

Historical Timeline of Hinduism in America

1780's Trade between India and America.

Trade started between India and America in the late 1700's. In 1784, a ship called "United States" arrived in Pondicherry. Its captain was Elias Hasket Derby of Salem. In the decades that followed Indian goods became available in Salem, Boston and Providence. A handful of Indian servant boys, perhaps the first Asian Indian residents, could be found in these towns, brought home by the sea captains.^[1]

1801 First writings on Hinduism

In 1801, New England writer Hannah Adams published *A View of Religions*, with a chapter discussing Hinduism. Joseph Priestly, founder of English Utilitarianism and isolater of oxygen, emigrated to America and published *A Comparison of the Institutions of Moses with those of the Hindoos and other Ancient Nations* in 1804.

1810-20 Unitarian interest in Hindu reform movements

The American Unitarians became interested in Indian thought through the work of Hindu reformer Rammohun Roy (1772-1833) in India. Roy founded the Brahmoo Samaj which tried to reform Hinduism by affirming monotheism and rejecting idolotry. The Brahmoo Samaj with its universalist ideas became closely allied to the Unitarians in England and America.

1820-40 Emerson's discovery of India

Ralph Waldo Emerson discovered Indian thought as an undergraduate at Harvard, in part through the Unitarian connection with Rammohun Roy. He wrote his poem "Indian Superstition" for the Harvard College Exhibition of April 24, 1821. In the 1830's, Emerson had copies of the *Rig-Veda*, the *Upanishads*, the *Laws of Manu*, the *Bhagavata Purana*, and his favorite Indian text the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

1838 Thoreau at Walden with the Bhagavad Gita

Henry Deavid Thoreau was introduced to Indian thought through Emerson. During the year 1838-39, he retreated to "confront the essential facts of life" at Walden Pond, which he called "God's drop" and compared to the holy Ganges. His classic Walden makes clear that the Bhagavad Gita accompanied him there. In a sense, he embraced Indian thought more fully in his own life and thought than did Emerson.

1830's Indians in California.

In 1836, a forty-year-old cook, John from the Coramandel in southern India was in Monterey. There were at least two Asian Indians in California for the gold rush, brought probably by New England ships.^[2]

1840's New England Transcendentalists

Influenced by the "Transcendentalism" of Emerson and Thoreau, later Transcendentalists such as Bronson Alcott and Theodore Parker were also sympathetic to Indian thought. Alcott spoke of creating a *World Bible* that would contain all the wisdom from the major religious traditions. In sum, the Transcendentalist were the first Americans to take seriously Indian thought as ideas to be incorporated, rather than rebutted.

1842 The American Oriental Society formed

The A.O.S. was inaugurated in 1842 to advance scholarship on Asian topics. Its publication, the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, which still exists today, was instrumental in establishing scholarly work on Asian thought in America.

1851 Salem's Fourth of July

Trade with India increased steadily, but slowly. In 1851, a half dozen Asian Indians marched in the East India Marine Society contingent for the Fourth of July parade in Salem.^[3]

1867 The Free Religious Association

The Free Religionists split with more conservative Unitarians and gave Eastern thought an important role in the 1870's and 1880's in their discussions of comparative religion. They drew upon the work of the great Orientalist Max Müller who was busy translating Indian texts during these decades and were also in contact with the Brahma Samaj in India.

1880-90's Theosophy emerges in America

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott, while pursuing their own agenda in creating a universal religion based on ancient scriptures, helped disseminate Hindu thought. They believed that the Oriental religions contained the purest kernels of their universal religion. Blavatsky and Olcott went to India and the movement grew considerably, in both India and the West.

1893 Hindus at the World's Parliament of Religions

The Parliament marked the first time in history that Hindus presented their teachings to American audiences. Hindus at the Parliament were Protap Chundar Mozoomdar and B. B. Nagarkar (both of the Brahma Samaj), Narasima Chari and S. Parthacarathy Arjanger (both Vaishnavites), Mohun Dev, Manilal N. Dvivedi, and Swami Vivekananda. The charisma and charm of Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) eclipsed the others and he drew a phenomenal response from the audience with his speech preaching the tolerance and all-embracing nature of Hinduism.

1893 Swami Vivekananda tours America

Vivekananda spoke in churches and clubs throughout the Boston area, both before and after the Parliament. Immediately following the Parliament his speaking tour took him to such places as Madison, Wisconsin; Minneapolis, Des Moines, Detroit, and Memphis. Everywhere he challenged audiences with a positive, universal Hindu message.

1894 Vivekananda founds Vedanta Society

Swami Vivekananda founded the first Vedanta Society in New York. His teachings were oriented around three main themes: the essentials of Hinduism and Vedanta philosophy, the unjust criticism of Christian missionaries in India, and the need for understanding between East and West. Vivekananda returned to India in 1897.

1899 Vedanta Society in San Francisco

After two years in India, Swami Vivekananda returned to America to establish a Vedanta center in San Francisco. He installed Swami Trigunatita in San Francisco and Swami Abhedananda in New York --both monks from the Ramakrishna Mission in Calcutta. These were the first two of what would eventually become some xx Vedanta centers in the U.S., each in direct relation to the main headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission in India. In 1900, Vivekananda returned to India, where he died in 1902.

