

ensuring that financial responsibility for a destitute population would never again fall at their door.

The land agitation that took place in the Highlands and islands in the 1880s saw crofters and their advocates seek redress for historical grievances over land tenure. The Clearances, still fresh in the memory of many tenants, provided a rallying point for reformers. Similarly, the outbreak of World War I coincided with the centenary of some of the most notorious Sutherland Clearances, and the call for homes “fit for heroes” for returning Highland soldiers was backed up by the idea that such a policy would finally right past wrongs.

Literature and drama—often based on the Sutherland experience—saw the Clearances return to public discourse in the latter part of the twentieth century. Land and its ownership was among the first devolved issues tackled by the reconvened Scottish Parliament, and the “expression of regret” by the Parliament placed the Clearances in a context of apologies for perceived historic wrongs wrought on various peoples throughout the world. Internationally, land, and the forced removal of the people occupying that land in the name of economic advancement, remains an issue with global relevance in the twenty-first century. The Three Gorges Dam on the Chang (Yangtze) River will displace over one million Chinese from their homes. The Sardar Sarovar dam in Gujarat, India, also highlights the ongoing tension between economic development and the displacement of thousands of families in order to accommodate that development. Land reform and redistribution has been high on the political agenda in Brazil, Venezuela, South Africa, and—most controversially—Zimbabwe.

[See also Scotland.]

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ANDREW G. NEWBY

**HINDUISM.** Hinduism today has approximately 800 million adherents around the world, though the vast majority of these are to be found in South Asia, the land of its origins. Modern Hinduism developed, in more ways than is customarily understood, under the crucible of colonial rule. By the late eighteenth century, considerable portions of India had fallen under British rule, and the British “discovery” of Hinduism dates to this period. Translations of various classes of Hindu religious literature into European languages were first attempted at this time, just as lengthy accounts purporting to offer insights into Hindu customs, manners, and mores were also beginning to appear. Though the establishment of British rule would eventually ease the way for Christian missionaries, until 1813 the East India Company was not favorably disposed toward missionary activity. Indians were perceived as being particularly religious-minded, and British officials were certain that nothing was calculated to jeopardize British rule in India as much as creating insecurity of religious belief and expression among their subjects.

According to conventional scholarly accounts that are still not without their adherents, early British Orientalists or Indologists, such as Sir William Jones, Nathaniel Halhead, and Charles Wilkins, who never doubted the superiority of their culture and intellectual attainments, were nevertheless enthusiastic about the achievements of the ancient Hindus. By the early nineteenth century, however, British rule was firmly in place and racial feelings had become more pronounced. There was much less hesitation in denouncing Hinduism as a polytheistic faith ridden with superstitions, and scores of works drew attention to barbarous practices alleged to have been inspired or sanctioned by the Hindu faith, including sati (widow-immolation), female infanticide, human sacrifice, child marriages, hook-swinging, polygamy (among some classes of Brahmans), and prohibitions designed to prevent widows, including prepubescent girls, from remarriage. European observers, quite unmindful of the clearly subservient status of their own women, had nevertheless concluded that one reliable evaluative scale for judging civilizations consisted in assessing how they treated their women. In this respect, India was found gravely wanting.

**Reform Hinduism.** The Bengali Brahman Rammohun Roy (1772–1833) was perhaps the most illustrious of the early reformers who accepted that European rule in India had fortuitously compelled Hindus to recognize the shortcomings in Indian society. While Roy was unable to accept the charge that Hinduism was intrinsically flawed, he acknowledged that the original teachings of the Vedas had

been corrupted; and while receptive to the ethical content of Christianity, he rejected its doctrinal teachings. Roy undertook a careful scholarly study of the Hindu scriptures and came to the conclusion that Hinduism, far from being a polytheistic faith, was fundamentally monotheistic. He did not pause to consider, however, that “polytheism” and “monotheism” alike are not categories through which Hindus would have described themselves. His opposition to sati, which was to lead to its abolition in the territories of the East India Company, enraged the Hindu orthodoxy. Roy was also a proponent of education in English, since he wished to bring Western scientific and humanistic learning to India.

