

# RELIGIOUS GIVING IN SOUTH AFRICA ---A HINDU PERSPECTIVE---

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## **Introduction**

For Hindus, charity is primordial in the sense that it features in an integral way in their religious literature and culture, and could be seen as normative (considered proper conduct), relativistic (having different giving capacities from the elite to the most humble giver), individualistic and subjective (acts of giving assumes a human face for both the giver and receiver). Thus the notion of giving is essentially romantic (Sen, 1993:36), especially at the individual level. According to Evertat and Solanki (2004) religion plays a very important role in influencing the decision to give. Voluntarism amongst Hindus is a self-initiated act which is largely driven by a sense of socio-religious commitment. Giving is thus understood as a universal phenomenon which includes all possible situations and counting all plausible reasons for giving.

This report begins with a brief introduction about Hindus in South Africa and touches on concerns raised at selected major Hindu conferences over the last two decades. The issue of giving as a way of life for Hindus as identified in scripture is presented in the second section. It is argued that in general, giving patterns reflect a bilateral relationship between service rendition and karma in which different degrees of reward can be accrued through the act of giving. The third section of this report presents an assessment of Hindu giving in South Africa based on the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. Hindu giving is an individualistic and subjective experience and giving is seen as a social contract, done compassionately and providing contentment at an individual level.

Hindu giving patterns are contextualised within welfare (especially poverty alleviation initiatives and feeding programmes), culture and knowledge-empowerment (through planned cultural activities and the distribution of religious books) and development and service orientations (the building of schools and homes for indigent families). It is argued that Hindus display an extremely sophisticated articulation and understanding of social giving. There are two challenges in writing this report. Firstly, Hindu organisations have been reluctant to divulge details of their financial status and secondly, there is no form of assessment of mandatory or systematic individual giving in Hinduism.

## **Hindus in South Africa**

In 1995, there were 527 352 Hindus in South Africa of the one million Indians in the country (2001 Census). Hindus accounted for a very large percentage of Indians who came to South Africa in 1860 as indentured labourers, who were subsequently followed by passenger or trader Indians. Despite over 130 years of oppression, international sanctions and isolation from the Indian motherland, Hindus flourished by nurturing and maintaining their religious and cultural heritage – a proud record of its self-help approach in building the community. The recognition of this development was expressed at a World Hindu Conference in 1995 held in South Africa.<sup>1</sup> Largely for historical reasons, the overwhelming majority of Hindus are located in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (Table 1).

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*1 World Hindu Conference: Vision for the 21st century, Durban South Africa, July 1995.*

**Table 1: Hindu Population in South Africa by Province**

<b>Province</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Eastern Cape</b>	5275	1.00
<b>Free State</b>	466	0.08
<b>Gauteng</b>	67421	11.64
<b>KwaZulu-Natal</b>	443987	84.19
<b>Limpopo</b>	1043	0.20
<b>Mpumalanga</b>	2220	0.42
<b>Northern Cape</b>	345	0.07
<b>North West</b>	1267	0.24
<b>Western Cape</b>	5328	1.01
<b>TOTAL</b>	527 352	99.09

(Adapted from Statistics South Africa, 2001)

At South Africa's first post-apartheid national convention on Hindu unity convened on September 6, 2003, in Durban, ideas around charity and the lack of structure in respect of organised giving was raised. The two day conference was organised by the South African Hindu Maha Sabha<sup>2</sup> and attended by 370 delegates from 108 Hindi, Tamil, Gujerati and Telugu linguistic and community groups from across the country.

At this conference, Trikamjee (2003) emphasized that when poor Hindus are in trouble, financially or socially, the Hindu community itself should have some kind of support structure in place that can help to solve their problems. This was lacking and the poor continue to be exploited by missionaries from other faiths.<sup>3</sup> As a result of this, many Hindu organisations reacted by advancing a greater degree of activism against religious conversions. The Arya Samaj, the Divine Life Society, the Ramakrishna Mission, Sai Baba Samitis and ISKCON are among some of these organisations.

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<sup>2</sup> *The South African Hindu Maha Sabha, the national voice of the Hindus in the country was formed in 1912. Being primarily a religious body, the South African Hindu Maha Sabha initially devoted much of its attention to the religious needs of Hindus in the country.*

<sup>3</sup> *South Africa's first national convention on Hindu unity (Sept 6, 2003) by SA Hindu Maha Sabha - The chairperson, Trikamjee (2003), in his address, made reference to the tide of conversion of Hindus to other faiths.*

In 1983, Dr T Naidoo (religious scholar) noted that Hindu organisations do not offer a comprehensive structure of social and ministerial support for Hindus, particularly in times of difficulty.<sup>4</sup>

A national survey conducted by Strategy and Tactics (2003) revealed that the majority of Hindus participated actively in religion. More specifically, 42% visited a place of worship at least once a week, and 38% at least once a month (Table 2).

**Table 2: Frequency of visits to place of worship by Hindus**

<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Every Day	6	2.84
2-3 Times a week	24	11.37
Once a week	58	27.49
2-3 Times a Month	17	8.06
Once a Month	64	30.33
Hardly/Seldom	40	18.96
Never	2	0.95

(Adapted from Statistics South Africa, 2001)

That Hindus give has not gone unnoticed. According to the State President of South Africa, there are many lessons that one can learn from the Hindu religion. One of the most important of these lessons is the principle of hospitality and charity, which is an important hallmark of Vedic culture.<sup>5</sup> Durban's Deputy Mayor, Logie Naidoo, noted that most religions, including Hinduism, propagate that service to mankind is service to God.<sup>6</sup> Given our divided history, religious organisations have an important role to play in the reconstruction and development of our country, especially in the welfare and civil society sectors.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.hinduismtoday.com/archives/1983/01.shtml>

<sup>5</sup> President Thabo Mbeki, opening address at the opening of the Hindu Convention, September 2003, <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbheki/2003/tm0906.html>

<sup>6</sup> In response to survey showing that Indians are the most generous givers, *Sunday Times*, Tuesday, 21 December 2004, [http://www.hinduismtoday.com/archives/2004/1-3/38\\_africa.shtml](http://www.hinduismtoday.com/archives/2004/1-3/38_africa.shtml)

Hindus are seen to have a divine duty to unite the good and noble teachings of voluntarism of their faith with the campaigns that they are conducting.<sup>7</sup> State President Thabo Mbeki (2003) cited the idea of Hindus contributing to peace in the country by referring to the following quotation from the Rig Veda: “Through our actions together, all the people of South Africa will be able to live up to the wise words from the *Rig Veda*: come together, talk together, let our minds be in harmony, common be our prayer, common be our end, common be our purpose, common be our deliberations, common be our desires, united be our hearts, united be our intentions, perfect be the union among us (*Rig Veda*, 10:191:2).<sup>8</sup>

Dr Rambilaas explains that Hinduism is a religion of humanism and of love and gratitude. It gives due respect to each and every creature. The aspects of nature like earth, sky, mountains, rivers; and living being like animals, plants; and wealth are seen as connected to God. Even the plant kingdom has a prominent place in the Hindu way of worship –“be as selfless as the sun, the rivers and the natural elements that sustain all of humanity ... let these elements teach us acts of charity”.<sup>9</sup>

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The focus of the study was to examine the nature of giving in the Hindu community with the aim of identifying and reviewing the different literature on Giving in general and Hinduism in particular; to examine the different patterns of giving at an individual and collective/organisational level within identifiable geographical contexts that best represent Hindus in South Africa, and to analyse how Hindu religious organisations spend their resources.

Given the complex interpretations and profound understandings of Hindu social giving, two categories of social giving (individual and organisational) were identified. A purely qualitative approach was employed using in-depth individual and focus-group interviews. Qualitative information was selectively matched with the national survey on Hindu givers compiled by Strategy and Tactics.<sup>10</sup>

It was believed that the most representative and valid sample could only be drawn from a fully recognised organisation and its affiliates. The research sample for data collection at the organisational level was identified through the database of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha which is a national Hindu body to whom other organisations are affiliated. The sample was drawn from affiliates from the different provinces where the highest concentration of Hindus live, viz. KwaZulu Natal and Gauteng (Table 1).

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbheki/2003/tm0906.html>

<sup>8</sup> cited in <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbheki/2003/tm0906.html>

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Dr Rambilass, Vedic scholar referring to the veneration of the elements, 3 March 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Strategy and Tactics consultancy was commissioned by the project partners comprising The Southern African Grant Makers Association, National Development Agency and the Centre for Civil Society at the University of KwaZulu-Natal to design, implement and analyse a national sample survey of individual-level giving behavior. A data base comprising a national stratified sample of 211 Hindus (203 KwaZulu Natal, 7 Gauteng and 1 from Western Cape) from an over sample was used in this study to compare findings. Unless otherwise indicated, all tables in this report were extracted from the above survey.

Interviews were conducted with representatives from ISKCON, SA Tamil Federation, Divine life Society of SA, Ramakrishna Society of SA, and Aryan Benevolent Home (ABH). Focus group interviews were also held with the smaller organisations in the different provinces, all of whom were affiliates of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha. A brief description of the major organisations is presented as appendix 1 to develop a context for organisational giving.