1902 Swami Rama Tirtha to U.S.

Swami Rama Tirtha (1873-1906), also a Vedantin, arrived in America in 1902. He toured and lectured for two years. Swami Rama was a poet, intellectual and itinerant teacher. Preferring a quiet, simple life, he had no wish to found a movement as did Vivekananda. While in America, he spent most of his time as a guest of a Dr. Hiller in Shasta Springs, California and giving lectures in and around San Francisco. Swami Rama returned to India in 1904 and died by an accidental drowning in the Ganges, but not before inspiring considerable admiration and devotion from American followers.^[4]

1902 Baba Premanand Bharati, Krishna devotee

A Bengali follower of Krishna-devotee and saint, Sri Caitanya, Baba Premanand Bharati also came in 1902 and founded the Krishna Samaj. He lectured in New York, Boston and Los Angeles where he is said to have built a Hindu temple. The Krishna Samaj was the first *bhakti*-oriented form of Hinduism to reach American soil and can be thought as the precursor to the Hare Krishnas of the 1960's. Bharati returned to India in 1907.^[5]

1903 **A. K. Mozumdar: Messianic World Message**

A.K. Mozumdar (1864-1953)'s Messianic World Message was an eclectic blend of Hinduism and Christianity. He published a series of pamphlets called *The Life and the Way Series* in addition to other works. In 1911, A. K. Mozumdar was the first East Indian to receive American citizenship.^[6]

1906 **First major Hindu temple: San Francisco**

The first Hindu temple in North America was erected in San Francisco 1906 by the San Francisco Vedanta Society. The temple quickly became a San Francisco landmark, a remarkably eclectic building incorporating elements from various temples in India, the Taj Mahal, and European castles. Swami Trigunatita claimed that in the temple he had blended a Hindu Temple, a Christian church, a Muslim mosque, a Hindu monastery, and an American residence.^[7]

1910 **Split in New York Vedanta Society**

The Vedanta center in New York collapsed due to a split between Swami Abhedananda and the New York members. This was a considerable blow to the fledgling Vedanta movement in America. Shortly thereafter, however, Swami Paramananda founded a center in Boston.

1911 **Attacks on Hinduism**

In 1911, a sensational article by Mabel Potter Daggett, "The Heathen Invasion" was published. Shortly thereafter in 1912, a Mrs. Gross Alexander published her "American Women Going After Heathen Gods". These articles expressed concern about the large percentage of women in Vedanta Centers, presenting them as duped by the charms of Asian teachers.

1912 **Tagore to America**

Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore, came to the U.S. for the first time in 1912-13. He returned in 1916-17. His son went to agricultural school at the University of Illinois, Urbana. He lived briefly in Urbana, lectured at Harvard and elsewhere. Tagore won the Nobel prize for literature in 1917.

1915 **Vedanta Boston and Los Angeles**

Swami Paramananda started the Vedanta Center of Southern California in Los Angeles. He divided his time equally between Boston and L.A.

1917 **Asian Exclusion extended to Indians**

The Asian Exclusion Act of 1917 cut off almost all immigration from India. Until 1965 when the immigration laws changed, the transmission of Hinduism to America was reduced to a trickle.

1920's **Krishnamurti comes to California**

The Theosophists further contributed to the dissemination of Hindu thought through their promotion of Jiddu Krishnamurti as the world savior predicted by Theosophical literature. He gave lectures on Theosophy in the early '20's, and then settled in Ojai, California, where the Krishnamurti Foundation continues to circulate his writings to this day. In the late '20's, Krishnamurti renounced his messianic role and broke with the Theosophists, rejecting all religions as external trappings.^[8]

1920 **Paramahansa Yogananda to America**

Yogananda (1893-1952) founded Yogoda-Satsang in India in 1917 and brought it to America in 1920. He came to Boston this year to attend the Pilgrim Tercentenary Anniversary International Congress of Religious Liberals, sponsored by the Unitarian Church. After the conference, Swami Yogananda stayed on, becoming the first Hindu Vedanta and Yoga teacher to settle in the United States. By 1930 had established twelve Yogoda centers in cities across America, which altogether claimed 25,000 members.^[9] His movement continues to the present as the Self Realization Fellowship. Until 1965 when significant numbers of immigrants from India began to arrive, this movement was the largest and most extensive Hindu organization in the U.S.

1923 **Ananda Ashram in California**

Swami Paramananda founded the Ananda Ashrama, a Vedanta hermitage at the foothills of the Sierra Madre Mountains in California.