In 1828, Roy established an organization called the Brahma Sabha (Society) dedicated to the Worship of One God. Apart from its advocacy of a simpler, more Unitarian-like form of Hinduism, the Brahma Sabha promoted modern learning and fought strenuously for the removal of traditional disabilities against women. In the emergent middle-class Hindu society of Bengal, girls were now educated and child marriages were debated if not always repudiated. The Tattvabodhini Sabha (Meeting Group), founded in 1839, aimed both to familiarize Hindus with their scriptures through inexpensive publications and stem the expansion of Christianity in India. Debendranath Tagore (1817–1905), the father of the famous poet Rabindranath Tagore, endeavored to bring the two organizations together in 1843 and created something like a charter of faith for the newly energized Brahma Samaj (Society). Under the controversial leadership of Keshub Chunder Sen (1838–1884), the Brahma Samaj experienced a number of schisms, even as its influence was experienced in other parts of India and its agenda of social reform became bolder. In western India, for example, the liberal-minded Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842–1901) established a similar organization by the name of Prarthana Samaj (Prayer Society) in 1869, and there, too, debates over widow remarriage, child marriage, and female education were soon to occupy center stage.

Hindu reform movements did not, however, always look to the West, as the history of the Arya Samaj amply demonstrates. Its founder, a village Gujarati Brahman by the name of Dayananda Sarasvati (1824–1883), condemned nearly all developments in post-Vedic Hinduism. Dayananda held the Vedas to be the Word of God, absolutely free from error and an authority to the end of time, and he set out his teachings in *Satyartha Prakash* (“The Light of Truth,” 1875), a massive reinterpretation of the Vedas for modern times. Although the Arya Samaj,

founded in the same year, is often described as a revivalist movement, Dayananda thought of himself as a modernist. He found no sanction for idol-worship, the practice of untouchability, child marriage, or even the subjection of women in the Vedas; on the contrary, he was quite certain that the social scientific learning of the West had been anticipated in the Vedas. The reformist and crusading impulses of the Arya Samaj, which sent out missionaries throughout north India and even among diasporic Indian populations in Fiji, Trinidad, South Africa, and elsewhere, are seen today in the figure of Swami Agnivesh (b. 1941), a fiery activist known as much for his critiques of Hindu superstitions as for his work in procuring the freedom of bonded laborers.

**Divergent Strands of Hinduism: Nationalism, Devotionalism, and Spiritual Masters.** Two of Dayananda’s contemporaries at the other end of India, in Bengal, point to the diverse developments taking place under the rubric of Hinduism. The renowned novelist and essayist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838–1894), while not a supreme figure in the history of modern Hinduism as such, nonetheless eloquently voiced the anguish of middle-class Hindus in posing the question, “Just how had India repeatedly succumbed to foreigners?” In works such as *Krsnacaritra* (“Life of Krishna,” 1886), Bankim argued that the Hindu’s attachment to the philosophy of bhakti (devotion) had rendered the once vigorous race of Aryans into an effeminate people who, lost in rapturous and ecstatic devotion, had become incapable of defending their faith. Bankim called for the affirmation of a more masculine Hinduism.

Meanwhile, in another part of Calcutta, one of the most remarkable figures of modern history was steering Bengali youth back toward bhakti. Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1836–1886), who was far removed from the elite circles of Bengali society, came to acquire a large following among the modernizing, middle-class Bengali families as a Hindu mystic. Ramakrishna came to embody a sheer spiritual ecstasy that appeared to offer one answer to the growing materialism of Bengali life and the investment of the educated in scientific rationality. At the Dakshineswar temple on the outskirts of Calcutta, where his brother Ramkumar had served as priest, Ramakrishna became a devout follower of the goddess Kali. His devotion was so intense that he would remain immersed in *samadhi*, a state that Hindus describe as transcending all consciousness—paradoxically, also a state of constant awareness, a form of supra-consciousness. Ramakrishna hearkened back to a form of androgynous Hinduism, and is described as being capable of taking on feminine attributes. In the company of

women, it is said of Ramakrishna, he appeared to them as one of their own; and he could so embrace the feminine that he would menstruate, blood oozing out of the pores of his skin.