In addition to the above, various key stakeholders in the Hindu religious and welfare sector, as listed below, were interviewed:

- Student groups, e.g. Hindu Students Associations of UKZN: Westville campus and Howard College
- Hindu Philanthropist, Mr Ranjith Ramnarain (Sentinel Holdings)
- Gender groups, e.g. all men, all women groups, mixed groups
- Informal community social workers
- Local community Hindu priests (20 priests interviewed at a priests ' convention in July 2004)
- Old Age groups – members of old age groups in the community
- Academics at the University of KwaZulu Natal (Prof A Singh and Prof Sitaram)
- Welfarist and academic – Dr A Desai, Durban
- Welfarist – D Bundhoo, Pietermaritzburg

Secondary data analysis in the form of annual reports and perusal of financial statements of selected organisations, census data, and profiles through the Internet of selected organisations was undertaken. Several visits and observations were undertaken at selected sites to inform the main focus of the report.

### **Religious Giving: A way of life for Hindus?**

The Vedantic literature is suffused with hierarchies of giving, ways of giving and links giving with spiritual evolution in a profound way. Among the guidelines contained in the statements of the Vedas, there is extraordinary emphasis on how a human being should consider him/herself extremely fortunate in having opportunities to extend help to the society, how charity yields bliss in the material and cosmic world, and how it purifies the heart. In the light of this, an extensive review of literature on Hindu giving is undertaken through documentary analysis of the seminal religious texts in the next section.

This section of the report responds to the issue of how the historical, religious and cultural literature on charity influences giving patterns in the Hindu community. Individual and religious philanthropy have always been interrelated (Sen, 1993:2). In examining the notion why and how Hindus give, selected Hindu scriptures, epics and metaphors are used to understand that the act of giving presents itself in an ubiquitous way in Hindu culture and life.

Hindu religious discourse suggests that Hindus are not born with birth-rights, but with birth-duties. Important terms are defined and regulations concerning every aspect of private and public life have been formulated and enforced. In the endeavour to redeem throughout life, duties are required towards *devata* (divine powers), *rsis* (sages), *pitrs* (ancestors), *manusya* (fellow-humans) and *bhutas* (fellow creatures other than humans). The first is done by means of regular worship, the second through the reading and studying of sacred scriptures,

and the third through commemorations and rituals. The fourth and fifth duties require charity in the form of food giving and shelter offering, and recognising in prayer one's gratitude to all those who make one's life and well-being possible. The Hindu way of life thus de-emphasised the need to exclusively accumulate personal possessions over and above things required for personal use. Within the joint family all resources were shared according to a well-established system. While it did not amount to an absolute egalitarianism it prevented members from becoming destitute and homeless.<sup>11</sup> Generally Hindu religious literature subscribes to the notion that one owes so much to so many different agencies at all levels of existence which would make one inclined to share generously everything that is needed to sustain life.<sup>12</sup>

Several older texts refer to *dana* (charity) juxtaposing hundreds of quotes from older writings and arranging them systematically and defining the concept, setting its parameters, and clarifying ambiguous situations.<sup>13</sup> *Dana* was defined as a "cessation of ownership over a thing and creating the ownership of another over that thing which occurs when the other accepts the thing, either mentally, verbally or physically" (cited in Klostermaier, 2000). Six *angas* (elements, constituent parts) of *dana* are enumerated: the donor, the recipient, the charitable attitude, the gift (acquired in a legitimate way) of *dana*, a proper time and a proper place.

As far as the *donor* is concerned, an exploration of the *Bhagavad-gita as It Is* reveals that ways in which giving happens is critical, especially for the householder:

*Charity is meant for the householders. The householders should earn a livelihood by an honourable means and spend fifty percent of their income to propagate Krishna consciousness all over the world. Thus a householder should give in charity to institutional societies that are engaged in that way. Charity should be given to the right receiver. There are different kinds of charity ... charity in the modes of goodness, passion and ignorance ... Charity in the modes of passion and ignorance is not recommended, because it is simply a waste of money.*<sup>14</sup>

With regard to *recipients*, the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* refers to *Danaih* – charity which is given to a suitable party, such as those who are engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Lord – the *brahmanas* and the *Vaisnavas* (Srila Prabhupada, 2003). In respect of the relationship between the giver and the donor, the *Bhagavad-gita* makes reference to *Sarvabhute hite rata* which means that Hindus should be constantly engaged in the welfare of all living beings.<sup>15</sup> It also exhorts people to work for their own salvation and the welfare of the world - *Atmano mokshartham jagad hitaya ca - there is no better good than doing good*

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with D Bundhoo, philanthropist and Vedic scholar, 23 July 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Dr Rambilaas, Vedic scholar and 3 March 2004

<sup>13</sup> Texts like Hemadri's *Danakhandha* or Mitramisra's *Danaprakasa* are exclusively devoted to the subject of charity,

<sup>14</sup> *Bhagavad Gita as it Is* 16:3, purport by Srila Prabhupada (2003:743) Interview with Smita Krishna Dasa, 3 August 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Professor Sitaram, scholar in Sanskrit, UKZN, 11 October 2004.

*to someone and there is no greater evil than causing pain to someone else. Similar sentiments are expressed in the Tulasi Ramayan - Parahita sarisa dharma nahi bhai Parpida sama nahi adhama - for my own salvation and the good of the world.*<sup>16</sup>

The third element is the *attitude* of the giver. In Chapter 17 of the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, the different modes of giving are described as *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*.<sup>17</sup> Charity that is given as a matter of duty, desiring nothing in return to a deserving candidate at the right place and time, is called *sattvikam* (17:20). Charity that is given unwillingly, or to get something in return is called *rajasam* charity (17:21). Charity that is given at a wrong place and time, to unworthy persons, without paying respect or with contempt, is said to be *tamasam* charity (17:22).<sup>18</sup>

Religious leaders have exhorted: *Watch, watch, and watch for every opportunity of rendering service to humanity. Service alone can purify the heart.* (Sivananda, cited in *Divine Life*, 2004). This is a passionate invocation to Hindus to seize or create opportunities to render service, as it is a prerequisite for higher spiritual evolution. A prominent saint in the Hindu tradition, Ramakrishna, cleaned the bedpan of another just to illustrate the spirit of service. The notion of menial work rendered in the service to others is said to rid people of high-mindedness and eradicate the ego that operates counter to the notion of rendering service.<sup>19</sup> It would appear that the more menial the service, the greater the value of the reward. Many people believe that not all the penance, pilgrimage, scripture reading or chanting can facilitate transcending the material world but by service to humanity: “Service to humanity is service to God”.<sup>20</sup>

The remaining elements concern the giving of *gifts* – which includes the type, the proper place and time of giving. Gifts made out of compassion alone are not *dana* in the scriptural sense: giving has to be done out of a sense of duty to qualify as legal “charity”. Gifts of food and clothing were considered to be a universal duty. Various categories of gifts can be identified from the giving of cows to knowledge/wisdom (*vidya*) which is considered superior to all other gifts (*Yajnavalkyasrti* 1, 121 cited in Klostermaier, 2000). With reference to the concept of *krishna karma*<sup>21</sup> (11:55), Srila Prabhupada (2003: 607) explains the following:

*If a businessman is in possession of thousands of rands and thousands of dollars, and if he offers all of this to Krishna, he can do it. Instead of constructing a big building for his sense gratification, he can construct a nice temple for Krishna, and he can*

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with and translations by Bharat Ramkissoon, Sanskrit scholar, Honours student, UKZN, 3 October 2004

<sup>17</sup> Material nature consists of three modes: ignorance, passion and goodness, or countless permutations of these.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Ramakrishna devotee, 25 March 2004.

<sup>20</sup> focus group interview with women, 23 October 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Krishna karma refers to engaging in the service of God without fruitive action without expecting results in return

*install the Deity of Krishna and arrange for the Deity's service, as is outlined in the authorised books of devotional service.*

A further reference to the actual act of giving by the same author in the same text (17:28) exhorts Hindus to give with devotion. The giving form is almost always altruistic and resonates with injunctions from *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* (17:25/ 17:28): *Anything done as sacrifice, charity or penance without faith in the Supreme, O son of Pritha, is impermanent. It is called asat and is useless both in this life and the next.*

The above demonstrates that voluntarism has long been an integral part of Hindu society, dating back to at least 1 500 BC when it was mentioned in the *Rig Veda*. Indeed this tradition in India, the home of Hinduism plays an important role in social and economic development. It is known that volunteer campaigns help in the fields of education, medicine, cultural promotion and during times of crisis such as droughts, floods, epidemics and foreign invasions. Through these contributions the disadvantaged and the poor are taken care of by social mechanisms outside the state – through the family structure, social groups, guilds, and individual religious philanthropy (Sen, 1993).

It is clear from this brief exploration of selected religious texts, the relationship between individual philanthropy and religion is well explained by the mandates regarding charity laid down by Hinduism. Although it is argued that systematic or planned payroll giving is not evident among Hindu givers, an important issue like *dana* could not be left to improvisation and co-incidence.

Defining the notion of giving and establishing patterns of giving in Hindu philosophy is a difficult task because no single theme or pattern can characterise ways in which this gets interpreted. While there is great diversity and eclecticism, the basic principles governing giving and charity were accepted fairly unanimously. Hence this brief review used social, cultural, religious and philanthropic approaches as analytical tools to define operational ideas of Hindu giving. Such ideas of giving are useful to understand its present role within the Hindu community in South Africa.

