantly Catholic country, and having a Portuguese name, as most Goan Roman Catholics in Portugal do (see Chapters 6, 7, 9 and 10). The religious traditions are also shaped in many ways by the features of the majority culture of the new settlement. For immigrants to secular countries such as the Netherlands or Germany, religion might lose some of its importance for the second generation (see Chapters 3 and 8). Although in the diaspora the first generation tends to give the same importance to religion than before migration, or more, the second generation may withdraw partially from church life as a function of the secular environment of the society at large.

Studies on South Asian Christian diasporas can help correct some mistaken perceptions. In several countries in Europe (Germany, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, France, Denmark, Norway) there are large communities of Tamils from Sri Lanka. The largest community of Sri Lankan Tamils is found in Canada. Much information about the religious life of the Tamil Hindus is now readily available. Books and articles have been published.<sup>8</sup> However, hardly anything has been written about the religious life of the Sri Lankan Tamil Christians. In this book, three chapters cover the Sri Lankan Tamil Christian diaspora (Chapters 4–6). For most Christians, religion is part of an ethnic identity and religion is important for the preservation and the transmission of this ethnic identity from one generation to the next. In the South Asian diasporas, the Christian identity is for most people an inherited identity from the country of origin that people invest much energy in preserving and transferring to the next generation. It is an obvious part of their South Asian identities. Preservation of the Christian identity is a way to attempt to safeguard the religious culture inherited from their parents and grandparents. Preservation of something old, not conversion to something new, often characterizes the situation. This preservation takes place in a number of different contexts.

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<sup>8</sup> See Martin Baumann, Brigitte Luchesi and Annette Wilke (eds), *Tempel und Tamilen in zweiter Heimat. Hindus aus Sri Lanka im deutschsprachigen und skandinavischen Raum* (Würzburg, 2003).

## Strategies of Cultural Survival and Assimilation

In his landmark study of Asian Indian Christian immigrants in the United States, Raymond Williams proposes a typology of six adaptive strategies employed by Indian Christian immigrants, strategies that resemble the ones he discovered in his 1992 study of Hindu organizations in the United States.<sup>9</sup> These adaptive strategies are: ‘individual, national, ecumenical, ethnic, hierarchical, and “denominational”’.<sup>10</sup> Williams argues that these strategies account for the differences in the language, types of religious leadership, general ethos of the community, cuisine and arts among Indian Christian groups. The selection of a specific adaptive strategy is itself influenced by the four variables of social location: length of residence, population density, transition from the first to succeeding generations, and majority/minority status. While Williams regards these six strategies as parameters that define the process of adaptation of Asian Indian Christian immigrants to the American landscape, he reminds us that these strategies are often malleable, since immigrants’ desire to preserve several overlapping identities leads them to ‘adopt elements of more than one strategy’.<sup>11</sup> We believe this typology can be effectively applied not only to the larger North American and European contexts, but to all South Asian Christian immigrant groups as well. While the various groups represented in this volume may not employ all six strategies, they do employ one or more of these strategies, tailoring them to their particular cultural and social context. We encourage readers to relate these ‘ideal types’ as they navigate through the complex histories and distinctive dynamics of the various Christian immigrant groups discussed in this volume.

As with other South Asian immigrants, religion and ritual play a pivotal role in the construction of their distinct ‘South Asian Christian’ identity based on regional, ethnic, linguistic, denominational and liturgical heritage. Their self-perception as ‘South Asian Christian’ immigrants living in the West (Europe and North America) as distinct from other South Asian immigrants of diverse religious persuasions compels and leads them to establish their own ‘spaces’ for social exchange and religious worship that act as locus for identity formation. ‘Differentiation’ is a major reason and key strategy for the establishment of churches like the Tamil Christuva Koil in New York that McDermott discusses in Chapter 13. Such efforts are aimed at two distinct audiences: a domestic audience that encompasses their second-generation immigrant children, Western religious ‘others’ and non-Christian South Asian ‘others’, and a distant, transnational audience comprising fellow Christians in their native villages and regions. The formation of religious centres and groups enables South Asian Christian immigrants who, like most immigrants, are more religious in the diaspora setting than in the native setting to maintain transnational

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<sup>9</sup> Raymond Brady Williams, *Christian Pluralism in the United States: The Indian Immigrant Experience* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 96–111.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

ties with native Christian communities with whom they feel a certain emotional affinity through fund-raisers for and mission trips to native churches and groups.