Ramakrishna's oral discourses, faithfully captured by a number of disciples, on ethical conduct, mystical illumination, rapturous devotion, the goddess, and the wicked ways of the world became legendary. Among those who heard his summons was Narendranath Dutta (1863–1902), who found Ramakrishna's mysticism entirely compatible with the demands of reason. As Swami Vivekananda, he was charged with spreading not only his master's teachings but the idea that a resurgent Hinduism would lead India into fulfilling its mission of energizing the world through a form of political spiritualism. While keen to furnish Hinduism with a message of social service, which would be dispensed through the Ramakrishna Mission, founded in 1892, Vivekananda became a tireless proponent of a Hinduism that he envisioned as once both muscular and the repository of timeless truths. He accepted that Hinduism had become degraded over time, and that the West's domination of the material domain had given it the veneer of superiority. The inner core of Hinduism, Vivekananda submitted, nonetheless remained spotless. To a world weary of violence, Vivekananda put forward Hinduism as an intrinsically tolerant faith. Vivekananda took his message to the West, and his fame spread after an electrifying address he gave in Chicago at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893, where he stood forth as the principal representative of Hinduism. He lectured widely in the West and won many converts to his thinking. To the present day, he remains one of the favorite icons of diasporic Hindus.

As nationalism gained ground toward the end of the nineteenth century, Hindu thinkers sought to accommodate Hinduism to their political thinking. Under Lala Lajpat Rai (1865–1928), the Arya Samaj mobilized nationalist sentiment against British rule and became a considerable political force in north India. Though Lajpat Rai was immensely popular, Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856–1920), a learned Chitpavan Brahman from Maharashtra, acquired an unprecedented following. He gave support to Dayananda's anti-cow-killing campaign, but the real stroke of political genius on his part was to revive both the Ganapati festival (celebrating the popular deity Ganesh), which would become an annual occasion for haranguing the British, and the memory of Shivaji, a seventeenth-century chieftain who was transformed by Tilak's panegyrics and the anticolonialism of rapturous Hindu devotees into a nationalist figure who had shown

the way to defend the motherland against rapacious outsiders. The suppression of these celebrations by the British, Tilak realized, could be charged against them as an attempt to tamper with the religious sensibilities of Indians.

In Bengal, the highly Westernized Aurobindo Ghose (1872–1950), whose father kept him away from India for nearly fifteen years, immersed himself in Hindu texts and then plunged into nationalist politics. The pages of his English-language weekly, *Bande Mataram* ("Hail the Motherland"), became a rallying point for Hindu revolutionaries who invoked the goddess and advocated *swadeshi* (self-reliance). Aurobindo's retreat from politics was just as dramatic as his entry: allegedly upon the advice of a holy man, Aurobindo left for the French enclave of Pondicherry in southern India and withdrew into seclusion to practice yoga. Over the course of the next four decades, Aurobindo endeavored to perfect yoga so that it would lead to an inner development by means of which the practitioner could discover the "one self" that inhabits all and evolve a consciousness that Aurobindo described as supramental. Though Aurobindo also sought to articulate his philosophical worldview in a huge corpus of writings, he was, like virtually every other major figure in contemporary Hinduism, including Bankim Chandra, Tilak, and Gandhi, drawn most eminently to the *Bhagavad Gita*. Indeed, a history of contemporary Hinduism can be written through the *Gita*: discussed widely in nationalist circles, revolutionaries drew upon its teachings to justify armed opposition to the British, while Gandhi insisted on an allegorical reading that turned the *Gita* into a manual of nonviolence. While a contemporary Vaishnava theologian such as Srila Prabhupada (1896–1977) of the Caitanya-sampradaya, the founder of the Hare Krishna movement, views the *Gita* as the supreme embodiment of the idea of bhakti (devotion), others such as Gandhi and Tilak have seen the *Gita* as a call to action (karma yoga).

The first half of the twentieth century can also be described as a period of modern spiritual masters, of the emergence of Hindu apologetics, and of Hinduism, or a form of "Indian spirituality," going transnational. Various figures, such as Swami Sivananda (1887–1963), the founder of the Divine Life Society Movement; the philosopher Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975), author of the widely read *The Hindu View of Life* (1927); Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986), who owed no particular allegiance to Hinduism, or to caste, religion, or nation, but nonetheless became widely renowned as the repository of "Indian wisdom"; and the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission can be evoked in this context. Two extraordinarily compelling figures

emerge from this period of Hinduism. The Sai Baba of Shirdi (1894–1969) stressed the harmony of Hinduism and Islam and would be claimed by both Muslims and Hindus. Speaking in parables, he became known as a healer and performer of miracles; and from his base in a village in Maharashtra, he came to have a worldwide following among Hindus. Further south, in Tamil Nadu, the sage of Arunachala, Ramana Maharshi (1879–1950), offered the clearest exposition of *advaita* (non-dualism). Describing his method as Self-inquiry, Maharshi taught that we are the Supreme Self, and that awareness of this reality necessitates not the abandonment of our duties in this life or the cessation of activity but only emancipation from ego-illusion, or from mistakenly taking the ego to be real. The duality of the individual and the world is itself illusory. With these teachings, Maharshi returned to the classic formulations of the venerable Shankaracharya (c. 780–820), the leading expositor of *advaita* in Hindu thinking.