### **Hindu Giving in South Africa**

It is clear that there is no robust Hindu community effort that organises giving in any particular way. With the exception of a few individuals, there is no systematic payroll giving evident. Professor Anand Singh<sup>22</sup> believes that although there are no systematic structures of giving, Hindus respond directly to the societal needs as and when these emerge. A similar trend was reflected in the Strategy and Tactics Survey (2003) in which more than 57% of the Hindu sample indicated support for immediate causes compared to less than 20% for long term causes.

From discussions with priests and community leaders it was found that because giving takes several forms, organised monetary giving did not feature strongly. Payroll givers were also reluctant to disclose amounts and the idea that giving should be “spontaneous as getting up in

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<sup>22</sup> Professor of Anthropology at UKZN and member of Ramakrishna Mission of South Africa

the morning”.<sup>23</sup> Table 3 reflects the monthly Hindu household income generated from the Strategy and Tactics Survey (2003) report.

**Table 3: Monthly Hindu Household Income**

Income	Percent
Up to R199	5.21
R600-R799	1.42
R1000-R1499	2.37
R1500-R2999	0.95
R3000-R6999	12.80
R7000-R8999	16.59
R9000-R13999	14.69
R14000+	5.69
Refused to answer	37.44
Do not know	2.84

(Adapted from Statistics South Africa, 2001)

A large section of the respondents (79%) were unwilling to disclose earning amounts and refused to respond to this question. Social giving is seen as selfless and a part of *brahmanical* principle: “But we cannot force a person into giving – Hinduism does not propagate coercion in charity. It is not Hindu not to give”.<sup>24</sup>

It is for this reason that relatively little is known about quantitative patterns of individual giving among Hindus. However, the data reveals several themes in giving amongst the Hindu community. Social giving is considered a *silent duty*, an act that should not be boasted about - *What the right hand gives, the left hand should not know*. The idea of publicly declaring ones giving is seen to be boastful and renders the act of giving useless. Ranjith Ramnarain sees his giving attempts as “not putting a price to social responsibility and sees giving as a form of enablement”.<sup>25</sup>

In the next section several themes arising out of the data are generated to explore how social giving among Hindus is understood, managed and operationalised. In understanding this, the idea of charity is considered relativistic, involving different giving capacities and types. In many ways the concept of charity assumes a human face and is seen as subjective.

### **Relativistic and Subjective Giving Patterns**

Social Giving amongst Hindus is a way of life. It is ingrained in Hindus to always give. Hindus have taken bank overdrafts and taken loans to build institutions like schools and

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with focus group men, 5 July 2004.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Alankar R Maharaj, UKZN Hindu Students’ Association, 24 June 2004

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Ranjith Ramnarain, businessman - philanthropist, 7 September 2004

temples for their communities.<sup>26</sup> It is not always clearly understood in terms of Vedantic injunctions or philosophy, but perceived as something that one had to do in one's life time.

According to Bala Naidoo<sup>27</sup> the *Tirukkural* (11:103) is clear about the idea of giving at an individual level: "He is no friend who does not give to a friend, to a comrade who comes imploring for food; let him leave such a man – and rather seek a stranger who brings him comfort".<sup>28</sup> In the Strategy and Tactics Survey (2003), it was found that a large section of the Hindus respond to charity not necessarily for religious reasons, rather because they see the need to intervene where there is some form of suffering. More than 84% of the respondents believe that they give because it makes them feel better and 75% do so in order to make the country a better place. An extremely small section of the community support charity because they have more than they need (10%). For many Hindus it is considered a family tradition to give. Others have learned to do so through their own experience of poverty and hardships and many Hindus give because they believe that this is a kind of social responsiveness to the needs of the immediate and larger communities.

Thus, social giving is considered a *social contract* in which no household should have more than what is deemed necessary in comparison to another. This derives from a sense of social solidarity referred to as *samajic sangathan*. Some Hindu leaders interviewed believed that the notion of *Ramrajya*<sup>29</sup> was associated with ideas of an ideal community in which the ruler and the ruled were seen as one, and a community in which poverty and suffering were non-existent. Closely linked to the idea of a social contract, is *shrama dhaan* (labour, time, shelter). In this type of giving, there is a sentiment of giving (*serva bhav*) that gives the individual and organisational giver spaces to be altruistic in a very meaningful way. Shelter giving is a practice of giving by an individual in the Shallcross area.<sup>30</sup> He would provide shelter for workers coming through from rural areas of KwaZulu Natal as well as refugees. At an organisational level, shelter is provided to the destitute. This may include accommodating families whose homes have been destroyed by fire, e.g. ABH would provide shelter, clothing and food to any family rendered destitute. Similar services are provided to abandoned babies as well as basic healthcare and nursing facilities.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Dr D Moodley from S A Hindu Maha Sabha., 8 September 2004

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Bala Naidoo, Chairman of KwaZulu Natal South African Tamil Federation, 25 November 2004.

<sup>28</sup> Cited in [http://www.beliefnet.com/features/charity\\_chaart2.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/features/charity_chaart2.html)

<sup>29</sup> The voluntary movement in India received the maximum impetus and incentive from Gandhi, who believed that voluntary action was the only path to India's development. Gandhi's concept of development included all aspects of life: social, political, economic, cultural, and spiritual. His notion of rural development was constructing self-supporting, self-governing, and self-reliant village communities where everyone's needs were satisfied and everyone lived in harmony and cooperation. The major shift in the organisation of voluntary work was through Gandhi's voluntarism. It emphasised empowerment and transformation of the society and acquired a political context of *Ramrajya* (Interview with Dasarath Bundhoo, philanthropist and community welfarist, Pietermaritzburg, 23 July 2004).

<sup>30</sup> Retired principal and philanthropist

<sup>31</sup> Interview with PRO of ABH speaking about the most recent provision of services, 9 October 2004.

Social empowerment happens when members of the community provide informal skills training to enable the unemployed to generate some form of income. The teaching of specific skills like woodwork is linked to enablement. This may also include the free loan of equipment to labourers.<sup>32</sup> The Divine Life Society of South Africa also built centres to promote self-help initiatives and skills. It established sewing centres in Tongaat, Chatsworth and Merebank – 46 sewing machines in operation with 70 African women graduating in sewing in 2004.<sup>33</sup>

Another common practice among several community individuals was the rendering of administrative service, e.g. completion of forms for identity document application, tax returns and other applications for the community. Here lies a readiness to provide assistance to especially older people in the community to facilitate easier grant withdrawals, understanding new policy and legislation in terms of pensions and disability grants.<sup>34</sup>

There are other incidental but specific activities performed by individuals like providing counselling to people. This would include relationship problems, advising prostitutes in the Chatsworth area, and the tutoring of matric pupils in the area. There would also appear to be some form of invisible support structure, especially in respect of abused women and children.<sup>35</sup>

The giving of time is extremely popular and takes the form of the upkeep of religious sites and the buildings and hospice duties. One respondent indicated that as a priest, it was incumbent of him to spend time on Values Education at Westville prison. Hospice duties which included reading and attending to the frail and dying was also undertaken by several Hindu priests who believed that they were credentialed to attend to the last rites of dying patients.<sup>36</sup> In the Strategy and Tactics survey (2003), 95,5% of the sample indicated that they do give regular time to the temple either in the form of labour or caring for the sick or disabled and aged.

Material giving takes the form of food, blankets and other material objects. This constituted an important form of giving and was done on an ongoing basis, especially when there is a call for immediate relief work within the community.

The notion of a social contract with the community more specifically includes the following themes: giving is contentment (*santoshum paramum*); giving means compassion for all (*pranidaya*), and financial giving. Many individuals believed that by giving they felt contentment which they saw as the highest form of wealth (*santoshum paramum*). Part of this belief generates from being God-fearing, that “you will be punished in other ways if you don’t give ....for example, if you don’t give charity then your car would break down and this

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with anonymous philanthropist Chatsworth, 3 October 2004.

<sup>33</sup> See website for more information on services rendered by the Divine Life Society SA.

<sup>34</sup> Interviews with receivers of this service – old age organisations in Chatsworth and Shallcross, 24 November 2004.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Hindu priests, 25 July 2004, Westville campus, UKZN.

may cost a lot of money ...so the money gets taken away from you anyway...”.<sup>37</sup> The women believe that opportunities for giving present themselves all the time. They referred to a ritual in which “forced begging of flour” from seven different homes in order to conduct a specific prayer. This act, they believed, humbled them as well as gave them opportunities to give with purity. The ancient story of *Visnu* as *Daridranarayan*, God appearing in the guise of a beggar, is frequently employed to instil respect for the less fortunate and elicit active charity towards them, which would be rewarded both in this world and the next (Klostermaier 2000).