Even as these immigrants negotiate their adjustment and assimilation to a new, often alien, cultural and religious landscape, traditional patterns of distinctions, divisions and boundaries based on caste, linguistic heritage, places of origin and regional identities are not only faithfully replicated but vigorously reinforced and perpetuated, causing a sense of cultural ambivalence and puzzlement among their second-generation children. This is amply illustrated in the constant and ever-increasing proliferation of Christian social and religious groups in diaspora settings.

### **The South Asian Christian Diaspora in Europe and North America**

At the very outset, we wish to state that this study is neither comprehensive in the range of South Asian Christian immigrant groups found in North America and Europe nor exhaustive in its analysis of the dynamics of these groups. An obvious limitation of this volume is the limited coverage and attention accorded to Dalit Christian immigrants even though they constitute the largest segment of the Indian Christian population. Even if we wanted to cover them more fully, we would not have succeeded given that only recently has a small group of scholars begun to study Dalit Christians in South Asia or abroad. If the study of South Asian Christianity is a nascent sub-field in religious studies, it is even more true of diaspora studies, which accounts for the paucity – nay more, absence – of literature on the subject. Hence, the selection of contributions for inclusion in this volume was guided by practical realities and exigencies in the academy. We invited those scholars we knew to have research specialties and interests in South Asian Christian immigrants to contribute their recent work. Located in two different continents, these contributors, who hail from diverse disciplinary backgrounds (sociology, anthropology, religious studies), investigate intra-community and inter-community religious dynamics from their respective disciplinary and inter-disciplinary perspectives. Our modest goal in preparing this volume is threefold: (1) to call attention to an understudied diaspora group; (2) to provide a select number of case-studies of South Asian Christian immigrants originating from fresh and recent field-research, and (3) to offer some generalizations that will stimulate further research. To use a culinary metaphor, we envision this volume as the first course in a South Asian Christian immigrant feast to be followed by other delectable studies by future scholars.

Scholars continue to debate the viability, adequacy and usefulness of the familiar term ‘diaspora’ when speaking of post-1960 immigrants from South Asia, whether Hindu, Christian, Muslim or Sikh. While some scholars tend to dismiss this term because of its specific historical reference to South Asians and Indians who emigrated from India and South Asia as indentured labourers, inapplicable to the educated, affluent and white-collar generation, the editors and contributors

have chosen to use the common term ‘diaspora’. ‘Diaspora’ refers to processes of maintaining and transferring cultural and linguistic identities and traditions in a minority situation associated with migration, independent of the educational success, affluence or economic integration of the group. In his seminal work on Hindu diaspora, Vertovec highlights three specific meanings of diaspora: diaspora as social form, diaspora as type of consciousness, and diaspora as mode of cultural production.<sup>12</sup> Vertovec’s observations on Hindu diaspora can be equally extended to Christian immigrants. All three forms are discernible in the case studies documented by our authors.

The chapters in this book present the community histories, issues of identity, the links between religious and cultural traditions, the use and reinvention of religious and cultural traditions, appearance of new ritual traditions, attitudes to language, generational transfer, marriage and family life, the plurality of Christian traditions to which they belong, their relationship to non-Christian South Asians and to the Christian majority churches, and so on. The scant literature on South Asian Christians in Europe and North America also leads the authors to lament the current situation and indicate areas for further research.