1923 **Swami Omkar founds Asrama in Philadelphia**

Swami Omkar had founded Santi Asrama in Madras in 1917 in memory of Swami Rama Tirtha. In 1923, he began an American branch of Santi Asrama in Philadelphia --the Sri Nariya Asrama. ^[10]

1927 **Katherine Mayo's Mother India**

Hinduism was viciously attacked by the best-seller *Mother India*, by Katherine Mayo, a book which sharply critiqued the most sensation aspects of Hinduism -- "idol worship", animal sacrifices in Calcutta, child marriage, and the practice of suttee. Left entirely untouched were the higher ideals of the religion expressed in the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad-Gita* that so attracted the Transcendentalists and other admirers of Hindu thought. The book set off considerable controversy. Swami Omkar, among others, responded vehemently to the book.^[11]

1928 **Dharma Mandal, New York City**

A Bengali dramatist, Kedarnath Das Gupta, founded the Dharma Mandal in New York City and also published a magazine, *Dharma*, in an effort to "present India from India's point of view."^[12]

1930's **New Vedanta Centers**

The Vivekananda Vedanta Society experience a considerable growth spurt in the 1930's and '40's. New centers were opened in Portland, Hollywood, Providence, Chicago, New York, St. Lewis, and Seattle. The number of members tripled in the 30's and grew steadily until the 50's where membership leveled off again. Yet, even with the growth-spurt, the numbers were tiny--less than 1,000 members country-wide.^[13]

1930's **Self Realization Fellowship**

The Self Realization also flourished. Followers of Swami Yogananda are said to have numbered over 25,000 in the 1930's.^[14]

1937 **World Spiritual University, New York City**

Dada Lekh Raj, also called Sri Prajapita Brahma, spiritual leader of the Brahma Kumari movement in India, founded the Brahma Kumari's World Spiritual University in New York. Leadership passed to the Brahma Kumaris, his female disciples.

19xx **Wendell Thomas publishes Hinduism Invades America.**

This book chronicles the early history of Hinduism in America and the varied responses of Americans to this religious tradition.

1941 **Centers split from Vivekananda Vedanta Society**

The Vedanta movement experienced a blow when the Ananda Ashram in California and the Vedanta retreat center in Boston split away from the Vedanta Society and continued under the name of the Order of Ramakrishna Brahmavadin, which they carry to this day. These communities both had women lieutenants of Paramananda as

their leaders --Gayatri Devi and Sister Daya. Upon Paramananda's death, the Ramakrishna Mission in India refused to name them as the new leaders of their respective centers, insisting that the leaders of Vedanta centers be monks trained in Calcutta.^[15]

1941 Christopher Isherwood becomes Vedantin

The writer Christopher Isherwood joined the Hollywood Ramakrishna Vedanta Society at the age of 35 and became a lifelong student of Swami Prabhavananda. They collaborated on a rendition of the Bhagavad Gita published in 1943.

1949 Saiva Siddhanta Church founded

The Saiva Siddhanta Church was founded in 1949 when Siva Yogaswami (1872-1964) passed the mantle of spiritual succession for his lineage to Gurudeva Sivaya Subramuniaswami, an American disciple. With the initiation, Yogaswami proclaimed, "This will be heard in America! Now go 'round the world and roar like a lion!" Gurudeva returned to the U.S., practiced intense meditation and began his active teaching in 1957. Its first headquarters was in Kauai, Hawaii.^[16]

1950's Popularization of Yoga

Hatha Yoga, the physical yoga of breathing and postures, became popular in this decade. Yoga teachers demonstrated postures on television and bookstores carried books on yoga techniques. Yoga was popular among many people who had little interest or knowledge about its religious underpinnings. It became possible in America to approach yoga at different levels ranging from merely physical exercise to a spiritual way of life. Check on Swami Satchidananda, Yogaville

1950 Lake Shrine opened in Los Angeles

On August 20, 1950 the Self-Realization Fellowship of Swami Yogananda formally opened its international headquarters, "The Lake Shrine", in Pacific Palisades, California. This 13-acre center has grown over the years to house life-size statues of Jesus and the Buddha, swans, gold-plated lotus towers, an artificial lake and windmill, and a gilded brass chest said to contain some of Gandhi's ashes.

1952 Swami Yogananda Dies, Body Incorruptible

The death of Swami Yogananda attracted considerable media attention due to the incorruptibility of his physical body for twenty days after he died. After Yogananda's death, the Self-Realization Fellowship began to wane. Several spin-off organizations founded by his followers included the Self-Revelation Church of Absolute Monism in Washington D.C., the Prema Dharmasala in Virginia, the Temple of Kriya Yoga in Chicago, and the Ananda Church of God-Realization.

1957 Saiva Siddhanta in San Francisco

Subramuniaswami founded the Saiva Siddhanta Yoga Order in San Francisco. He established the Palaniswami temple there which was probably the first Hindu temple in North America performing traditional deity worship.^[17] It moved to Concord, CA in 1989.

1957 Nityananda Institute

The Institute was founded by an American master named Swami Chetananda, of the lineage of the Indian sage, Swami Nityananda. By the early seventies it had centers in Portland, Oregon, Cambridge, Mass., Santa Monica, California, and Ann Arbor, Michigan. It provides yoga classes, study groups, retreats and a daily practice of chanting.

1958 Divine Life Society

The American branch of the Divine Life Society of India, the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Center, was founded by Swami Vishnu Devananda in 1958. The Indian society was founded in 1936 by the famous yogi Swami Sivananda Saraswati. In North America, the Divine Life Society established three large yoga camps in Quebec, New York state and the Bahamas. Devananda's work in America promoted *hatha yoga*, and were part of a general trend in the 1950's of the popularization of yoga.^[18]

1959 **Maharishi Mahesh Yogi**

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi arrived in America with a simple technique of yoga meditation for popular use called Transcendental Meditation (TM). He established the Spiritual Regeneration Movement (SRM) in Los Angeles and the Maharishi International University. TM was billed not as a religious movement, but as a scientifically verifiable technique of self-improvement unrelated to Hinduism or any other religion.