The Hindu women’s roles go beyond the issues of voluntary work to include a broader conceptualisation of care-giving (*pranidaya*). Women see themselves responsible for the protection, preservation and continuity of the community, galvanising support for special functions, crisis and events. The following excerpts are ways in which women organise themselves to network with the giving process:

*Helping our neighbours like there is a neighbour that you can talk to and they will give you some advice...*

*If you are going to buy groceries they can offer the car to go ...*

*Emotional support*

*If you know that some people are poor you organise somethings and give them...*

*When there are funerals we cook and give them to the bereaved family and they don’t have to worry about it...*<sup>38</sup>

Although this may be typical of many traditional families, it is evident from the above that the idea of the women as “community-maker” assumes a central role in the identity of Hindu women givers. Women understand giving in a more organic way, as *pranidaya* suggesting compassion for all forms of life – “not even a dog must go hungry”. At an individual level it is believed that “the fiery scourge called hunger never touches the man who shares his daily meal with others”.<sup>39</sup> Interviews with women indicated that giving transcends the real world and giving to departed souls during identified periods is seen as a pure act of altruism. Although they are unable to understand the details of this act of prayer, it is done as a selfless act and surrender to the departed souls.<sup>40</sup>

In the Strategy and Tactics survey (2003), it is clear that Hindus respond to emergencies generously. Almost 62% of the Hindu sample that responded gave to emergencies regularly. The following citation supports the idea of giving in an emergency situation:

*We have been brought up in a very different type of environment from other religious groups – in an environment where love flourishes in abundance. If a funeral takes place, the entire neighbourhood rallies around contributing food and money – this is not an unusual phenomena. Ubuntu is a term that people have just introduced. We have been practising that for years irrespective of race or culture... if you were the neighbour things got done, e.g.*

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<sup>37</sup> Focus group interview with men, 28 November 2004.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid*

<sup>39</sup> Interview with cultural philanthropist, Mrs Mothilal, Shallcross, 8 September 2004.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Bharat Ramkissoo, Sanskrit scholar, Honours student, UKZN, 3 October 2004.

*...6 people burnt to death in Kwa Mashu – we negotiated the funeral arrangements – provided the family with food and utensils – this is done on a needs/crisis basis”.*<sup>41</sup>

Most people interviewed gave financially. There were two ways in which money giving took place: direct giving – finances were given directly to the individual in need. Indirect giving occurred when householders would give to an organization and allowed it to decide how the money is spent. Most householders interviewed considered this to be a suitable way of giving. It was obvious that the credibility of the organisation was important to them. A systematic collection strategy was used by the organization to collect the money and the householders had no concerns about how their monies were utilised. The Divine Life Society would appear to be the biggest recipient of such contributions in KwaZulu-Natal, and its giving gets managed and operationalised in a very professional way. Subsidiary giving occurs incidentally, and is usually dictated by immediate or urgent needs, largely confined to giving family support.

An extremely powerful injunction through Hindu scripture supported by the data is that “you give within your means” and is referred to as *shakti dhaan*. This allows for the smallest giver to participate in the act of giving, and in whatever form. In the interviews people clearly indicated that giving happened when they were scheduled to travel out of home.<sup>42</sup> Charity during pilgrimage is thus a common practice done to secure safety of travel.<sup>43</sup> Organisational giving during happy occasions (birthdays, weddings, specific religious days) is also commonplace.<sup>44</sup> One example of occasion-giving for most Hindus is *Diwali*.<sup>45</sup> Another is when there is some prediction of ill-luck<sup>46</sup> that could befall individuals. Although the latter was not significant, it did feature when asked “when do they give”.<sup>47</sup>

The information from the various interviews suggests that Hindus consider themselves to be generous, noble, charitable and hospitable. Since self-realisation is the goal of life for most Hindus, the practise of giving is inextricably woven into their daily lives as a sure and simple way to achieving absolute bliss. There is an enduring sense that giving would in fact bring them closer to God. This is also evident in the Strategy and Tactics Survey (2003) which

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Bala Naidoo, president South African Tamil Federation, KwaZulu Natal, 25 November 2004

<sup>42</sup> In the *Sri Ramacharitamanasa Balakanda* (doha 211, chaupai 1-2), when Rama and Lakshmana accompany Sage Vishwamitra to the Ganga, gifts of various kinds are offered to Brahmanas (Ayodhyakunda, doha 794, chaupai 80). While Rama is on his way to the forest (14 years exile) he gives the brahmanas and beggars whatever they want and sustenance for one year.

<sup>43</sup> Interviews with focus group women – Johannesburg, 7 February 2004.

<sup>44</sup> Interviews with representatives from Divine Life Society, ISKCON, Aryan Benevolent Home, 4 June 2004.

<sup>45</sup> This act of giving because of ill omen is mentioned in the *Ayodhyakanda* doha 156, chaupai 4, when Bharat is at his maternal grandfather’s house and experiences nightmares about home, and because he sees evil omens, he prays and gives food and gifts to brahmanas

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Bharat Ramkissoon on identifying scriptural notions of giving in the *Ramcharitmanas*, 3 October 2004. See also article by Romila Ramkissoon, (2003) *The Philosophy of service in the Ramayan, Glimpses of the Ramayan: An ancient saga with modern relevance and Eternal wisdom*, editor, Dharam Ramkissoon.

revealed that almost 67% of the Hindu sample believed that giving brings them closer to God.

There is a bilateral relationship between service rendition and *karma*. Some priests emphasised the idea that the moment you give, you become a receiver. In most interviews with priests, it was clear that with giving came the assurance of transcendental receiving. Both giving and receiving get collapsed into an integral notion through which Hindus are able to redeem themselves from past *karmic* actions towards realisation of God. This would appear to be the understanding of most people interviewed – this intertwining of giving to divination.<sup>48</sup> The next section focuses on organisational Hindu giving.

### **Organisational Giving**

This section on organisational Hindu giving responds to key issues in the study, viz. contexts that make the giving process possible, the strategies employed, and an understanding of how resources get mobilised. It also discusses the different giving activities, how resources get targeted, the selection of the beneficiaries and it briefly alludes to the relationship between the giving groups and the recipient.

The organisations selected in this study have all demonstrated clear roles, responsibilities and contributions in their pursuit of service rendition (*Niskhaam Karma*)<sup>49</sup> Over the years one can easily detect a shift in the specialised spiritual mission to a paradigm that is driven by social vocation in the form of poverty alleviation and issues of development.

The distinct patterns of Hindu giving that have emerged over the years in South Africa are organised into themes. The terms *welfare-orientations*, *cultural-orientation* and *knowledge-empowerment-orientation* used by Sen (1993) are appropriate ways of describing how giving has evolved in these organisations. There are essentially three orientations that characterise giving by Hindu organisations in South Africa. These are similar to those proposed by Sen (1993), and for the purpose of this report, the three major themes that emerge are Poverty Alleviation, Societal and Cultural Development and Development and Service.

#### **(i) Poverty Alleviation**

One of the obvious consequences of poverty is hunger. Hindus believe that serving food to the poor and the needy or to a begging mendicant is a very good *karma*. The husband and wife of the house should not turn away any who comes at eating time and asks for food. If food is not available, a place to rest, water for refreshing one's self, a reed mat to lay one's self on, and pleasing words entertaining the guest- these at least never fail in the houses of the good.<sup>50</sup> According to a Sanskrit scholar "When hunger stares you in the face, giving is not an act of charity or spirituality but the act of humanity yoked together".<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with Hindu priests, 25 July 2004, Westville campus, UKZN.

<sup>48</sup> Interviews with Hindu priests, 25 July 2004

<sup>49</sup> *Entitled to actions but not to the fruits of the actions*

<sup>50</sup> *Apastamba Dharma Sutra*, 8.2 cited in [http://www.beliefnet.com/features/charity\\_chaart2.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/features/charity_chaart2.html)

<sup>51</sup> Interview with H R Maharajh, Sanskrit scholar, priest and philanthropist, 7 June 2004

Hindus believe that the giver of food attains greater happiness than the giver of other things like land or knowledge (Klostermaier, 2000).

Food is also associated with a lot of religious activity.<sup>52</sup> Food is invariably offered to God during most of the religious ceremonies. On specific days in a year food is offered to departed souls. Food is also distributed to people at the end of many religious ceremonies. Many Hindu temples distribute food freely every day to the visiting devotees.<sup>53</sup>

With regard to food giving, a devotee from the Ramakrishna Society Mission cited Vivekananda: “we wander about teaching metaphysics to people. It is all madness. Did not our master say: ‘an empty stomach is not good for religion’...”.<sup>54</sup> It has been suggested about hunger that: “more bitter than even a beggar’s bread is the meal of the miser who hoards wealth and eats alone”.<sup>55</sup>

For Ranjith Ramnarain, a purposeful existence is to “give to all” because God dwells in the hearts of everyone: there is no point in praying when people are hungry. He treats the street children to meals and ice-creams on a yearly basis and shows care and concern in a welfare clinic in Verulam to treat the local indigent people.<sup>56</sup> Ramnarain states that “a hungry man is an angry man”. Thus feeding is critical to his giving style. He has made donations to the Hare Krishna *Food for life*. He believes that by feeding the poor, one contributes towards the creation of social stability and it is for this reason that he privileges food giving as a fixed pattern. Special functions like *Diwali* also sees him contribute food parcels (600-700 at R130 per hamper). He also gives to the Aryan Benevolent Home a daily donation of bread in perpetuity, and has spent his time with the poor and frail; e.g. his 50th birthday was celebrated at ABH with the poor and disabled. He cites an inner feeling that drives him to share with the poor. In this way he does not forget the old, needy and disabled.<sup>57</sup>

Swami Navaler’s organisation, an affiliate of the Tamil Federation began South Africa’s first large-scale Hindu charity program. Some 1 500 meals are served daily to the poor, irrespective of colour or creed. The *Tirukkural*, 11:103, is often cited as a text that implores individuals to give in an un-coerced manner.

