Hindu Youngsters in the Netherlands

Category : In-Depth Issues
Published by Anonymous on Dec. 18, 2009

By Dr. Chandersen Choenni

Posted: September 30, 2001
Article appeared in Hinduism Today January/February/March 2002
Originally in Dutch with the title: "Dr. Chandersen Choenni, Chander Mathura, Hindoe jongeren in beeld, OHM, Hilversum, November 1998

Outside of India -their country of origin- Hindus appear to function relatively well as a religious ethnic group. They are capable of structurally integrating in the receiving society and partly retain their cultural heritage (Cross 1972, Choenni 1982, Clarke 1990, Vertovec 1992, Dabydeen 1987, Parekh 1994, Veenman 1994). Dutch-Surinamese Hindus have adjusted relatively well and are capable to form a religious and cultural infrastructure in the Netherlands. Generally a limited amount of empirical research in the field of the religious perception of Hindus in Western countries has been carried out. In this article we will discuss the religious orientation of Hindu youngsters from Surinamese origin in the Netherlands. Three questions are passed on this subject: What are their perception of Hinduism? What knowledge do they have about Hinduism and what are their cultural orientation?

Introduction

In the Netherlands there are about 125.000 Hindus1. The overwhelming majority are of Surinamese origin. About 15.000 persons are from India, and a group of Hindus are from Uganda and Sri Lanka (most of them are Tamils). Also a small number of Dutch people who became Hindus, such as the Hare Rama Hare Krishna and the transcendental meditation movement of Maharsi Mahesh yogi (TM). The ancestors of Dutch-Surinamese Hindus immigrated in as indentured labourers

between 1873-1916 from the then British-India to the Dutch colony Surinam. Hindus form the majority of the Surinam population group known as Hindustani; about twenty percent of the Hindustani is muslim. The Hindustani – in the english speaking Caribbean –known as East Indians form, with 35%, the largest ethnic group of the population of 450.000 in Surinam. Before and afterwards the independence of Surinam in 1975, a mass immigration took place of Hindustanis to the Netherlands. The Surinamese population in the Netherlands consists of 302.515 persons in 2000. About 50% are Hindustani. It is remarkable that in the few studies about Indians and Hindus overseas the Hindustanis of the Netherlands are not mentioned, while in 1990 more than 60.000 Hindus were living in the Netherlands (cf. Clarke 1990, Parekh 1994).

The Hindu community in Surinam as well as in the Netherlands is divided in two main religious streams. The largest is the orthodox group known as the Sanatan dharma. The smallest is the more reformist group, the Arya Samaj. Especially, among the older generation the differences en rivaliries among these two branches of Hinduism are stressed. Recently a split has been arisen in the Sanatan Dharma. A more reformist group, called the Karmavadis, is challenging the authority and superiority of the highest Hindu cast, the Brahmins. The Karmavadis have their own lower cast priests. Recently, also women priests belonging to the Karmavadis are coming on the foreground. The orthodox Sanatan dharma, labelled as the Janmavadis, tends to become a shrinking and much critizied group. The fact that after more than five years of qibbling the Hindus did not succeeded, in forming a national representative Hindu organization is an illustration of the differences and rivaliries. On the other hand, the Hindus succeeded in the forming of an representative broadcasting network called OHM (Organization for Hindu media).

There is hardly any research carried out on the position of the Hindustani Surinamese –some prefer the term Hindustani Dutch-population in the Netherlands. The Hindustani and the Hindus in particular seem to integrate very well into Dutch society. They are usually not seen as a problematic group. But on the other hand, this group is like other Asian groups, perceived as rather reticent and inaccessible. Especially, Dutch native researchers are distrusted and seen as 'to nosy'. Therefore getting confidence is very important in order to be able to do good research. A complication is that the Hindustanis are not registrated as an ethnic group, but are seen as a part of the Surinamese population in the Netherlands. And next to that there does not exist a trustworthy registration of Hindus. Nevertheless: the few researches that have been done indicates that most Dutch Hindus fare relatively well. Hindu youngsters are not regarded as a problematic group.

Hindus in the Netherlands are, as stated earlier not individually and adequately registrated.