**Mohandas Gandhi: Hinduism's Preeminent Voice in the Modern Age.** Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948) doubtless occupies an altogether distinct place in the history of modern Hinduism. He is chiefly honored today not as a savant of Hinduism, but rather as the principal architect of the Indian independence movement and as the most dedicated advocate of nonviolent resistance as a mass movement. While the rest of the world paid homage to him at his assassination as the supreme example of a moral leader in modern times, his political nemesis, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in his condolence message to the government of India, adverted to Gandhi as “the great leader of the Hindu community.” Gandhi’s assassin, a Chitpavan Brahman by the name of Nathuram Godse, on the contrary viewed the Mahatma as a traitor to the Hindu community, and adamantly held forth to the view that his appeasement of Muslims had led to the emasculation of Hindus. Yet, as the assassin’s bullets pierced Gandhi, he is reported to have said, “He Ram!” (Oh, God!, a Hindu invocation of the divine).

In Gandhi’s own lifetime, people clamored for his *darshan* (or gaze, by means of which the observer also becomes blessed) and even claimed that he was an avatar (incarnation) of God. Gandhi was nearly installed into the pantheon of Hindu gods, yet he himself went so far as to say that a person could not believe in God and still be a Hindu. The contours of his Hinduism are thus not easily delineated, and his relation to diverse Hindu communities remained a complex one. A Hindu is not required to visit a temple, and Gandhi seldom did so; however, he championed the rights of Dalits, or lower-caste Hindus, to

worship at temples. Similarly, he was emphatically of the view that when venerable Hindu texts seemed to go against one’s conscience, their teachings were to be rejected; and, yet, he frequently described himself as a believer in *sanatan dharma*, or the idea that Hinduism is an eternal religion. His prayer meetings were models of ecumenism, as passages were read from Hindu, Muslim, and Christian texts. Gandhi is both one of the critical figures in modern Hinduism’s engagement with other faiths and the supreme representative of Hinduism in contemporary interfaith dialogues. Though he remained profoundly wedded to the *Gita*, and viewed it as an insurmountable guide to daily living, his veneration for the Sermon on the Mount never diminished. Many Christian missionaries who came into contact with Gandhi, sometimes toying with the idea of attempting to convert him to Christianity, came away with the opinion that they had seldom encountered a better Christian.

Gandhi’s precise contributions to the evolution of Hinduism are likely to remain a matter of discussion for some time, but some insight might be gleaned by considering briefly his positions on questions of caste and *ahimsa* (nonviolence). Not unlike the Buddha, Gandhi was not greatly inclined to indulge in metaphysical speculations, and utopian though he may have been in many respects, he had an extraordinary awareness of the realities on the ground. His opponents among the lower castes, such as the Dalit leader B. R. Ambedkar, viewed him as an unrepentant supporter of the caste system, but others have argued that no one did as much as Gandhi to unsettle orthodox Hindus with his various campaigns of social reform and his sharp critiques of untouchability as an excrescence upon Hinduism. Gandhi drew upon a wide array of sources—Vaishnava, Jain, Buddhist, Christian, and secular humanist—as he came to formulate his ideas of nonviolent resistance (*satyagraha*), and though countless Hindu texts have argued for the centrality of *satya* (truth), Gandhian hermeneutics uniquely posits the relationship of *satya* to *ahimsa* as an integral part of Hinduism.