From focus group and individual interviews with members of the ISKCON, food (*anna dhan*) was considered to be an essential component of giving. According to Smita Krsna, *Food for Life* which is an active wing of the Society, is the largest registered non-profit,

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52 *He is liberal who gives to anyone who asks for alms, to the homeless, distressed man who seeks food; success comes to him in the challenge of battle, and for future conflicts he makes an easy ally.*  
[http://www.beliefnet.com/features/charity\\_chaart2.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/features/charity_chaart2.html)

53 (<http://www.suntimes.co.za/articles/article.aspx?ID=ST6A95523>).

54 *Interview with Ramakrishna devotee, 25 March 2004*

55 *Interview with male focus group, 28 July 2004*

56 *Interview with Ranjith Ramnarain - Treats his workers with the same charity in upgrading, provision of health and safety, aids programme, school fees for employees children, family health programme, 7 September 2004*

57 *Interview with Ranjith Ramnarain, businessman, philanthropist, 7 September 2004.*

vegetarian food relief organisation worldwide and is currently the largest vegetarian free meal programme in South Africa. Since 1974, *Food for Life* has served more than 200 million free hot meals in over 70 countries. In South Africa alone, in 2002, a staggering one million plates of food were served.<sup>58</sup>

These interviews reveal an awareness that in South Africa, regardless of colour, culture, creed or race, young and old, “many people are starving – this is a stark reality”. The escalating poverty and unemployment rates have caused people to be destitute and homeless, without access to clean running water and sanitation. ISKCON believes that it is the responsibility of individuals, the small to medium businesses, the corporates, and the multinational sector to address this situation. *Food for Life* has developed the concept of “hunger-free zones” within the community. This operates on the principle that no one should go hungry within a 20 km radius of the distribution points. According to this organisation, the vision of this initiative is to have an entire network of hunger-free zones regionally and nationally. Ingredients and donations for meals are collected and provision of facilities for the preparation of meals are organised. More than one hundred and fifty thousand hot meals are served every month.

President Thabo Mbeki captured the following sentiment about the food giving initiative by the ISKCON:

*This understanding that, if I have a plate of food, let me share it with my neighbour, let those who are hungry come and eat, let those who are feeling sad come together with us and together we can share this burden, this understanding should be taken from Food for Life and transmitted to the entire country.*<sup>59</sup>

When asked whether giving food was the best thing they could do to help poor people, the women interviewed responded by suggesting that while it was a short term relief it did not provide long term solutions:

*I also don't think food is the best thing. I think they should be given skills that will help them to survive. In that way you will not have to put food on their table for the rest of their lives they can go out there and get food for themselves...*

*By giving them food they take it for granted...*

*There are a lot of underprivileged people who come to the Krishna (ISKCON) and if you give them they can waste it and they know that they will get another plate. If they are to work for the food they will not waste it...*<sup>60</sup>

Other organisations involved in food-giving at smaller volumes sincerely believe that “Great, indeed, is the power to endure hunger. Greater still is the power to relieve other’s hunger”.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Interview with Smita Krishna Dasa, 7 March 2005

<sup>59</sup> Smita Krsna Dasa (undated): *Food for Life Fundraising Brochure*, ISKCON.

<sup>60</sup> Focus group interview with women, 23 October 2004.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Dr D Moodley from S A Hindu Maha Sabha,, 8 September 2004

The Tamil Federation commits itself to social giving of food hampers during *Joythi Jeevam* – about 1 800 food hampers during the *Deepavali* period.<sup>62</sup> The priests in the interview believed that “...in *Kaliyuga* charity of food brings liberation from cycle of birth or death”.<sup>63</sup>

Food giving as a means of poverty alleviation can be seen as social responsiveness to more immediate needs. In addition Hindu organisations indicated that they were also interested in contributing to long-term societal and cultural development.

## **(ii) Societal and Cultural Development**

People closely associated with religious organisations felt that one of the great services that one can perform is to educate people into spiritual consciousness (transcendental giving or *Jnana dhaan*), even “if by your endeavour one or two souls who come under your protection become liberated in this life, that is a great transcendental service to the Lord” (Srila Prabhupada, 1998). Hare Krishna devotees who were interviewed believe that it is the duty of every responsible Indian to broadcast the transcendental message of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* throughout the world (Srila Prabhupada, 1982). This is referred to as *jnana dhaan* (knowledge giving).<sup>64</sup> Two categories of knowledge giving are identified. The first *avidya dhaan* is giving knowledge about this world, information about how to live in the material world. The second type of knowledge giving is *vidya dhaan*, which refers to knowledge beyond this world, hence the notion of transcendental giving. This form of giving is largely practised by priests who feel that it is incumbent on them to share such information to the Hindu mass. Knowledge giving would also include the dissemination of cultural literature, seminars and conferences planned by organisations.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with representatives from five Hindu organisations in the KwaZulu Natal region, 5 November, 17 November, 2 December, 2004.

<sup>63</sup> The *Sri Sathnarayan Vrath Katha* refers to “charity being done by villagers to a brahmin to uplift him from the perils of hunger. The villagers benefited from the priest’s blessings and prospered.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Hindu priest, 25 August 2004.

<sup>65</sup> See ffg websites for more information on types of knowledge giving offered:  
<http://www.sivananda.dls.org.za>  
<http://www.krsna.com>

The 2003 world Sri Hanuman Conference, April 18-20, attracted more than 14,000 people over the three days in Durban, South Africa. Jointly organized by the Ramakrishna Centre and Divine Life Society, the primary objective was to "awaken the great ideals synonymous with Sri Hanuman of bhakti, jnana and shraddha (devotion, knowledge and faith), and to inspire aspirants to tread the path of God Realization with great zeal and sincerity".<sup>66</sup>

Hindus who volunteer their service satisfy a quest for understanding people, organisations, or their communities better. At a community level, the collective action of a group of volunteers who share a commitment to a cause can be a powerful experience. Being engaged in volunteer work allows for the individuals to experience profound sensitivity, a heightened sense of urgency, and dedication.

The South African Tamil Federation's organisational giving has a strong cultural and educational focus. Social giving efforts which took the form of bursaries valued at R108 000 in 2003, and R130 000 in 2004, were allocated to needy students. The selection depends on merit, irrespective of colour. Student organisations within the federation are also supported to study in India (music, language or culture) and flight, accommodation, and other costs are covered by this bursary. A large focus of this organisation as well as its affiliates is on education and book distribution. It has a systematic way of prioritising events and a rigorous budgeting process. Money is raised to ensure that earmarked events are completed successfully.<sup>67</sup>

Many of the Hindu organisations provide the youth with opportunities to take on serious responsibility. This allows for the youth to quickly develop a sense of maturity. It also acts as a leveller between young and old, professionals and non-professionals. Opinions are sought irrespective of one's official standing or level of education. Many youth believed that it raised them to

*a higher level of thinking and acting ... knowing that you will be respected for your ideas and behaviour can make you feel you are making a contribution", e.g. working with people at a hospice with patients diagnosed with cancer – you cannot but be seriously involved with lives of such people".<sup>68</sup>*

Hindu youth have been most responsive in promoting awareness and conscientising students by providing a unit which supports disabled people (as in setting up with a guide dog, walking stick, raising funds to get someone a wheelchair or academically, by making tapes for blind people).<sup>69</sup>

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66 South African Tamil Federation, ISKCON, Divine Life Society of South Africa, Ramakrishna Society of South Africa, these were the most often mentioned organisations in all group or individual interviews.

67 Interview with Bala Naidoo, President South African Tamil Federation, KwaZulu Natal, 25 November 2004.

68 Vishal Sookhraj, Bhakti Yoga Society UKZN, 23 June 2004.

69 Vishal Sookhraj, Bhakti Yoga Society UKZN, 23 June 2004

### (iii) Development and Service

Over the last 50 years, Divine Life Society has given financial assistance to over 30 Hindu spiritual institutions in South Africa and about 25 in India. The organisation considers it a great blessing to have the privilege of serving temples and spiritual institutions.<sup>70</sup> The Divine Life Society obtains its funds from a variety of sources. Much of it is derived from book sales, printed and published by the Society. Also, since the inception of the society in 1949, generous hearted well-wishers and patrons from all over the country continue to provide substantial financial aid in an unparalleled and spontaneous way.<sup>71</sup>

The Divine Life Society is currently involved in projects from building of schools for the disadvantaged sector of the community, building 255 homes for displaced Africans and Indians, in Waterloo, Verulam, baptismal centres at Port Dumford and Inanda, disposal of cremated ashes – *ghat* project in Clare Estate, and making of sandwiches for school children at five different centres in KwaZulu Natal.<sup>72</sup> There is a growing networking and co-operation that goes beyond race, culture and class, clearly an influence of the political transition in South Africa.