This article is based on the interviews that have been performed with more than three hundred respondents. With a questionnaire ten Hindustani students interviewed the majority of the respondents. A small group of respondents filled the questionnaire themselves. The first part of the questionnaire was made up of twenty-five statements. The statements and closed questions were designed to reflect their perception, knowledge and cultural orientation. To check the validity of the answers some incorrect statements were included. Some quotes were negatively formulated to prevent so-called response set (sequence of all yes or no answers). The twenty-five statements were presented in a three point scale; agree, don't agree/don't disagree and disagree. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of and twenty-four (half-open and closed) questions about relevant subjects with choice options. At some questions the respondent was requested to give a motivation. Furthermore, data was collected about certain characteristic features. The questionnaire was constructed in such a way that an lower educated youngster would be able to respond.

Partially due to the approach of the interviewers, who were very enthusiastic and committed to this research, the co-operation of respondents was successful. Most of the interviewed youngsters found the questions very interesting. Apparently, the questions matched their own ideas and the problems they were confronted with in daily life. `Nice questions; Who devised them?, Aren't there more questions like these, I like this research', were some of the typical reactions. It turned out that the questions were understood quite well, also by less educated Hindu youngsters. It is estimated that the non–response category was probably not higher than five to ten percent, because the interviewees reported very few refusals from respondents who did not wanted to be interviewed.

Analysis and Result

The data were analysed, coded and reported in straight counts. Because the absolute figures are high, we report in percentages. We report the 'agree'

percentages of the respondents concerning the twenty-five statements; in case the 'don't disagree/don't agree' category and 'disagree' category shows remarkable results we report that as well. We used the chi-quadrate test for significant differences between the relevant characteristics, like religious movement, sex, age group, level of education, and country of birth (born in Surinam or not). We report the results of the 25 statements on basis of the religious streams and the relevant themes on basis of gender.

We tried to obtain a well-balanced relation between sexes: of the 305 respondents 152 are male and 153 female. We also tried to keep the balanced properly acknowledging two groups, below and above the age of twenty, making sure that no more than 48% of the respondents was under the age of twenty (a few between the age of 12 to 14). In the category above the age of twenty (52%); a few respondents were between 26 and 29.

Table 1: education level of the respondents

Higher education	28,2%
Secondary education	22,0%
Secondary Professional education(MBO)	27,2%
Lower education	22,6^%
Total	100 %

The level of education is clustered from higher to lower education. A forth had a very high education level (HBO/University level). Almost a fourth had a lower education level. About half of the respondents had a secondary education level. More then a fourth (26,6%) of the respondents lived independently from their parents; all others lived either with their parents or other family members or friends. Half of the respondents were born in the Netherlands and the other half in Surinam.

A large part of the respondents does not know to which religious Hindu stream they belong or did not find that difference relevant. This is consistent with the results reported by van Dijk (1994). In this report it is concluded that 15% of the Dutch Surinamese Hindus did not see themselves as a part of a specific stream and less than five percent that was born as a Hindu refused to call him or herself a Hindu. In

our research fifty-five respondents (18%) turned out to belong to this category. We labelled them as the non-specific Hindus. The Sanatanis formed 58% (177 respondents) and the Samajis 24% (73 respondents). There is a small underrepresentation of Samajis on the basis of the proportion of this stream in the Surinamese Hindu population. Probably a part of the youngsters in the non-specific category is born as a Samaji. Nevertheless, the number of respondents per category is large enough to compare these groups.

Even though the research was bound to certain restrictions and could not be conducted on a more regionally spread group of Hindus the results of the questionnaire support the conclusion that there exist a 'typical' Hindustani youth. Of course our observations are based on youth opinions and not on their behaviour, however with some restrictions an adequate image of Hindu youths about their religious perception, knowledge of Hinduism and their cultural orientation may be portraited.

Perception of Hinduism

From the results we can derive that a very large part of the Hindu youngsters sees the classic distinction between the orthodox Sanatani and progressive Samaji as irrelevant. The reaction on the statement `God shouldn't be portrayed in one form or another' illustrates this. A forth of the youngsters belonging to the Sanatani -in contradiction to the beliefs of their religious stream supports the statement that God shouldn't be portrayed in one form or another. From the Samajis less than half of the youths (only two fifths) agrees with the statement that God should not be portrayed in any form. Of the non-specific Hindus -mainly those reluctant to make distinctions between Hindu religious streams-, a third agrees with the statement. One from seven does not have a clear opinion (don't agree/don't disagree). Probably, Hindu youngsters are more tolerant towards the classic differences between Sanatani and Samaji. They have and hold their own opinions about Hinduism.