The settlement of South Asian Christians in Europe, the subject of the Part One of the book, ‘Europe’, is related to colonial history, the division of Europe during the Cold War, and refugee laws. Those nations that had colonies in South Asia or had colonies that used Indians as indentured labour often have the largest populations of South Asian Christians. The largest South Asian Christian population in Europe is in the UK. In Chapter 1 on the South Asian Christian diaspora in the UK, Eleanor Nesbitt emphasizes diversity and the plurality of traditions of the South Asian Christians in that country, both in terms of regional background and church affiliation, and observes that South Asian Christians do not have a sense of comprising a single society. She also notes that because of the inclusiveness of the Hindu traditions, many Hindus have Christian images included in their domestic shrines, problematizing the relationship between Christian practice and Christian identity. She observes that for some Christianity is the inherited religion, for others it is a new religion to which they have converted while living in the UK. This makes a difference because as an inherited identity, Christianity is bound up with South Asian cultural and linguistic forms. But South Asian Christians are generally or mostly an invisible diaspora because they do not establish separate churches. Nesbitt notices that South Asian Christians express frustration that government grants are available for non-Christians for building community centres and other purposes, but not for South Asian Christians, and this contributes to a feeling of marginalization. Interestingly, among the South Asian Christians in the UK, shared culture and language often takes precedence over denominational divides.

The diversity among the South Asian Christians in the UK is unique in Europe so far. In other European countries that have a sizeable South Asian Christian

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<sup>12</sup> Steven Vertovec, *The Hindu Diaspora: Comparative Patterns* (London, 2000), pp. 142–56.

population, the vast majority of them often come from the same region in South Asia and belong to the same church. For example, the South Asian Christians in France are mainly Roman Catholic Tamils from Puducherry (Pondicherry) and Sri Lanka. In Chapter 2, Brigitte Sébastia discusses several cases of Indianization of Catholic rituals among the Tamils in France, and the dilemmas and difficulties involved. Sébastia shows how Tamil rituals were integrated into the Catholic liturgy in an attempt to inculturate Catholic faith. Our Lady of Health of Velankanni has been installed in many churches. Even the annual Tamil pilgrimage to Lourdes has been 'Indianized'. Sébastia argues that some families chose the Indianization or Tamilization of the Catholic Church and the rituals in order to exalt Tamil identity and to gain prestige and recognition, which, however, was opposed by others. She notes that many of the Tamil Catholics in France are Untouchables, and for many of them, affirming a Christian identity means the rejection of everything that symbolizes Hinduism.

Two chapters focus on the South Asian Christian diaspora in Germany: Chapter 3 on the immigrants from Kerala who arrived mainly in the 1960s and 1970s, most of whom were nurses, and Chapter 4 on the immigration of Sri Lankan Tamils who arrived in the 1980s and 1990s and continue to arrive.

The South Asian Christian diaspora in Germany started with the recruitment in the 1960s by the Catholic Church of young Christian women in Kerala to work in German hospitals and homes for the elderly as nurses. Many settled in Germany permanently, but had arranged marriages with Malayalee men in Kerala. Their husbands were not immediately allowed to work, and thus their activities were restricted to the household and child-rearing as well as to the establishment of an ethnic infrastructure including cultural, sports and religious organizations. Urmila Goel, who builds Chapter 3 around one person, a Christian male who arrived in Germany from Kerala in 1966, focuses on identity issues. Goel observes that even if the language and food are different, Christianity to some extent makes the Malayalees less 'alien' than other migrants.

In Chapter 4, Brigitte Luchesi reviews the Sri Lankan Tamil Catholic diaspora in Germany and analyses the remarkable Tamil pilgrimage undertaken every year by Tamil Christian refugees from Sri Lanka to the Madonna in Kevelaer, Germany, near the Dutch border. The Tamil pilgrimage, which was invented as early as 1987, has become the largest single pilgrimage event to this place. The pilgrimage has an association to the pilgrimage to Our Lady of Madhu, the main Marian shrine in Sri Lanka, and many Tamils associate Kevalar with Our Lady of Madhu. This is a good example of how Tamil space is increasingly being created within the Roman Catholic Church in Europe.