1960's **Popularization of "TM"**

The Beatles and actress Mia Farrow join the Transcendental Meditation movement. The simplified form of yoga taught by Maharishi proved to be well-adapted for Americans. In the early sixties, TM was part of the colorful youth culture.

1965 **Immigration Act of 1965**

The new immigration policy abolished the quota system based on national origins and allowed for an annual limitation of 20,000 immigrants per country and a limitation of 170,000 immigrants from the countries outside the Western Hemisphere. Immigration from India rose dramatically. The act gave preference to visa applicants whose skills are needed in the U.S. and those with professional qualifications. A highly educated and affluent Hindu immigrant population began to grow in the U.S.^[19]

1965 **Bhaktivedanta to the U.S.**

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896-1977) arrived in America and founded the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), otherwise known as the Hare Krishna movement. Bhaktivedanta was seventy years old when he arrived in New York City with less than ten dollars. His Vaishnava movement of devotion to Lord Krishna, emphasizing chanting the Lord's name, a rigorous daily schedule of worship, and strict vegetarianism, grew within a few years to include dozens of ISKCON centers .

1966 **Swami Satchidananda to the U.S.**

Swami Satchidananda, a disciple of Swami Shivananda in India, attracted many seekers to the discipline of yoga, teaching both physical and meditation practice. He eventually founded the headquarters of the Integral Yoga Institute in the U.S., at Yogaville in Virginia.

1968 **New Vrindavan**

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness established the rural New Vrindavan community in the hills of West Virginia. Named after the popular childhood home of Krishna in India, New Vrindavan became a popular place of pilgrimage for American Hindus.

1968 **Ananda Meditation Retreat**

This center was founded by Swami Kriyananda (J. Donald Walters), disciple of Swami Paramahansa Yogananda and former board member of the Self-Realization Fellowship. Kriyananda had been expelled from SRF in 1962.^[20]

1969 **The Ananda Marga Yoga Society**

The American headquarters of this group, founded in India in 1955 by Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, was established in New York.

1969 **Rukmini Dwarakadish Temple**

Established by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, this Center in Los Angeles became the North American headquarters for the ISKCON movement.

1970's **The "Secularization" of TM**

Transcendental Meditation (TM) experienced a resurgence, moving away from its 'pop' appeal and toward a scientifically verifiable means to creativity and peace of mind attractive to professions. It's legal name in the United States became the World Plan Executive Council (WPEC) in 1972. TM was used in public schools across the country starting in 1971. Though presented by its followers as a non-religious meditation technique, a 1977 federal court ruling considered it a religious teaching prohibited under the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution.^[21]

1970's **Satya Sai Baba**

In the early 70's centers of Satya Sai Baba began to appear in America. Sai Baba (1926----) is said to be the incarnation of the previous South Indian saint, Sai Baba, who died in 1918. He is said to perform miracles, materializing from his body an aromatic gray ash which is thought to be healing. Sai Baba is considered by his devotees to be an *avatar*, an incarnation of God, and not merely a holy man. The largest centers are in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. By 1984, the Satya Sai Baba Council of America listed seventy-six Satya Sai Baba Centers and Study Centers.^[22]

1970 **Swami Muktananda and Siddha Yoga**

Siddha Yoga was brought to America by Swami Muktananda Paramahansa (1908-1983), a teacher of *kundalini yoga*. Swami Muktananda came from his ashram in Ganeshpuri, India, where he had many American devotees, for a two-month visit in America. The movement began to grow in the U.S.

1970 **Sri Chinmoy at UN**

Sri Chinmoy, a disciple of Sri Aurobindo, and an athlete and artist as well as a spiritual teacher, began to lead meditations for world peace at the United Nations. Sri Chinmoy has continued to be known in the U.S. and throughout the world for his many initiatives for world peace.

1970 **Vishwa Hindu Parishad**

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America was begun in 1970. It is a international organization that was formed to network among Hindus and unite Hindu communities, especially those outside of India.

1970 **Hindu Temple Society of North America**

The temple society was incorporated in Flushing, Queens, the first of a new wave of American Hindu associations. Its temple was consecrated in 1977.

1971 **Guru Maharaj Ji**

A teenage guru, Maharaj Ji, introduced the Divine Light Mission to America. He was 13 years old when he arrived in Colorado and made Denver his international headquarters. By the end of 1973, 50,000 people had received his teaching, but most did not stay with the movement. Members were called "premies", lovers of God. By the mid-seventies, membership was between 500-1200 among two dozen or so ashrams.^[23]

1971 **Swami Rama, Himalayan Institute**

The Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy was founded by Swami Rama, an Indian born yogi who was initiated as a sannyasi and became a spiritual leader in India, taught philosophy and psychology, and then came to the U.S. in 1969.