The lower the education level of Hindu youngsters the higher the chance that they believe that God should be portrayed in some form. The percentage agrees with the

statement are: the lower educated 44,9%, the secondary educated 20,9% and the higher educated 20,9%. Also fewer women – a forth of the women compared to a third of the men- agree with that statement.

Half of the respondents considers Hinduism as a very complicated religion; one of six are neutral. More than half of the respondents seeks comfort/conciliation in Hindu practices at sad moments. This holds more often for Sanatani (55,9%) then for Samaji youngsters (39,4%). 79,0 percent of the Sanatani, 70,4% of the Samaji and 50% of the non-specific Hindus disagree with the statement that some Hindu rituals are nonsense. Only one of seven perceives some Hindu rituals as nonsense.

Table 2: Perception of Hindu youngsters by religious stream

Agree with statement (N= 305)	Sanatani	Samaji	Non specific	Total
God should not be portrayed in one form or another	25,4%	40,8%	32,7%	31,6%
Hinduism is a complicated religion	43,8%	47,9%	51,9%	48,1%
On sad moments I find support in Hindu practises as rituals and bhadjans.	55,9%	39,4%	29,4%	49,5%
Hindu-rituals such as shaving the head are nonsense	9,7%	14,1%	26,9%	14,3%
I prefer not to talk to mine Dutch friends about Hinduism	11,3%	14,3%	9,6%	12,2%
Hindus have to be proud of their religion	86,4%	93%	78,8%	90,3%
It is difficult to live according to Hindu rules in the Netherlands	13,1%	12,9%	3,9%	11,6%
Hinduism stands for continuous development	67,6%	60,6%	48,1%	65,2%

Only a small minority, one in nine, prefers not to talk about Hinduism with friends. The lesser educated youngsters, the more trouble they have with talking about their religion than higher educated Hindus. The majority interprets Hinduism positively. This holds especially more clearly for Hindus with a secondary or higher education

level (67%) than with a lower education level (50%). Therefore, it is no surprise that the majority of recipient Hindu youngsters agrees with the notion that Hindus should be proud in their religion. A very small minority experiences that it is difficult to live according to Hindu rules in the Netherlands. Here a difference in education level plays a role: lower educated (23,2%) have more difficulty with practising their religion (13,3%) as well as secondary educated youngsters than the higher educated (7,4%). The non-specific Hindus has less difficulty with practising their religion than youngsters of both religious streams.

Apparently Hinduism has - according to the general knowledge of this religion in the Netherlands - a positive image that is also perceived by Hindu youngsters. The majority of Hindu youngsters considers the Hindu-rituals and practises as important. Half of the respondents are personally involved in their religion. Although the majority are proud of Hinduism, most find it a very complicated religion.

Knowledge of Hinduism

The classical differences of Surinamese Hinduism between the Sanatani and Samaji is considered by the most Hindu youngsters as not important. According to their answers on the statements large numbers of youngsters of the one stream seems to belong to the other stream. Probably, Hinduism as a common religion is more important to them than the special rules of the Hindu streams.They choose according to their own beliefs whether they worship God in an abstract form or in a more visible form. When we add these 'cross-over' youngsters (45 Sanatani and 42 Samaji) to the 'non specific' Hindus, we see that 147 of the 305 respondents fits in this category; therefore almost half cannot be placed in the specific category of Sanatani or Samaji. On this point the Hindu youngsters are tolerant and flexible in their religious beliefs and are in that respect very close to the basics of Hinduism. The question remains however what their knowledge of Hinduism is.

The knowledge about Hinduism amongst questioned Hindu youngsters is rather poor and inconsistent. On the correct statement that Hinduism has no founder three fifth answers accordingly. That holds a little less for the Samaji and non- specific Hindus than for Sanatani youngsters. Almost a fourth does not know or does not

have a clear opinion (don't agree/don't disagree: 23,8%). However, on the incorrect statement that Shiva is the divine manifestation of the maintainer/keeper of the world (Vishnu), half of the respondents gives an incorrect answer. Shiva represents the regeneration of live and the destruction of evil. One third of the Hindu youngsters does not know this. Swami Dayanand, founder of the Arya Samaj movement (1875) in Bombay (India) seems to be relatively unknown as well. Two fifth of the respondents agrees with the incorrect statement that he lived a thousand years ago and, while also two of five do not give an answer; they choose the neutral answer.