The South Asian Christians in Switzerland and Norway are primarily Roman Catholic Tamils from Sri Lanka. Damaris Lüthi's informants in Chapter 5 regularly emphasized that religiosity is an important constituent of traditional Tamil culture to be passed on to the next generation. Lüthi's chapter draws many comparisons between Tamil Christians and Hindus and the role of religion, and shows that the social values of the first generation Hindus and Christians

are very similar. She suggests that a specific Tamil religiosity often transcends the traditional Christian/Hindu dichotomy. Lüthi further discusses the festival calendar, the participation of Catholics in Hindu festivals, their worship of the Madonna, caste and impurity/purity regulations, and the relationship between the first- and second-generation immigrants.

In Norway, the Tamil ritual events in the Roman Catholic churches have become important expressions of Sri Lankan Tamil identity. Tamil ritualization has been a key strategy for the Tamils in Norway to negotiate their identities, and the Catholic Church has participated in this by hiring several Tamil priests who have assisted in creating Tamil Catholic traditions in the churches in order to ensure Tamil participation. In Chapter 6, Knut A. Jacobsen argues that the institutionalization of Tamil space within the Catholic Church has paralleled the establishment of Hindu temples, and that both function to preserve Tamil religious traditions and to transmit them to the next generation. The chapter focuses on their immigration history and the various ways devised to transfer religious practice, especially the construction of Tamil Catholic sacred space and sacred time in Norway. Although not without conflicts, the inclusion of the worship of Our Lady of Madhu in the church liturgy shows that Tamil Catholicism is accepted by the church.

Helena Sant'ana in Chapter 7 focuses on the history of Goa and Daman and Diu, the process of conversion, the migration patterns between India, Africa and Portugal and Goans and Damanians living in Portugal. Goa and Daman and Diu were created as Portuguese colonies on the coastal territories of Konkan and Gujarat. Conversion to Christianity in these areas produced an ethnic and political identity different from that of other Indians. Many of these Christians came to Portugal to study or work; many also went to Africa to work in the Portuguese colonies there, and later, when the Portuguese colonies in Africa gained independence (in 1974), they went to Portugal. Change in religion caused Christian Goans and Damanians to identify with the Portuguese Catholic Church, take Portuguese names, communicate in Portuguese and adopt a Portuguese lifestyle. In Portugal, they have become fully integrated and assimilated in Portuguese society. That they are Roman Catholics in the Portuguese tradition means that religion does not set them apart.

Finally, as in Portugal, a large part of the Indian diaspora in the Netherlands, is a second diaspora. The great majority of Indians in the Netherlands are from Suriname. Referred to as Hindustanis in the Netherlands, most of the Surinamese are Hindus, with Christians forming a small minority. Due to mission history in Suriname, there are two different Christian groups among the Hindustanis in the Netherlands: the Moravian brethren (Congregation of Evangelical Brethren) and Roman Catholics. The Moravian brethren are the largest groups of Hindustani Christians in the Netherlands. In Chapter 8, Freek L. Bakker describes the creation of these communities, their organizational structures, dilemmas and different strategies.

Part Two of the book is about North America. Christians from Kerala have dominated the South Asian Christian diaspora in North America, and the majority of the South Asian Christians belong to Malayalee churches. Several of the chapters are based on research into these churches. The last two deal with the issues of evangelization, and with Dalit Christians.

The Syro-Malabar and the Syro-Malankara churches are the focus of Elizabeth Galbraith in Chapter 9. Her contribution is based on field research among Indian Catholic communities both in India and North America, and examines what might be considered the plight of Eastern Catholic traditions in the West, with specific reference to Indian Catholic communities in North America. She rightly points out that Indian Christians leave a country where Christians are a tiny majority and come to a country where they are for the first time the religious majority. But their particular religious traditions are still not mainstream, and it is the preservation and transference of these traditions that become important.