According to Ina Cronje, MEC of Education in KwaZulu Natal “since January 2004, the Society has completed over fifty schools, with three hundred classrooms in total. The Society is also engaged in sanitation and water programmes in schools around the province. Currently, The Divine Life Society of South Africa is building schools in the Okahlamba, Ethekwini, Zululand and South Coast regions. Ina Cronje commended the Society for its support in trying to relieve the backlog of classrooms in rural areas; “we also want to compliment Divine Life Society for its speedy delivery, quality and cost effectiveness”.<sup>73</sup>

An intensive Outreach Health Programme was undertaken in the 1980s by the organisation, driven by the idea of their spiritual master, Swami Sivananda, that “God walks in the garb of a beggar. He moans in pain in the guise of the sick ... see Him in all. Serve all, love all”.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps also worthy of mention is the construction of the Ganga Baptismal Centre for the Nazareth Baptist Church at Ebuhleni in KwaZulu Natal. This is an example of how an organisation can work beyond ethnicity, culture or race. Since Africans also worship water, the input by Divine Life Society was received with great appreciation by the Shembe worshippers. Swami Sivananda’s *Peace* series books contain translation in isiZulu and has recorded sales of more than 30 000 copies. The Baptismal centre has been designed in a way that it is also used for cultural and educational purposes.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Interview with Divine Life Society member, 25 August 2004

<sup>71</sup> *Guru Bhakti Yoga* – 31, April 2003

<sup>72</sup> *Guru Bhakti Yoga* – January 2003

<sup>73</sup> Speech made by Ina Cronje, MEC of Education, KwaZulu Natal <http://www.sivanda.dls.org.za>

<sup>74</sup> See Swami Sivananda *His Mission in South Africa: Golden Jubilee (1949-1999)* for information about the health and social services provided by the society.

<sup>75</sup> See *Guru Bhakti Yoga* – 36, September – October 2003.

The one day monthly Yoga Camp, held at the Sivananda International Cultural Centre, is attended by 300-400 participants, from pre-school children to senior citizens. The Yoga Camp has two main aims: firstly, to impart to all participants the most inspiring and practical teachings of the Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda. The second aim is to teach and encourage participants to do spiritual practices daily, not just once a week or once a month.<sup>76</sup> A post cremation public facility was officially opened on 5 June 2005 by the Divine Life Society. Located along the Umgeni River, next to the Umgeni Hindu Crematorium, this provides an appropriate space for the disposal of ashes of the deceased. Over the past two months of its opening, the *ghat* has been utilised by people from all race groups in South Africa and internationally.<sup>77</sup>

The Divine Life Society has entered into a partnership with the eThekweni Municipality towards the development of 263 sub-economic properties, valued at a total of about R7,7 million. Sbu Ndebele, the premier of KwaZulu Natal, noted that this partnership between government and the Divine Life Society has been a longstanding relationship in which The Divine Life Society has contributed more than R70 million towards community improvement projects in the province.<sup>78</sup> This is the second housing initiative that the society has undertaken with the Council, the first being the building of 200 houses in Waterloo, near Verulam. There are currently 220 000 people in the city without access to basic housing and the Divine Life Society was praised by the Deputy Mayor for their “service to mankind ” and for providing basic services which has restored the dignity of the poor.<sup>79</sup>

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*77 Interview with Divine Life Society member, 25 August 2004*

*78 Divine Life, Sivanda Day to Day, No 72, 2005*

*79 Daily News, 14 September 2005, Footprints: KZN Premier S’bu Ndebele praises Divine Life Society for sterling work done among the needy in the province*

According to Professor Anand Singh, the Ramakrishna Mission of South Africa has an operational cost of R50 000 per month and depends on congregational support and targets business people to procure funds. The vision of this organisation is to render service especially in places where the state has been unable to do so, e.g. specialist surgeons from this society provide systematic and ongoing expert service to patients at selected state hospitals in Durban.<sup>80</sup> The mission statement of this society is “Service to humanity is service to God”.

The launch of the Chidananda Medical and Resource Centre by the Sarva Dharma Ashram means the provision of basic medical assistance to about 20 000 indigent residents of Welbedacht, a low income group on the outskirts of Chatsworth.<sup>81</sup> In collaboration with the KwaZulu Natal Health Department and the R K Khan Hospital in Chatsworth, this centre hopes to provide a 24 hour facility to residents occupying 6000 one-room units in this area. According to Ms Bhagwan, the ashram secretary, “the Ashram’s cycle of service includes daily feeding schemes, providing sandwiches for local schools, enrolling children at schools and equipping them with educational aids and books, an adult literacy programme, providing second-hand clothing to the poor and conducting religion and dance classes for the children”. The local community participate in the day-to-day operations.<sup>82</sup>

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness liaises with community-based organisations like orphanages, HIV/AIDS support programmes, old age homes and crisis relief centres in KwaZulu Natal. Networks have been forged with the SAPS and Metro Police Community Service and several youth character building initiatives have been conducted in various communities. Volunteers engage in psychological support to prisoners. In South Africa, volunteer teams are a familiar and most welcome sight in townships, squatter camps, impoverished housing schemes, hospitals, crèches, schools, universities and homes for the aged and handicapped. This is done in a selfless way and the Sanskrit term for this action without reward is known as *nishkaam karma*. This approach implies that people who serve are entitled to action but not to the fruits of these actions.

In examining selected services at an international level, it was found that ISKCON is engaged in providing shelter for HIV/AIDS orphans and a rehabilitation programme for street children and drug addicts, in Kisumu, Kenya. At the time of writing an orphanage in Colombo, Sri Lanka is being expanded alongside the feeding of 10 000 plates of food per day to tsunami victims. In Vrindavan, India, self-help and self-sufficiency programmes have been established to promote community development.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with A Singh, professor in Anthropology and member of the Ramakrishna Mission.

<sup>81</sup> Daily News, 14 July 2005, *Society homes in on happy future*.  
Welbedacht is a township on the outskirts of Chatsworth

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Ms Bhagwan, 14 August 2005. See *Tribune Herald*, *A beacon of hope, health and charity*, 2 October 2005.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Smita Krishna Dasa (ISKCON / Food for Life Procedural Chairman), 4 March 2004.

Service provision at Aryan Benevolent Home (ABH) ranges from providing shelter for abused, destitute women and children, responsiveness to crisis, counselling services, literacy classes for resident children and adults, gardening projects, nursing service, to the provision for HIV/AIDS orphans.<sup>84</sup> The notion of integrity is critical and the community places trust in the ABH. It has an annual budget of R17 million, of which R12,5 million comes from a state subsidy. It is evident that from the nature of the services provided by the ABH, that it has actively responded to the social needs of the day and the service extends beyond narrow ethnic or racial boundaries.

In respect of international relief, there is evidence of some Hindu support towards international disasters, e.g. floods. However, contribution to international causes as per the Strategy and Tactics Survey (2003) was minimal. It is evident from Table 4 that local needs were considered more important than international ones by Hindus.

**Table 4: Importance of local vs international causes**

<b>Local/international</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Local more impt than international	46.92
International more impt than local	4.27
Local and international equally impt	41.23
Do not know	7.58

(Adapted from Statistics South Africa, 2001)

However, systematic relief attempts continue to be made towards international disasters. The South Asia Tsunami Disaster in December 2004 saw immediate reaction from the South African Hindu Maha Sabha who together with the SA Tamil Federation launched an interim relief committee and an appeal to all South Africans to “give up just one day of their monthly salaries to assist those left destitute by the disaster” (*Post*, December 29, 2004 –January 2, 2005).

In June 2005, the International Movement for Tamil Culture launched the Poverty Alleviation and Disaster Initiative in Durban. A team of fifteen volunteers travelled to

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<sup>84</sup> See Singh, K (2000) *A Labour of Love: The Biography of Dr Shishupal Rambharos for a historical review of the ABH, founder and cherished Hindu philanthropist.*

Tsunami affected areas to offer assistance to rebuild the area (*The Rising Sun*, 14-20 June 2005). This initiative has been set to provide an ongoing relief to those affected by disasters locally as well. The guest speakers commended the team for their selfless effort and reiterated the notion that the greatest service to God was service to humanity.<sup>85</sup>

### **Sources of funds**

It is obvious that for most of the Hindus that give there is no systematic donor planning in place. This then forces organisations to employ unique models of collection. With the Divine Life Society of South Africa, mandatory monthly collection of stipulated amounts happen through personalised visits by dedicated members. This entails door-to-door physical collections.<sup>86</sup> In this strategy, the amounts to be given are negotiated between the organisational collector agents and the giver. The income of the Divine Life Society of South Africa is primarily congregational giving from private individual donations. Wealthy and generous Indians are attracted by their steady track record of service and their reputation to use the money expeditiously and responsibly. A strict policy governs their handling of donations: "Our society feels - just like our Master - that whatever funds the Divine Mother provides should be immediately utilized for the good of mankind and not invested".<sup>87</sup>

According to a representative from the Hare Krishna Movement, businessmen and Hindu organisations are solicited each year, especially during the festive periods to garner financial support. In some cases the solicitation strategy could make the giver feel that it is a "privilege" for him/her to give to an organisation. The Hare Krishna *Food for Life* generates about R350 000 per annum largely through donations by the general public, businessmen, the congregation givers, and donations of groceries and vegetables by supermarkets. The biggest givers are Hindus from Durban and surrounding areas as far as Richards Bay, Newcastle and Port Edward. The money is generated through cash donations from people celebrating birthdays, in memory of others, death anniversaries, but largely through soliciting fixed contributions by way of debit order donations and single large donations by businessmen. Furthermore, several festivals are held annually in different areas. Here the local *nama hattas*<sup>88</sup> organize festivals in a local hall or under a tent and invite the local community who are served a sumptuous meal. The largest feeding at any one festival occurs at the *Ratha Yatra* (Festival of Chariots) on the Durban Beachfront, usually held over the Easter Weekend where people from all cultures and backgrounds are invited, entertained with a cultural stage show of international artists, and fed the entire day. According to a representative of the organisation, "the minimum amount of food distributed has been 120 000 plates for those four days. For this festival large donations are received from regular donors from other provinces as well. A regular Ratha Yatra donor gives between R50 000 to R60 000 just for food distribution at the festival. *Food for Life* may also be commissioned by Government Departments to feed large gatherings of up to 30 000 people, e.g. Department of Transport

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85 A Rajbansi, KZN Minister of Sports and Recreation and Prof F Mazibuko, DVC of the University of KwaZulu Natal were guest speakers at this function.