1973 **Guru Maharaj-ji in Astrodome**

The Divine Light Mission under Guru Maharaj Ji rented the Houston Astrodome for what it billed as Millennium 1973, "the most significant event in human history". Attendance fell far below anticipated and left DLM deeply in debt. The movement was struck by a further blow in 1974 when Guru Maharaj Ji, advocating celibacy for his followers, married his American secretary. Many people left the movement.^[24]

1973 **Kauai Aadheenam Monastery, Hawaii**

Surudeva Sivaya Subramuniaswami established the monastery and the Kadavul Hindu Temple on the island of Kauai, Hawaii, a center which has now become the nucleus of the Saiva Siddhanta Church. The monastery has now become the center for the educational Himalayan Academy Publications and the monthly newspaper *Hinduism Today*.

1974 **The Maharishi International University**

MIU was established in Fairfield, Iowa in 1974 --a degree-granting university under the auspices of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. It offers bachelors and masters degrees and enrolls about 700 undergraduate and graduate students.

1974 **Siddha Yoga Dham Association --SYDA**

SYDA was established in Oakland, California upon Muktananda's return from Ganeshpuri. Shortly thereafter, a second ashram in the Catskill mountains of New York was established which eventually became the international headquarters of the organization. Since 1974 the movement has grown considerably. By 1976 it had eighty meditation centers and five ashrams, claiming 20,000 followers.^[25] Muktananda taught that each individual has an internal transformative energy, *shakti*, that can be awakened by the guru.

1975 **Chinmaya Mission West founded**

Swami Chinmayananda, a Vedanta teacher and disciple of the revered Hindu teacher Shivananda, founded the Chinmaya Mission in India in 1953. Swami Chinmayanada travelled widely, gave lectures, and sponsored summer youth camps and family camps in America until the time of his death in 1993. There are Chinmaya Missions in many American metropolitan centers, attracting largely Asian Indian immigrants.

1977 **Consecration of America's first Hindu temples**

The Sri Venkateswara Temple in Penn Hills outside of Pittsburgh was consecrated with rites of Kumbhabhisekam on June 8, 1977. The temple had been in the planning stage since 1972. Its presiding deity is the form of Vishnu known as Venkatesvara, whose shrine at Tirupati in south India is a popular place of pilgrimage. Similarly the "S.V." temple in Pittsburgh has become an American pilgrimage place for Hindus.

The Hindu Temple Society of North America in Flushing, Queens was formally established on January 26, 1970 -- India's Republic Day. After years of planning and work, was consecrated with the rites of Kumbhabhishekam on July 4, 1977. The main deity at the temple on Bowne Street is Ganesha, the "remover of obstacles" and the guardian of the doorway or threshold.

1970's Hindu Temples in the Making

The Bharatiya Temple (Troy, Michigan), the Capital District Hindu Temple (Albany), the Sri Meenakshi Temple (Houston), the Hindu Temple Society of Southern California (Malibu), the Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago, the New England Hindu Temple Incorporated (Boston), and the Connecticut Valley Hindu Temple Society (Middletown) all incorporated between 1975 and 1979 and began working toward temple construction.

1976 **Kashi Ashram, Roseland, Florida**

Kashi Ashram was established by Ma Jaya Sati Bhagavati, a Brooklyn-born whose spiritual journey was guided by Christ, Swami Nityananda, and her guru Neem Karoli Baba. The ashram, named for the sacred city of Kashi (Banaras or Varanasi) in India, has grown into an interfaith religious community dedicated to service and built around its own "Ganges" in Florida.

1977 **The Swaminarayan movement begins in America**

The first Swaminarayan temple in America was consecrated on August 3, 1977 in Flushing, New York --also on Bowne Street. This movement of Gujarati immigrant Hindus follows the teacher Pramukh Swami, considered to be embodiment of the perfect devotee of Krishna. The movement grew rapidly with new Gujarati immigration and within twenty years had over 30 centers and 6 temples.

1977 **New Jagannath Puri Temple**

One of the first temples of ISKCON in the U.S., the Berkeley, California community consecrated an elaborate temple for Krishna, modeled on the Indian temple of Jagannath in Puri, Orissa.

1979 Vedic Heritage, Inc.

Vedic Heritage was formed by the Indian woman teacher Guru Maa, who began teaching in Forest Hills, N.Y. and in 1984 built a large Hanuman Temple in Hempstead, Long Island. It is the largest Hanuman temple in America.

1980's Rapid Growth of Asian Indian population

In 1980 the U.S. Census first used the category "Asian Indian" and in that year 361,544 chose that designation. Asian Indian immigration continued at a steady rate in the 1980's. They were mostly professionals settling in metropolitan areas. In this decade their numbers were great enough to begin supporting large temples. Nearly every metropolitan center with a significant Asian Indian population either built or formulated plans for a temple in this decade.