Table 3: Knowledge about Hinduism of Hindu youngsters by religious stream

Agree with the statement (N= 305)	**Sanatani**	**Samaji**	**Non-specific**	**Total**
Hinduism has no founder	62,9%	50,7%	48,1%	59,8%
The divine manifestation Shiva maintains creation*	54,8%	42,9%	39,2%	51,4%
Swami Dayanand was a prophet who lived about 1000 years ago in India *	38,9%	47,1%	39,2%	40,8%
Karma is how you act; not what you think	50,9%	56,3%	51,9%	54,6%
Reincarnation means that your soul doesn't return after death	1,7%	8,5%	3,8%	3,9%
Dharma is a havan which is done by the pundit*	15,4%	17,4%	9,6%	15,4%
Shri Krishna is a god with four faces*	16,6%	14,5%	15,4%	16,5%
At the Divali celebration Lakshmi is a symbol of luck	87,1%	76,1%	71,2%	85,1%
My parents think that they know a lot about Hinduism	36,7%	32,9%	44,2%	38,7%
According to me my parents don't know much about Hinduism	16,9%	21,1%	32,7%	21,5%

***incorrect statements**

A few aspects of Hinduism like reincarnation and karma are well known by most of

the Hindu youngsters. More than half is familiar with karma and disagrees with the incorrect statement about dharma. Shri Krishna seems to be even more well known: almost two third disagrees with the incorrect statement that he is a God with four faces, while one of every six agrees with that incorrect statement.

We saw that the knowledge of most Hindu youngsters about Hinduism is not correlated to the religious stream. The Sanatani youngsters (54,8%), by the way, more often give the incorrect answer about Shiva than the other youngsters, and on the other hand more often the correct answer that Hinduism has no founder. Other characteristics like gender and age group show no significant differences. The higher the education levels, the greater the knowledge about reincarnation and dharma and the least incorrect answers about Krishna. Still these differences do not suggest greater knowledge of Hinduism as a whole. The group aged higher than twenty more often gives the correct answer about Swami Dayanand and reincarnation than the youngster's aged less than twenty. Being born in Surinam does not make any difference in knowledge. There is -by the way- a significant difference between men and women about the correct statement that the Goddess Laskmi is the centre of the Divali-celebration (celebration of lights) as a symbol of luck more women (87,8%) than men (76,5%) agree with the statement.

Finally, we asked the Hindu youngsters about the knowledge that their parents have about Hinduism. More than one third answered that their parents think that they know a lot about Hinduism. Almost a fourth gives no specific answer. The Samajis more often disagree with the statement though (more than half). More than a fifth thinks that their parents do not know a lot about Hinduism. The youngsters born in Suriname more often disagree with the statement than the youngsters born in the Netherlands.

Familiarity with Hindu scriptures

The image that a large part of the Hindu youngsters has not much knowledge about Hinduism, is confirmed when they are questioned about Hindu scriptures. Half has heard something about the Bhagavad Gita and the Ramayana. Less than a fourth has heard about the Veda's and a tenth about the Purana's. There was a significant

difference according to education level though: the higher educated, the more often youngsters had ever heard about the scriptures. Comparatively more Sanatani youngsters have heard something about the Bhagavat Gita and Ramayana than the other Hindu youngsters. The non-specific Hindus has the least knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Results of a former research (van Dijk, 1994) also confirm that the scriptures are not well known: less than a fourth would had read something about the scriptures. Probably the large number of Holy Scriptures within Hinduism compared for instance to Islam and Christianity, is the cause that almost half does not know one holy Hindu scripture.

The poor knowledge Hindu youngsters about Hinduism could also have to do with the fact that youngsters rarely visit the mandir (Hindu temple). The majority of the questioned youngsters wants to know more about Hinduism.

Mandir attendance and pundits

The mandir (Hindutemple) plays compared to the mosque of Muslims and the church of Christians a less prominent part in the religious beliefs, because most Hindus have their own temple in their house. The frequency of the mandir attendane is an indication of how the Hindu youngsters practise Hinduism. In table 4 these frequencies are listed.

Table 4: When was the last time you visited a Mandir?