86 Interviews with Hindu householder giver, 8 August 2004

87 Interview with member of Divine Life Society, 25 August 2004

88 Congregational service groups held in different areas that meet weekly

information dissemination rallies in 2004, or the East Coast Radio Toy Story function at Kingsmead Stadium in 2003”.<sup>89</sup>

For the ABH, its Annual Fair generates R400 000 in gate entrance takings alone, largely from community support. Sponsorships from stallholders at the yearly fair are an assured income strategy. Bigger donors like Telkom and Vodacom are also approached. Diwali is a special period when giving happens more generously from the smallest giver (meals prepared for the day) to business houses like Shoprite Checkers (food items). ABH also received R1,2 million to compensate for the 2002 deficit from the National Lotto in 2003.<sup>90</sup>

### **Hindu Giving - Emerging Insights**

The giving activities of the Hindu community can be seen as moving away from community-centric to one that is nation-centric thus embracing all racial, cultural and linguistic groups.<sup>91</sup> The implications of this shift are suggested by the concept of community service which works on the assumption that Hindu institutions are responsible agents for alleviating poverty and enlightening the public culturally and aesthetically.<sup>92</sup> Service is seen as a sacred trust, a cultivation of civic leadership and a performance of nobleness

What has emerged is a kind of social mission paradigm that is more pragmatic and implementation driven, through a better understanding of community life and how problems can be better addressed. It is obvious that Hindu organisations in this study have recognised a clearer vision for their work, and in many cases, have supported and extended the work that they believe should have been done by the government.<sup>93</sup>

It would appear that the patterns of giving take many forms. While there is generally no systematic donor scheduling in place for most Hindus, a significant amount of giving does take place and is driven by a spirit of voluntarism both at individual and organisational levels. This is strongly influenced by a sense of religious and civic responsiveness to community needs. Although very little is known about how poor communities mobilise resources internally in order to cope with difficult conditions, it is clear that Hindus generally respond more spontaneously to crisis situations. This type of responsiveness presents an enabling environment for the poor to mobilise and benefit from reactive giving by Hindu groups. Socially responsive giving is usually conducted in the case of immediate emergencies, e.g. deaths. In this case Hindus work together to facilitate funerals, ceremonies for the dead, bursaries for needy university students, especially in their first year of study. The Strategy and Tactics Survey (2003) also found that the most support was received by the poor and the youth (Table 5)

### **Table 5: Causes supported**

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*89 Interview with Smita Krishna Dasa (ISKCON / Food for Life Procedural Chairman), 4 March 2004*

*90 Interview with PRO (ABH), 9 October 2004*

*91 Interview with A Singh, professor of Anthropology, UKZN, 24 August 2005*

*92 Interview with A Singh, professor of Anthropology, UKZN, 24 August 2005*

*93 Interview with A Singh, professor of Anthropology, UKZN, 24 August 2005*

Causes	Percent
Disabled	6.64
Animals	1.42
Aged	9.95
Children/Youth	27.96
HIV/AIDS	19.91
The poor	26.54
Religious institution	0.95
Women	1.90
Crime/violence	0.47
Other	4.27

(Adapted from Statistics South Africa, 2001)

It is, however, conjectured that poor people in these communities are able to survive through various informal mechanisms that facilitate the internal flow of resources within these communities. Formal support at a Hindu organisational level is fairly systematic and offered to the frail and aged, physically disabled, mentally challenged, destitute men and women and children, as well as victims of emergencies and disasters.

**(i) Intergenerational and Interepochal understanding of giving**

Religious leaders believe that much of the giving lessons for Hindus have been learnt through Vedic principles enunciated through the ages. Therefore it can be suggested that in trying to understand the nature of Hindu giving and its rootedness, it is evident that the notion of giving is not just intergenerational (passed from one generation to another) but interepochal (an idea that is carried through from one epoch to the next). There is a kind of knowing about charity that pervades the hearts and souls of Hindus from one epoch to another. The term “charity” is preferred to “social giving” only because it is seen as egalitarian and refers to a decent, positive act of behaviour.<sup>94</sup> It has been repeatedly observed in the religious literature that as a Hindu one cannot avoid to give.<sup>95</sup> According to Smita Krishna Dasa (ISKCON member), the act of giving is

*... a profound form of socialisation through religious instructions, as well as a behaviour taught and subsequently learned over the generations in a systematic, intentional way. It is also learned by the act of giving and a feeling of compassion and goodwill ... which then reinforces the act as valuable*.<sup>96</sup>

There appears to be a deep value entrenchment between generations of Hindu givers, and the “dialogue” happens through religious instructions as well as intentional lessons on giving. Intergenerational giving ideas have been immutably ingrained, so in a sense it is viewed as expected behaviour. There is a feeling of closeness to the act of giving that spills over from giving in the past to the present givers. However, from the interviews it is clear that individual and subjective giving among Hindus have allowed for a more wilful and

<sup>94</sup> see *charity in the UK and USA* by Karen Wright, 2002, for a fuller discussion of the notion of charity.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Bala Naidoo, Chairman, KwaZulu Natal, South African Tamil Federation, 25 November 2004.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Smita Krsna Das, 4 March 2004

circumstantial construction of the ways in which charity happens. Reformulating the notion of giving is clearly not negotiable, but it becomes more expanded and mutates according to the emerging societal needs. This flexibility is created around patterns of giving that align to economic circumstances and emergencies.

Intergenerational ideas and patterns of giving then get pushed into interepochal values that get sustained over time.<sup>97</sup> It is clear from the interviews with the priests that present day giving strategically mimics giving of many epochs ago. In the following section selected concepts from the holy scripture, the *Ramacharitamansa* is cited to get a broader understanding of the ways in which people who were interviewed did in fact give through an “epochal mimicry” approach.

**(ii) *Voluntaristic idealism or welfarism?***

*Aparigrah*, a Sanskrit word, implies the value of non-accumulation or of not keeping anything more than is necessary for one’s minimal needs. The concepts of sacrifice and charity are also differently rooted in the Hindu mind. When one gives away one’s dearest object to a needy person, the sacrifice would be considered charity. If giving away something is only for one’s own self-purity and not aimed at someone else’s well-being, it is *tyag* (sacrifice) but not charity.<sup>98</sup> Ideas about generosity and altruism as pure selflessness have been explored by Chaturvedi (1987).

The concept of voluntarism, of voluntary giving or action is almost always associated with ideas of developing a just and fair society, both at individual and organisational levels. In part it can be said that individual giving is frenetic but the palliative endeavours only offer short-term relief. Perhaps the question that arises is: how sustainable is Hindu giving? From the responses by organisational representatives of Hindu organisations, it is clear that the continuous collecting and monitoring of funds is more sustainable. Although most organisations indicate that their involvement is largely cultural and religious dissemination, financial giving happens at a smaller level on an ongoing basis. Almost all interviewees at both organisational as well as individual levels are unable to exclude a deep sense of religious piety in their giving patterns. Welfarism appears as the underlying motive that drives all giving. In the Strategy and Tactics Survey (2003), a fairly large sector of the Hindu sample believed that they would like to influence development in the country (Table 6).

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<sup>97</sup> See [http://www.pucp.edu.pe/eventos/congresos/filosofia/programo\\_vierues/scim9-10/Lopez\\_Pablo.pdf](http://www.pucp.edu.pe/eventos/congresos/filosofia/programo_vierues/scim9-10/Lopez_Pablo.pdf) for a more complete discussion of interepochal. By interepochal dialogue I mean the deep communication or empathy between people of very distant times or historical circumstances. There are epoch-making events creating general situations which are difficult to understand for people of different epochs. History’s goal is to overcome those difficulties, by understanding past times and their different mentalities. Even though it is not possible in a literal sense to have a dialogue with deceased people, we can experience a real closeness to people of the past and an exchange of feelings and ideas. We feel that we can understand what they really meant and that they understood our views by anticipating our own perspectives and ideas.

<sup>98</sup> Published in *The Nonprofit Sector in the global community: Voices from Many nations*, a publication of Independent Sector, Washington, pp.422-437, 1992.