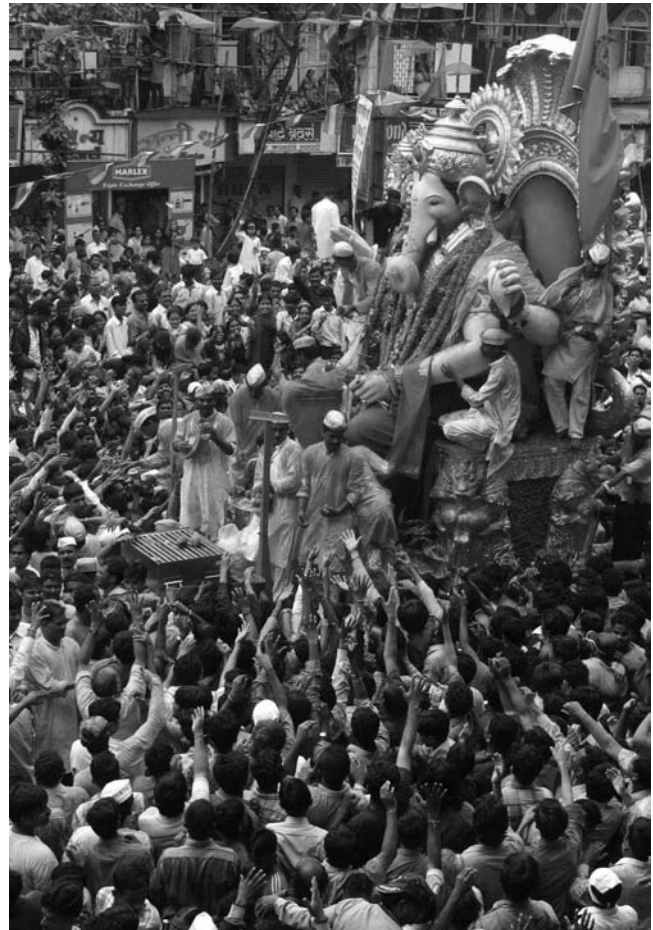
**Hinduism and Hindutva: A Faith and Its Place in Modern Politics.** Even as Gandhi took Indian politics by storm, some Hindus were forging a more virile and masculine conception of Hinduism, and by the 1930s, as contemporary research has indubitably established, they had established links with Italian Fascists and Nazis. India was proudly declared to be the original homeland of the Aryans. Gandhi’s assassin, Nathuram Godse, had been associated both with the Hindu Mahasabha, a political party that strove without much success to ensure the primacy of Hindu interests, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak

Sangh (RSS), a paramilitary organization that even today is viewed as the principal force behind the resurgence of Hindu militancy. The idea of a Hindu *rashtra* or nation did not bear fruit, and well until the 1980s any political party that openly championed the cause of Hindus was destined to remain an orphan in politics. However, by the late 1980s Hindu nationalists were able to come out of their wilderness, and many of them galvanized their forces around a sixteenth-century mosque in the north Indian city of Ayodhya. They alleged that a Hindu temple, built to commemorate the birth of Lord Rama at that exact spot, had been destroyed to make way for the mosque in 1526, and they demanded the removal of the mosque, which was also described as a palpable reminder to Hindus of their humiliation at the hands of Muslim conquerors. Finally, on 6 December 1992, notwithstanding the assurances of the Indian state that they would not permit the mosque to be desecrated, the Babri Masjid was destroyed when a huge crowd set to work on taking it apart.

In 1997, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a political party that represents the interests of Hindus, and had hitherto held office in only a few northern states, triumphed at the polls and became the leading partner in a coalition that would govern India until 2004. If the BJP did the more explicit work of Hinduism, the cultural work of a resurgent Hinduism was carried out by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), an organization that seeks to install pride in Hindu culture, disseminate Hindu writings, oppose conversions from Hinduism to other faiths, and project a favorable view of Hinduism to the outside world. The VHP has also taken upon itself the responsibility to facilitate knowledge of Hinduism around the world, and to embrace the religion aggressively in public forums; it has active chapters in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Fiji, Trinidad, and elsewhere in the Indian diaspora. During the BJP's years in power, there were frequent reports of attempts by the BJP and VHP, hotly contested by secularists, to Hinduize cultural institutions, promote the "Hindu science" of astrology as a university-level course, drastically alter the content of Indian history textbooks, and the like. Though the electoral defeat of the BJP in 2004 put some of these concerns into cold storage, the more substantive question is whether the advocates of Hindutva, which is most aptly described as a militant form of Hinduism whose adherents swear by modern realpolitik and the idea of an India that is in its fundamentals a Hindu nation-state, were ever seriously committed to Hinduism, or whether they opportunistically rode the faith to political power. Indeed, one of Hindutva's most famous ideologues, Vinayak Savarkar, openly stated his

dislike for the word "Hinduism," which he described as reminding him of a chaotic and rudderless faith that he thought could not be shepherded to lead India to glory in the modern age of brutal nation-state politics. If Hindu nationalists have arrogated to themselves the role of Hinduism's defenders, it is also remarkable that many have trashed the faith. Thus the Bajrang Dal, the "Army of Hanuman," which has openly resorted to violence to intimidate Muslims as well as soft Hindus, is quite oblivious of the fact that Hanuman has traditionally been viewed as the very personification of courage, selfless service, and learning.