(N=305)	Male	Female	Total
This week	8%	4%	6%
1-3 weeks ago	6%	6%	6%
One month ago	15%	11%	13%
A few months ago	7%	7%	7%
Last year	17%	29%	23%
More than 1 year ago	18%	10%	14%
Never	20%	16%	18%
Different.....	9%	17%	13%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

From this table it is clear that not many Hindu youngsters weekly visit a mandir. A fourth visits the mandir a few times a month and more than a fourth a few times a year (women a little more often than men). Almost half never visits the mandir or only at special occasions. In the category 'different' answer examples are given as: I rarely visit the mandir because we have puja [the giving of a sacrifice] at home, or, I pray at home, on Mothersday, or other special occasions'.

We have asked about the reason of their mandir visits. It appears that the most important reason is a religious celebration (almost one third) followed by 'a special occasion in the family'. One in eight respondents visits the mandir to satisfy the expectations of their parents.

Table 5: What was the reason of your visiting the mandir ?

(N=305)	Male	Female	Total
My parents want to	8%	16%	12%
There was a special occasion in the	24%	26%	25%
family	4%	2%	3%
You meet Hindu youngsters there	32%	30%	31%
A religious celebration	32%	26%	29%
Different	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Total			

Pundits (Hindu-priests) play an important role in Hinduism as 'givers' as well as maintainers' of Hindu ethics. Lately, a lot of discussion has been arisen about their position and the manner they should approach Hindu believers. Instead of asking the respondents their opinion concerning the way pundits should approach people, we asked them to comment on a pre-defined situation. From their comments, we were able to establish the relationship between youngsters and their parents. Furthermore, the expectations that parents have of pundits could be exposed as well. We asked them about the way their parents would react on this situation. Pundits will partly justified because of the age of youngsters – rate the opinion of youngsters less important than those of their parents.

Table 6: Imagine you start a discussion with a pundit. How would your parents react?

(N=305)	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
They think of it as being eager to learn	45%	35%	40%
They'll think of me as disrespectful	11%	19%	15%
They'll become angry with me	9%	11%	10%
They'll participate in the discussion	26%	28%	27%
Different....	9%	7%	8%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Interestingly two fifths of the Hindu youngsters (more men than women) thinks that their parents would rate a discussion between a youngster and a pundit as ``being eager to learn". More than a fourth states that the parents would participate in such a discussion. A fourth of the youngsters fears that their parents would became angry, if they start a discussion with a pundit. It is remarkable that more women than men share this opinion. Pundits usually are men; almost all women pundits belong to the Arya Samaj. A discussion between younger a female and an older male is (still)considered as inappropriate. It should be noted that more than two thirds of the youngsters thinks that their parents would have a tolerant attitude towards discussions between a pundit and a youngsters. This indicates that youngsters, and probably their parents as well, want a relationship with a pundit, that in order to discuss important issues. In the category different were mentioned:

'I would not do something like that, they would like to see it, I would not talk with

pundits, they let me be, I would not even consider it, they shall forbid me, do not know, talk it over/explain, I do not know how they would react'.

Table 7: Your are a Hindu because you....

(N=305)	Male	Female	Total
Only eat vegetarian	1%	2%	2%
Eat vegetarian on Holi- and Divali-day	8%	4%	6%
Show criticism towards yourself	2%	2%	2%
Touch the feet of your parents	1%	1%	1%
Born a Hindu	34%	36%	35%
Raised as a Hindu	43%	48%	45%
Fell like a Hindu	10%	6%	8%
Different	1%	1%	1%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

The majority of Hindu youngsters feel that they are Hindu because they 'are born or raised in that way'.

A small minority is Hindu because 'they feel like Hindus'. Other reasons are hardly of importance.

In the category 'different' one youth states; 'because your not circumcised and do not eat beef'. This is an apparent statement to distinguish Hinduism from Islam. The Hindu upbringing and being born in a Hindu family are apparently the most important element of their identity.

Cultural orientation

Compared to 20 years ago a large part of the Hindus in the Netherlands have changed in their cultural orientation (Martens 2000). The impact of the Dutch society is apparent. Individualism and the right to make one owns decisions have decreased the importance of certain values and ethics, the so-called cultural orientation. We have tried to expose the cultural orientation of the Hindu youngsters by asking their opinion about a number of statements concerning the relationship between parent and child. Within Hinduism the authority of the parents on the future of their child usually is very large.