1980's Hindu Temple Societies Formed

The Siva Vishnu Temple in Lanham, Maryland formed in 1980 and had its Kumbhabhishekam in 1990. The Hindu Temple Society of Northeast Ohio was formed in 1981 and completed the first phase of the Sri Lakshmi Narayan Temple (Liberty) in 1986. The Hindu Cultural Center of Tennessee was formed in 1980 and opened its Sri Ganesha Temple in 1985. The Paschimakasi Sri Viswanatha Temple was consecrated to bring the spirit of Banaras to Flint, Michigan in 1982. The Hindu Temple of San Antonio was formed in 1984 and opened in 1989. The Sri Venkateswara Swami Temple of Greater Chicago had its Kumbhabhishekam in 1985. The Hindu-Jain Temple in Monroeville, PA opened with Hindu, Jain, and Sikh altars under one roof. The Hindu Temple of Greater New Orleans bought land to begin construction. The Hindu Society of Central Florida was formed in 1987 and completed its temple in Casselberry in 1992.

1981 International Society of Divine Love

Swami Prakashanan Saraswati is the founder of the International Society of Divine Love, a bhakti movement devoted to Lord Krishna. He came to the U.S. in 1981 and established his first ashram in Philadelphia in 1984. The movement now has nine centers in America and dedicated a large temple complex in Austin, Texas in 1994 to serve as its base of operations.

1981 Bharatiya Temple of Troy, Michigan

The Hindu community in the suburbs of Detroit purchased 18 acres of hilly wooded land in the suburban area of Troy in 1976. The "Bhoomi Puja" --the worship of the site itself and the ground-breaking-- took place on July 4, 1976. The temple was inaugurated in 1981. The white marble images of the deities, typical of those of north India, took place in November, 1983. The temple brings north and south Indian communities together.

1981 Sri Venkateswara Balaji in Malibu

In 1978, land was purchased in the Santa Monica mountains and in 1981 the first of the temples here, the Ganesha shrine, was consecrated. The first phase of temple construction was finished in 1984 and the Rajagopuram dedicated in 1987.

1981 The arrival of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

Rajneesh came to the U.S. having established a successful ashram catering largely to Western seekers in Poona, India in the 1970's. In 1981 he established a new ashram on 100 square acres of land near Antelope, Oregon. By 1984 the community was thriving with largely European and American followers. It is estimated that Rajneesh had some 20,000 followers worldwide. The ashram disintegrated amidst internal dissent and legal controversy in 1985.

1982 Swami Muktananda dies

The spiritual master of the Siddha Yoga movement, Swami Muktananda, died in October 1982. His chosen

successors were two young gurus --a young man whom he had named Nityananda and Nityananda's sister, whom Muktananda called Chidvilasananda. After three years, Nityananda stepped down as guru. Swami Chidvilasananda is now the head of the Siddha Yoga movement.

1984 Badarikashrama Temple

Facilities for a spiritual and cultural Hindu center were purchased in San Leandro, California, by Hindus of the Bay area.

1985 Hindu Federation of America

This organization was launched by Swami Premananda in the San Francisco Bay area, with its headquarters in Fremont and a mission to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism and promote peace among religions.

1985 Arsha Vidya Gurukula

The Arsha Vidya Pitham split away from the Chinmaya Mission in 1982 under the direction of Swami Dayananda Saraswati. In 1985, Dayananda founded the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in the Pocono mountains in Pennsylvania which offers classes and programs where students can live in a contemplative setting and study Vedanta and the Sanskrit classics.

1986 First West coast temple: Livermore, California

The Shiva Vishnu Temple in Livermore, California was the first temple in the region built from the ground up in authentic South Indian style. It was first incorporated in 1977 under the name Hindu Community and Cultural Center (HCCC) and initially met in the homes of members. After its first attempt to purchase property in Pleasanton was protested at city council meetings, Livermore extended an invitation to the Hindu community. The ground-breaking was in 1983 on four acres in a suburban area. The Kumbhabhisekam was held on July 19, 1986.

1986 Lotus-Shaped Temple in Virginia

LOTUS, the Light of Truth Universal Shrine, opened at Yogaville in Buckingham, Virginia, under the spiritual leadership of Swami Satchidananda. The shrine upholds light as the universal symbol of Reality for all faiths.

1987 The Mahabharata on Stage and Screen

Director Peter Brook's nine hour rendition of the Mahabharata plays in Brooklyn and opens as a film in Hollywood.

1987 The Path of Grace comes to America

Pushti Margya Samaj of North America started temples in New York, Pennsylvania, and Houston. The Pushti Marga is a bhakti or devotional movement, emphasizing the grace and love of Lord Krishna and especially honoring Krishna as the divine child.

1987 Saiva Siddhanta Church

In May, the Saiva Siddhanta Church opened in Concord CA, following the leadership of Sivaya Subramuniaswami, an American-born teacher initiated into the Saiva Siddhanta lineage.

1987 Amma comes to America

Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, more commonly know as Amma, a Hindu spiritual leader who is often referred to as the "Hugging Saint", toured the United States for the first time.

1990 Census of Asian Indians

The 1990 census reported 815,447 "Asian Indians" in America.^[26] There are at least 150 Hindu temples divided equally in the east and west coasts, ranging from small converted homes to large temples constructed from the

ground up. A 1991 publication estimates some 1,259,000 Hindus in all of North America.^[27]

1990's New Hindu Temple Societies

In 1990, the Hindu Temple and Cultural Society of USA was established in central New Jersey and bought a large former church building in Bridgewater. The temple community grew quickly and flourished. Ground was broken for a new Sri Venkateswara Temple in 1995.