In Chapter 10, Selva J. Raj explores the role and function of religion in the acculturation of its immigrant members to the American landscape by focusing on the history of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in Chicago. Raj investigates this church as the locus of culture transmission, and asks whether the church functions for assimilation or de-assimilation. Since the modes of transmission of the religious tradition are language and rituals the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church re-creates the environment of the country of origin, and thus might become what Raj calls 'a culture comfort zone'. This chapter analyses further some of the dilemmas of the liminality situation of the immigrant group, being neither American when in the US nor Indians when in India.

Chapter 11 by Farha Ternikar focuses on the Brethren, Catholic and Knanaya Indian immigrants. She examines changing marriage patterns among Indian Christians (Catholics and Protestants) in the Chicago area. Religion remains an important factor when choosing mates. Arranged marriage or semi-arranged marriage is still the most common option, and it is always between persons of the same pan-ethnic and religious background. She argues that ethnic endogamy is closely linked to religious endogamy. The strong link between Indian Christianity and specific Indian cultural practices is also emphasized. Ternikar concludes, however, that there is a slight increase in inter-marriage between whites and Indian Christians in the US.

Nori Henk in Chapter 12 looks at how Christian Indians are creating a community within the larger Indian immigrant population, and how religious identity is negotiated with, and influenced by, ethnic and national constraints and opportunities. The author notes that in the Chicago area which she investigated, Indian Christian organizations both incorporate into and segregate from the larger Christian community. The tendency is for separate ethnic congregations to use the church space separately. The author investigates some Indian Protestant groups in North America which are more focused on evangelization than on the preservation and transference of religious identity, noting that for them, sharing Christ with non-Christians is a moral imperative. The interest here is to bring other

non-Christian immigrants into their churches. This particular focus is in sharp contrast with many other churches and communities presented in this volume which focus almost exclusively on the maintenance of the group's religious traditions and preservation of its inherited identity.

In Chapter 13, Rachel Fell McDermott presents material on Indian Christians in New York. She raises the issue of caste, for many an uncomfortable subject, as a central concern, and laments that there is a silence about Dalits in the research literature on the Indian and South Asian churches in North America (as well as in Europe). There are several reasons for this: the lack of diaspora studies on the South Asian Christians in general; the fact that the Dalits themselves often do not want to draw attention to themselves, and the lack of exact numbers. In contrast to many other contributions in this volume that are about preservation and transference of inherited religious traditions, Dalit Christians are often first-generation Christians who have converted, often after contact with missionaries. For Dalit Christians, the migration from India can also be interpreted as an exodus from a society in which discrimination on the basis of caste is still prevalent. It is understandable, therefore, that in contrast to many other South Asian Christian communities in the diaspora, Dalit Christians feel more welcome in 'mainstream' congregations where they are known as Indians rather than as Dalits, or in mixed congregations where the purpose is to unite, not to preserve an identity of difference. McDermott notes that discrimination on the basis of caste is common among Indian immigrants in the United States, but that there are also 'opportunities for its alleviation and potential healing'.

The book concludes with a response contribution by Raymond Brady Williams. Williams is the first North American scholar to undertake a comprehensive study of Asian Indian Christian immigrants in the United States. His insightful chapter draws attention to many common dilemmas and general trends in the South Asian Indian Christian immigrant history in Europe and North America: their transnational experience, functions of religion in the immigrant situation, relations with other religious groups, and tensions and conflicts. He stresses the importance of religion in the immigrant experience, in that religion provides a transcendent grounding for identity. However, he also argues that the establishment of new congregations and organizations in Europe and North America is not an act of separation, but is important for establishing a base from which to negotiate with social political and economic structures regarding place and power in society. Interestingly, in the discussion of tensions and conflicts, he suggests that Christian immigrants from South Asia in several countries in Europe and North America occupy a position with a potential to mediate between South Asian religious groups and the majority population. Finally, Williams suggests several trajectories for future research.

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