Table8: Cultural orientation of Hindu youngsters by religious stream

Agree with the statement (N=305)	Sanatani	Samaji	Non-specific	Total
I find it very important that my parents decide what's best for me	17,0%	12,7%	7,7%	15,0%
Hindu parents are capable of deciding on the best study for their child	10,2%	7,1%	9,6%	9,8%
Hindu parents are capable of deciding on the best marriage partner for their child	5,1%	11,3%	5,0%	6,9%
Hindu youngsters should raise their child the way they were raised	27,3%	23,9%	9,6%	24,4%
I rather discuss problems with friends	25,0%	35,2%	40,4%	31,4%
Family members advise their parents too much on subjects they have no knowledge of	41,1%	32,9%	38,5%	40,4%
I'd rather watch an Indian than an American movie	33,5%	31,0%	17,3%	31,4%

It is evident that a large part of the Hindu youngsters prefers to make their own choices. One of ten thinks that it is important that their parents decide what is best for them. Men and lower educated women agree more often with the statement than average or higher educated women. More than two third disagree with the statement. A very small minority (on of ten) thinks that their parents are most capable to choose the right study for their child; lower educated youngsters more often agree with this than higher educated. The vast majority disagrees with this statement that parents are most capable ones for choosing the best marriage partner for their child. (there is a slight trend that Samaji youngsters tend to agree

a little more with the statement). This result is surprising, because within the Hindu society many parents still believe that they are most capable of choosing the right partner for their child.

More than half thinks that not only their choices should be respected, but also the choices of the next generation. The majority disagrees with the statement that Hindu youngsters should raise their children like they were raised themselves. A fourth, especially the Sanatani youngsters, agrees with the statement, though. Youngsters born in Surinam also agree more often than youngsters born in the Netherlands do. Lower educated youngsters agree more often than higher educated ones. Almost a fourth has no specific opinion. Sanatani youngsters are a little more conservative, though.

Almost a third of the Hindu youngsters, in particular the Samaji and non specific Hindus, discusses their problems with friends. By the way, a fourth of the questioned youngsters has no specific opinion. There are hardly significant differences concerning the other characteristics such as gender of the questioned youngsters. On the statement that family members advise their parents too much on subjects on which they have no knowledge, differences are observed. Two fifth agrees with this statement, women (44%) more often than men (38%) and Sanatani agree a little more than Samaji youngsters. Finally the preference for Indian or Western culture has shown that only a third prefers Indian movies. There appears to be a slight tendency that more women than men and the more lower educated than the higher educated, have this preference. This is a remarkable result, as 20 years ago the majority of Hindu youngsters watched Indian movies. These movies offer an orientation of Hindu values and ethics. On this point, the orientation amongst Hindu youngsters is receding.

The mastering of the traditional language of the religion is an important mean for maintaining and practising the religion and heritage. Hindus often mingle Hindi with Sarnami, the Surinamese variant of Hindi; one could roughly call this language Sarnami-Hindi.

We asked the Hindu youngsters if they are able to speak and understand Sarnami-Hindi.

Table 9: Are you are able to speak and understand Sarnami-Hindi?

(N=305)	Male	Female	Total
Yes, quite well	37,7%	42,1%	39,9%
Yes, just a little bit	33,1%	30,3%	31,7%
No, hardly	29,1%	27,6%	28,4%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Two fifth is able to speak and understand Sarnami-Hindi well, while more than a fourth does not. Almost a third knows some of their original language. Fact is that the majority of questioned Hindu youngsters do not or barely master their original language -the language sermons and rituals are held in. This makes the inheritance of Hinduism to the Hindu youngsters more difficult.

We can state that individualization and westernization have a significant impact on Hindu youngsters, even though a minority still orientates themselves on traditional Hindu values and Indian movies. We have observed that slightly more lower educated Sanatani youngsters and those born in Surinam have a preference for the traditional Hindu culture.

Conclusion

Contrary to the older generation where the significance of the difference between the two Hindu streams is paramount, the classical contradiction between the orthodox (Sanatan Dharma) and progressive (Arya Samaj) has hardly has any significance for the Hindu youngsters. Almost half of the questioned Hindu youngsters could also be called 'crossover Hindus': the westernized Hindus. The majority of Hindu youngsters is oriented towards the Western culture as well as tot the Hindu culture. The majority of Hindu youngsters feel that they are Hindu because they 'are born and/or raised in that way'.

Hindu youngsters are proud on Hinduism and do not have much difficulty in practising their form of Hinduism in the Netherlands. Hinduism has a positive image in society and certain Hindu concepts like reincarnation and karma have become 'mainstream' . A large part of Hindu youngsters however considers Hinduism as a very difficult religion. This is not a surprise since Hinduism is one of the oldest religions., which has a broad horizon ranging from philosophy to art. So it can not be known sufficiently by everyone.