1991 Cultural Festival of India

The Cultural Festival of India, a thirty day celebration of Indian culture, organized by the Bochasanwasi Swaminarayan Sanstha (BSS) took place in the summer on the grounds of Middlesex County College in Edison, New Jersey. The festival attracted some 40,000 people every week for a month.

1993 Ashwamedha Yajna in Los Angeles

In August, the Gayatri Pariwar in India sponsored a three-day "1008 Kundi Ashwamedha Yagna" in a huge parking lot of Cerritos College in Norwalk, California. 1008 sacred fires were kindled as the individuals, couples, and families sponsoring the event made offerings into the fire pits or kundis.

1993 Global Vision 2000

As many as 10,000 American Hindus gathered in Washington D.C. to celebrate the centennial of Swami Vivekananda's coming to the U.S. The gala convention hosted by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America took as its vision from the Sanskrit Vasudhaiva kutumbakam, "the entire creation is one family."

1993 Parliament of the World's Religions

The Chicago-based Hindu host committee for the Parliament was active in the preparations. A fund-raising dinner raised \$40,000 in an evening to help in hosting Hindu guests at the Parliament.

1993 Navaratri in New Jersey

Fall Navaratri celebrations of the "Nine Nights" of the Goddess have grown too large for any building. 10,000 come each weekend of the event for Ras Garbha dances in a huge tent in Edison, New Jersey. The temporary image of the Goddess is 18 feet high.

1995 Murugan Temple of North America

Construction of a large South Indian temple dedicated to Murugan, also known as Kartikkeya, began on Princess Garden Parkway in Lanham, MD.

1995 Ashwamedha Yajna at Soldier's Field, Chicago

On a steamy weekend in the summer, more than 3000 Hindus participated in the ritual event with hundreds of fire-altars, kindled to honor the gods through the Gayatri, the most sacred of Hindu ritual mantras. The huge event was sponsored by the Gayatri Pariwar in India.

1996 Hinduism Today Magazine

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniaswami upgraded the popular newspaper *Hinduism Today*, which he had launched in 1979, to a quarterly magazine.

1997 American Hindus Against Defamation

The American Hindus Against Defamation organization is founded. Over the years the group would go on to protest about of number of things they found desecrated the Hindu tradition such as sandals with the image of the Hindu deity Ganesha on them in 2003.

1999 **Southern Baptist Church Prayer Guide Controversy**

Right before the Hindu festival of lights, Diwali, thirty thousand copies of a prayer guide for converting Hindus, were distributed by members of the Southern Baptist Church. In protest on November 7th in Houston, Texas more than one hundred people participated in a rally that was organized by the Hindus of Greater Houston.

2000 **Hindu Prayer in Congress**

Venkatachalapathi Samuldrala, a priest belonging to the Shiva Vishnu Hindu Temple in Parma, Ohio, became the first Hindu to open a session of the House of Representatives with a Hindu invocation prayer on September 14th.

2000 **Hindu University of America Campus**

Seven years after its founding, the Hindu University of America received its very own campus in Orlando, Florida, which consisted of a 9.7 acre property with two academic buildings.

2001 **Ramayana Recitation in Pomona**

Every day for over a week in June, hundreds of Hindu came to the Fairplex in Pomona, California to listen to Ramesh Oza tell the story of the ancient Hindu epic, the *Ramayana*.

2001 **Aftermath of 9/11**

After the tragic events of September 11th, Hindus across America found themselves the victims of hate crimes. For example during the week following the attacks, two Hindu temples, one in Medinah, Illinois and the other in Matawan, New Jersey, and a convenience store owned by a Hindu man from Gujarat, India in Somerset, Massachusetts, were all firebombed.

2002 **McDonald's Fries Settlement**

McDonald's apologized to Hindus for having failed to inform them that their French fries contained beef flavoring. McDonalds also stated that they would pay ten million dollars to Hindus, vegetarian and other groups. In a similar case three years earlier in 1999, Taco Bell settled a lawsuit with Hindu, Mukesh K. Rai, after they served him a beef burrito instead of a vegetarian bean burrito.

2003 **The Hindu American Foundation**

The Hindu American Foundation (HAF) an advocacy group for Hindu Americans is founded. The group stated that "HAF seeks to serve Hindu Americans across all sampradayas (Hindu religious traditions) regardless of race, color, national origin, citizenship, caste, gender, sexual orientation, age and/or disability." The group in 2004 went on to spearhead a brief with the United States Supreme Court in a case asking for the removal of a Ten Commandments monument from Texas State Capitol grounds.

2003 **First White House Diwali Celebration**

The White House celebrated the Hindu festival of lights, Diwali, for the first time with political advisor Karl Rove standing in for President George W Bush. Seventy members of the USA's Indian community attended including Dr Sudhir M Parikh, vice-president of Indian American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE) and Gopal Khanna, CIO of Peace Corps. The event included an elaborate Indian feast and a classical Indian dance performance.