**The Future of Hinduism.** Contemporary Hinduism is too diverse, polyphonic, and multilayered to be encapsulated through only its stellar figures, institutional histories, and the meta narratives that dwell on pan-Indian deities or the familiar sectarian histories of Vaishnavism and Saivism. The worship of minor deities persists, and



**Hindu Procession.** Procession honoring the Hindu deity Ganesha, Mumbai, India, September 2006. Photograph by Gautam Singh. AP IMAGES

moreover gods and goddesses die, take birth, or witness some rejuvenation. It will suffice to draw attention to a few of the more arresting developments of recent times. First, both abroad and even among the more affluent classes in India, Hinduism is increasingly being understood through such allied phenomena as yoga, ayurveda, vegetarianism, and even *vastu shastra*, the science that purports to establish how architecture and building structures could be propitious to human well-being. It is not clear, for instance, whether Jawaharlal Nehru had any propensity toward Hindu beliefs, but he was a keen advocate of yoga. For some Hindus, it is no exaggeration to say, vegetarianism is their dharma, the moral law of their being. To the Hindus in the United States who successfully filed a class-action lawsuit against McDonald's for using beef fat in the preparation of allegedly "vegetarian" french fries, vegetarianism, and in particular the complete disavowal of beef products, was the most explicit manifestation of their Hinduism. Certainly contemporary accounts of Hinduism can ill afford to ignore these phenomena.

Secondly, Hinduism is now present worldwide, even though the vast bulk of its practitioners reside in the Indian subcontinent. Diasporic Hinduism takes many forms, and an arresting question is whether it simply mimics Hinduism in India, or if it sometimes generates new Hindu practices and even helps to determine Hinduism's contours in the land of its birth. The nearly two-million-strong affluent Hindu community in the United States is opting for opulent, indeed ostentatious, temples, the construction of which is increasingly being handed over to architects and craftsmen imported from India. Hindu communities seem eager to embrace what they view as the most "authentic" forms of Hinduism. Scholars of Hindu nationalism have noted that Hindu militancy in India receives considerable support from Hindus settled in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, and disputes and controversies originating in India often get replayed in the diaspora. The agitation among certain Hindus over the content, regarding Hinduism and ancient India, of sixth-grade world-history textbooks in California is a case in point as nearly the same controversies had previously broken out in India. On the other hand, Hinduism has displayed a characteristic versatility in the diaspora. The comparatively minor village deity sometimes encountered in Tamil Nadu, Munisvaran, has been raised to the status of a major god among Malaysian Hindus, and everywhere, from Southeast Asia to Fiji, Mauritius, and Australia, the Tamil diaspora has been successful in transforming the worship of the god Murugan into a major public festival. Using the traditional form of popular Hindu literature called the

*Puranas* as a model, the Indo-Fijian writer, Subramani, published the first Purana ever written in Bhojpuri. It is important to recognize that an overwhelmingly Muslim country such as Indonesia continues to derive much cultural sustenance from Hindu epics and mythological stories.

Thirdly, Hinduism is, like most other phenomena of our times, a part of the cinematic, television, and digital age. A genre of films called "mythologicals" made popular Hindu narratives from the 1930s onward, and the film *Jai Santoshi Maa* (1975) won the goddess Santoshi Maa many new converts. Santoshi Mother's ritual fast (*vrata*) over sixteen consecutive Fridays began to be observed by millions. The observance by the unmarried heroine in the film *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995) of another fast, the *Karwa Chauth*, customarily kept by married Hindu women, apparently instigated many young girls to emulate the film's heroine. Ramanand Sagar's epic television serials, *Ramayana* (1986–1988) and *Krishna* (1989), brought the Puranic literature to television screens, and B. R. Chopra followed with the mega-serial, *Mahabharata* (1988–1990), relayed on successive Sunday mornings over two years. This seems unobjectionable enough, but some scholars have argued that the television *Ramayana* homogenizes the Ramkatha (story of Rama), elevating the conservative version of TulSIDas over competing versions. Hinduism has now entered cyberspace, appropriately enough for a religion that, like the World Wide Web, is extraordinarily decentered, polymorphous, and comparatively lacking in doctrinal authority. New Hindu histories, which are not very attentive either to Hinduism or to the protocols of historical scholarship, are constantly being generated on the Web. One Web site features the "Hindu Holocaust Museum" to document what is alleged to be the murder of millions of Hindus by Muslim invaders over the last millennium. Strangely, some Web sites on Hinduism not only give an overview of the faith but also document Islamic terrorism, a decisive sign that Islam is critical to Hindutva's self-identity.