Although the majority of youngsters hardly visit a mandir, half of them find comfort in Hindu rituals on sad moments. Sarnami-Hindi is a language most of therm do not mater or just a little. Sermons and rituals are held in Hindi or Sarnami-Hindi, and sometimes also commented on in Dutch. The frequency of mandir attendance isn't very high among Hindu youngsters. Often the mandir is visited because of 'a family occasion' or celebrations. As a meeting-point for youngsters,the mandir is poorly rated. A mandir probably isn't the place for youngsters to meet anyway. Youngsters will visit the mandir when they need spiritual support or the right atmosphere to exert their grief for instance

The knowledge about Hinduism is poor among Hindu youngsters; they often have an inadequate image of some aspects of Hinduism. Certain Hindu basic concepts and values are well known. Many are not familiar with the most important Holy Scriptures. Most youngsters though- in particular lower educated Hindu youngsters- state they would like to know more about Hinduism. Hindu youngsters furthermore state that they would want to discuss about issues with pundits. A (more) equal relationship is preferred. Youngsters would like to see a change in the position of pundits from an authoritarian advisor to a respected and caring conversational partner.

There exists a slight tendency that lower educated Hindus have more problems with integration than higher educated Hindus. Gender and country of birth (Surinam or the Netherlands) hardly show significant or interesting differences. Not surprising is the result that the higher the education level the greater the knowledge about Hinduism and the fact that lower educated Hindu youngsters are more conservative.

In the field of cultural orientation, the effects of individualization and westernization are most noticeable amongst Hindu youngsters. They prefer to judge for themselves and would like their family to be less critical and nosy about their affairs. A minority

of Hindu youngsters prefers Indian movies above western movies. Based on the interviews of this group of Hindu youngsters we may conclude that the positive development of their identity has been built upon the positive image of Hinduism in the Netherlands.

LITERATURE

Bloemberg, Lucie, 1995, Tussen traditie en verandering: Hindostaanse zelforganisaties in Nederland, KNG, Amsterdam.

Burg van der,C. & van der Veer, P, 1986, Pandits, power and profits: religious organisation and the construction of identity among Surinamese Hindus, in Ethnic and racial studies, 9 (4).

Central Bureau of Statistics, maandstatistiek september 2000, Voorburg

Central Bureau of Statistics Statistical Yearbook 2000, Voorburg

Choenni C., 1982, Hindoestanen in de politiek, een vergelijking van hun posities in Trinidad, Guyana en Suriname, Amsterdam

Choenni C., 1995, Kleur in the krijgsmacht. Utrecht: Universiteit, ISOR-publicaties.

Choenni, Pandit Ramkisoor, 1994, Leven in harmonie; inzichten uit de Vedische filosofie, Amsterdam

Clarke, C, C. Peach and S. Vertovec (eds), 1990, South Asians overseas; Migraton and ethnicity, Cambridge University Press

Dabydeen, D. And B. Somaroo (eds) 1987, India in the Caribbean, London, Hansib

Dijk van H. of (ed), 1994, Hindoestaanse jongeren en hun belevingswereld. Universiteit Utrecht.

Liem, P. 2000 ,Stapvoets voorwaarts. Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht.

Martrns, E.p. (ed), 2000, Integratiemonitor 2000, ISEO Rotterdam

Mungra, Gjaanchand, 1990, Hindoestaanse gezinnen in Nederland. Leiden: C.O.M.T, Leiden.

Parekh, B., 1994, Hindu diaspora, in : New community, vol 20, nr. 4, july1994

Spilka, B. & D. N. McIntosch(eds), 1998, Psychology of Religion. Westview press

Veenman J. (ed.), 1994, Succesvolle allochtonen, Assen: Boom.

Vertovec, S. 1992 , Hindu Trinidad: Religion, Ethnicity and Socio-economic change, London, Macmillan

1 This is an estimation. The Dutch central bureau of statistics reports that there are 81.400 Hindus. This is an underestimation, since a lot of Hindus are not explicit about their religion. Almost half of the 302.000 Surinamese (CBS, maandstatistiek van de bevolking, september 2000) are Hindustanis. Of the estimated 140.000 Hindustanis 80% is Hindu. So there are about 110.000 Hindus from Surinam and 15.000 from countries like India, Sri Lanka and Uganda.