2005 **California Textbook Controversy**

The Texas based Vedic Foundation (VF) and the American Hindu Education Foundation (HEF) approached California's Curriculum Commission, saying that the depictions of Indian history and the Hindu tradition in the sixth grade textbooks were biased against Hindus. Later that year more Hindu organizations voiced their opposition to these textbooks. In 2006, at the California Department of Education a five-member Board of Education subcommittee all voted to recommend adoption of staff recommendations for edits and corrections proposed by VF and HEF for the

textbooks.

2007 Hindu Prayer at Nevada State Senate

On May 7th, Rajan Zed opened a session of the Nevada State Senate with a prayer from the Hindu text, the Rig-Veda. This was the first time a Hindu prayer was delivered in the Nevada State Senate. Earlier that year in March Rajan Zed had read an opening prayer to the Nevada State Assembly. He went on to give historic first Hindu opening prayers in California, Arizona, Washington, Utah, and New Mexico Senates and the Arizona and Oregon House of Representatives.

2007 Hindu Prayer at Senate

After offering the opening prayers at a number of state senate sessions, on July 12th Rajan Zed gave the first Hindu morning prayer ever in the United States Senate. At the start of the prayer Ante Nedlko Pavkovic, Katherine Lynn Pavkovic and Christan Renee Sugar began to protest the prayer from the visitor's gallery. They were quickly removed by police officers and the protestors were arrested and charged with disrupting Congress, a misdemeanor.

2009 Inauguration of President Barack Obama

During his inaugural address on January 20th, President Barack Obama stated, "We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and nonbelievers", thus being the first president to address America's Hindu community in his inaugural address. The next day at the customary National prayer service at the Washington National Cathedral, Uma Mysorekar, the president of the Hindu Temple Society of North America, participated in the ceremony.

2009 President Obama Lights Diwali Lamp in White House

President Barack Obama became the first president to attend the White House's Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, celebration on October 15th. He lit a ceremonial Diwali diya lamp during the half-hour event, which included a Hindi acapella performance and a Sanskrit invocation by a local Hindu priest.

2009 Friendly's Converted to Hindu Temple

On October 25th, the Braj Mandir in Holbrook, Massachusetts was dedicated. The Braj Mandir temple is affiliated with the Vrindavana Preservation Society (VPS), and it serves eighteen hundred VPS members in the Quincy area. After four years of fruitless searching for a space that could accommodate the growing VPS members, in 2006 VPS came across a Friendly's restaurant in Holbrook that was closing. During the next three years the Friendly's was transformed into the Braj Mandir, a temple devoted to the Hindu female deity Radha.

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- [2] Joan Jensen, *Passage From India*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 14.
- [3] Jensen, p. 13.
- [4] A translation of Swami Rama Tirtha's poems from Urdu and Persian as well as brief account of his life is available in A.J. Alston's translation of Tirtha's *Yoga and the Supreme Bliss: Songs of Enlightenment* (London: Dorset Press, 1982). An account of his life is given firsthand by Puran Singh, *The Story of Swami Rama: The Poet Monk of the Punjab* (Delhi: Kalyani Publishers, 1924, revised, 1974). Wendell Thomas, *Hinduism Invades America*, (New York: The Beacon Press, Inc., 1930), p. 205-7.
- [5] J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967), p. 296.
- [6] J. Gordon Melton, *The Encyclopedia of American Religions*, (Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1989), p. 164.
- [7] Carl Jackson, *Vedanta for the West: The Ramakrishna Movement in the United States*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 58.
- [8] For more about Krishnamurti the reader can consult Jacob Needlman's *The New Religions*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1970).
- [9] Thomas, p. 150.
- [10] J. Gordon Melton, "A Bibliography of Hinduism in America, 1880 to 1940," (The Institute for the Study of American Religion, unpublished).
- [11] Thomas, p. 184.
- [12] Thomas, p. 187.
- [13] Jackson, *Vedanta for the West*, p. 108.
- [14] "Oriental Solace: Hindu Ritual of Peace and Tolerance Gains U.S. Devotees," *Literary Digest*, (November 14, 1936).
- [15] Jackson, *Vedanta for the West*, pp. 120-122.
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- [18] Robert S. Ellwood and Harry B. Partin, *Religions and Spiritual Groups in Modern America*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988).
- [19] On issues of their assimilation or lack thereof see Sathi Dasgupta, *On the Trail of an Uncertain Dream: Indian Immigrant Experience in America*, (New York: AMS Press, Inc. 1989).
- [20] See John Ball, *Ananda: Where Yoga Lives*, (Bowling Green Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1982).
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- [22] Ellwood and Partin, p. 214.; Brian Palmer, "The Lord of the Universe is Here: Sathya Sai Baba's Miraculous Charisma and its Bostonian Manifestations," (unpublished paper, 1991).
- [23] Bromley and Shupe, p. 45. See also James V. Downton, *Sacred Journeys: The Conversion of Young Americans to Divine Light Mission*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).
- [24] Bromley and Shupe, p. 46.
- [25] "I Am As You See Me': An Interview with Swami Muktananda", *New Age*, (July-August, 1976) p. 48.
- [26] Gerald James Larson, "Hinduism in India and in America," *World Religions in America: An Introduction*, ed. Jacob Neusner, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), p. 177.
- [27] "Hindu Revival In An Alien Land," *Little India*, (November 1992), p. 19.