As one contemplates the future of Hinduism, one is also struck by the fact that modernizing Hindus, while eager to project Hinduism as a uniquely tolerant and ancient faith that has been fed by diverse strands, are ironically also tempted to bring Hinduism into conformity with the major Semitic faiths. They resent, for example, the description of Hinduism as a polytheistic faith and are keen that Hindus should be viewed as monotheists. They are animated by a feverish sense of history and adamant in suggesting that Hinduism's truths are compatible with the findings of modern science. The ideologues of Hindutva and their supporters who demolished the Babri Masjid

are historical-minded to the extent that they have, unlike Hindus of the past, historicized Hindu deities. The tendency to scientize Hinduism is most palpably on display both in the argument, encountered frequently among Hindu nationalists, that the Vedas are repositories of scientific truths that are now only now being discovered by the scientific community, and in the worldwide dissemination of “scientific Hinduism” by the (many wealthy) Gujarati adherents of Swaminarayan Hinduism. Their extraordinary opulent structures, in London, Delhi, and Bartlett (outside Chicago), are not so much temples as museums of Hinduism. If one accepts that Hinduism is largely a religion of mythos, a religion without a historical founder or a central text, and perfectly at ease with its own indifference to history as a category of knowledge, then there is no question that the attempted transformation of Hinduism into a religion of history among some of its advocates will be one of the most contested elements in its continuing evolution as a faith responsive to one-eighth of humanity.

[See also India.]

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VINAY LAL

**HIP-HOP.** Hip-hop is a cultural expression developed by African American, Afro-Caribbean, and Latino inner-city youth that took form in the Bronx in New York City during the early 1970s. Most sources place the movement’s genesis as 12 November 1974, one year after the formation

of the Zulu Nation, an organization credited with the growth and spread of hip-hop culture and the preservation of its legacy.

There are several major elements of hip-hop: “DJ’ing,” the art of mixing and “scratching” records by disc jockeys; “writing,” skillfully executed graffiti and aerosol art; and several dance forms, including break dancing. However, hip-hop’s most prominent element is “MC’ing,” also known as rapping, distinguished by rhymed storytelling over musical beats. This element has its origins in the African American tradition of signifying and verbal wordplay, in call-and-response rituals as a throwback to African roots, in the lyrical genius of such predecessors as Gil Scott-Heron and the Last Poets, and in the contribution of spoken word forms transported from the Anglophone Caribbean.

The first rap record to reach the mainstream, “Rapper’s Delight” by the Sugarhill Gang, released in September 1979, was the epitome of party music, its lyrics containing subject matter that places emphasis on material wealth, sexual bravado, and merrymaking. However, by the dawn of the 1980s, rap quickly became a medium for the articulation of more critical concerns of urban youth. As Tricia Rose has noted in *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), the climate of the early 1980s saw cuts to federal aid used for social programs, a decrease in the availability of low-income housing, and the restructuring of labor in urban centers that left the working poor with skills for vocations that were becoming increasingly obsolete. These events, which significantly influenced the lives of New Yorkers in the lower economic strata, gave birth to Grandmaster Flash and the Furious 5’s release “The Message,” considered to be the first glimmer of social consciousnesses in popular rap music in its depiction of the hopelessness of the urban condition.

Since its inception, hip-hop culture and music have developed subgenres that cater to its function as both entertainment and social commentary. For example, artists such as Jungle Brothers and Public Enemy made message rap—which embodies cultural, political, or religious significance—popular during a period between the late 1980s and early 1990s. This was followed by what has been labeled as the “gangsta rap” era, where popular rap groups such as N.W.A. tended to promote the glorification of street violence. In the twenty-first century, mainstream rap music has been criticized for its materialism and misogyny. Despite these periodic shifts, there remains a steady undercurrent of all of these facets, their alternate resurfacing