**Table 6: Influence developments in my country**

Categories	Percent
Strongly Agree	13.27
Agree	30.33
Neutral	34.60
Disagree	18.48
Strongly Disagree	3.32

(Adapted from Statistics South Africa, 2001)

In order to achieve fairness and justice, cultural codification of compliant and conformist, as well as compulsive, giving behaviour has been noted. This leads from an individual-based giving to collective community and nation-based giving. For the elite givers like Ranjith Ramnarain, there is an expectation that there will be greater opportunities for private and personal giving. One cannot ignore the cultural rootedness of Hindu giving, especially the spirit of voluntarism.<sup>99</sup>

Voluntarism triggered by natural disasters, e.g. fires and floods, have had Hindus call for collective mobilisation and action by all organisations. There has been an eclectic approach to provide immediate material and financial support in such cases. Hindu communities are generally reactive and immediate about their giving. A move to a sustained mobilisation, the struggle for better relief, access to medical data, even legal support have been cited as ways in which Hindu people get involved in disaster relief.<sup>100</sup> A more organised systemic effort especially in response to disasters is evident. Here social spaces get created, opportunities for voluntarism get widened, and opportunities for participation increase dramatically, and networks are established to other agencies in South Africa. According to Ashwin Desai, the entry of government undermines self-help activity. Community initiatives/voluntary participation and aspirations can be destroyed when these activities are fragmented.<sup>101</sup> The spirit of routine and systematic involvement contradicts the spirit of voluntarism which is largely embedded in ideas of spontaneity.<sup>102</sup>

**(iii) Communal reciprocity**

Voluntarism based on *agarigrah* has another dimension, and this is the willingness to receive knowledge from whoever is knowledgeable. Thus giving away something (*pradan*) is accompanied by the inculcation or assimilation of humility and duty towards others. Generally voluntary organisations that emphasize giving on the basis of a relationship with poor people are either seen as paternalistic, or viewed as a source of external resources and skills. Very few voluntary organisations try to tap the technical, institutional or social

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<sup>99</sup> Interview with Hindu priest during rendition of Gita Katha, 30 June 2004.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Bala Naidoo SA Tamil Federation – KwaZulu Natal, 25 November 2004

<sup>101</sup> Interview with Ashwin Desai, sociologist and welfarist, 17 November 2004

<sup>102</sup> Interview with academic and Sanskrit scholar, Dr Rambilaas, 3 March 2004.

knowledge of the poor. The *grahan* or assimilation of knowledge from the poor does not constitute “richness” in the ability to maintain subtle differences in protocol, and reciprocity provides a “safety net” of kinship linkages<sup>103</sup> (interviews with women collecting flour is an example of how social spaces get created to experience begging and the potential to learn from this experience).

Reciprocity is an important cultural element of voluntarism in Hinduism. This includes both giving and receiving, but not in the form of an exchange. As Ellis (1989:1) puts it: “it is the giving and not the gift that is important”. Hindu giving has followed through reciprocity in many ways: guaranteed that you will receive. Ellis adds that reciprocities are characterised further by wealth being equated with one’s esteem or prestige in society based on giving behaviour, and the assurance of good return because many people owe it to the giver. Although this may be esoteric, and this receiving may take a longer time, it is understood that there is a causative accumulation of good giving deeds to be rewarded in another life.

*(iv) Voluntarism versus compulsion*

There is a subtle compulsion to give and a deep sense of voluntarism that drives much of Hindu giving. Hindu giving is seen as more than just charity - the act of giving is associated with a deep sense of sharing. Smaller, less noticeable and quantifiable giving happens at the community level. In this case there appears to be face-to-face giving starting with family, moving onto neighbours and then the community. Community-centric giving among Hindus is largely done collectively. This style of giving gets co-ordinated, managed and operationalised through reputable Hindu organisations that monitor funding with the strictest of moral principles. Both the individual- and community-centric giving styles lead to a nation-centric building process – contributing to the welfare of the individual and community within a nation. From the Strategy and Tactics Survey (2003), it can be seen that Hindus do give, and the largest percentage of givers come from the R51-R100 category (Table 7).

**Table 7: Total money given to organizations in the last month**

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*103 Published in The Nonprofit Sector in the Global Community: Voices from Many Nations, pp 422-437*

Amount	Percent
R1 to R20	8.33
R21 to R50	30.95
R51 to R100	42.86
R101 to R500	14.29
R501 to R1000	2.38
R1001 to R2000	1.19

(Adapted from Statistics South Africa, 2001)

Hindus demonstrate a fascinating consciousness in both the nature and purpose of the material reality around them, and the consciousness to align themselves to the ethics and politics of giving in a powerful way.

**(v) *Hindu Giving and Development***

Although giving in general and Hindu giving in particular are not effective solutions for poverty relief – the question is posed – how the poor can also come to benefit from and be included in systematic mechanisms of social co-operation between government and a nation of givers? In the South African context, de Haan (1999:8) argues for significant overlap between social exclusion and poverty. The process of social inclusion through social giving may mean that those included still experience a sense of exclusion (Sayed, 2002). The poor will always remain poor and excluded given the non sustainable nature of the nature of many poverty relief initiatives. This could have greater implications for social relations of power and structures and systems of inequality (Slee, 2001).

To some extent, there would appear to be a chronic reliance on Hindu charity on the part of the receivers, e.g. feeding schemes. Chronic reliance on the one strategy can harm the poor and subjects them to a form of “hard-core” exclusion in society.<sup>104</sup>

Hindu organizations “did not see development as a product of human endeavour, rather ...as a process of life ... the word ‘development’ carries within it a sense of patronage, whereas service embodies an attitude of mutuality and humility” (Mahatma Ghandi cited in Kumar, 2003:16). There is a clear need for conceptual tools for understanding the nature and causes of poverty and evaluating the giving potential of all religious groups in South Africa.<sup>105</sup> It would demand reforming relations and systems of co-operations such that voluntarism can be evaluated on an ongoing basis. Most of all, there is a need for a co-operative approach to sustaining social giving and government participation plans for poverty alleviation. Many Hindu organizations in this study have moved from an exclusively spiritual mission paradigm to one that is driven by social concern, poverty alleviation and empowerment.

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<sup>104</sup> Interview with Dr Ashwin Desai, sociologist, 17 November 2004

<sup>105</sup> Interview with DrAshwin Desai, sociologist and welfarist, 17 November 2004

## **Conclusion**

A review of Hindu scriptures suggests that the nature and the notion of giving are glorified in the religious texts. The Vedantic literature is suffused with hierarchies of giving and ways of giving which are linked to spiritual evolution in a profound way. A very important feature of giving is silence – without acknowledging pride about the benevolence of the act, thus allowing giving to be seen as altruistic, and without glorification.<sup>106</sup>

*Seva* or service is one of the fundamental principles of Hinduism. Mahatma Gandhi had argued that “service was fundamental to community upliftment” (Kumar, 2003:16). In this regard Hindu temples and organisations serve as “networks for the provision of food, employment, housing and psychological support as an expression of this principle” (Kumar, 2003:16). For example, the partnership between the Ulundi-based Zululand District Municipality and the Divine Life Society dates back 32 years. This co-operation has resulted in numerous multimillion rand development projects, including schools, crèches, clinics, recreation centres, skills and training centres, sanitation projects, sports fields, health care facilities, multimedia resource centre (Jenkins, 2006:5).

It is obvious that Hindu in South Africa giving has evolved over the years. This is true for most of the organisational givers after the political transition in South Africa. This shift was spurred by the political transition and the need to address the vast inequalities of the apartheid legacy. Hindu organisations in the context of this study generally display an extremely sophisticated articulation and understanding of social giving which could allow them to be seen as prolific givers in the country.

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#### **SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS, NAMES, DATES AND PLACES**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>NAMES</b>	<b>DESIGNATION</b>	<b>PLACE</b>
7 February 2004	Focus group women	Hindu women group engaged in temple duty	Shallcross
4 March 2004	Smita Krishna Dasa	ISKCON – Food for Life (procedural chair)	Sri Radha Radhanath Temple of Understanding - Chatsworth
5 March 2004	Dr Rambilaas	Vedic scholar, member of Hindu organisation	Westville
25 March 2004	Ramakrishna	Devotee	Durban

7 June 2004	H R Maharaj	Sanskrit scholar and practising priest	Shallcross, Durban
23 June 2004	Vishal Sookhraj	Bhakti Yoga Society	UKZN, Durban
24 June 2004	Alankar R Maharaj	Hindu Students Association	UKZN, Durban
30 June 2004	Hindu priest	Rendition of Gita Katha	Durban
5 July 2004	Focus group men	Hindu men and active givers	Midrand, Johannesburg
23 July 2004	D Bundhoo	Sanskrit scholar, philanthropist and welfarist	Pietermaritzburg
25 July 2004	Hindu Priest convention	Congregation of Hindu priests from KwaZulu Natal	Westville, UKZN
28 July 2004	Focus group men	Household givers	Estcourt
8 August 2004	Hindu householder	Household giver	Ladysmith
25 August 2004	Members of Hindu organisation	Ramakrishna Mission, Divine Life	Durban
7 September 2004	Ranjith Ramnarain	Businessman, philanthropist and elite giver	La Lucia
8 September 2004	Mrs Mothilal	Household giver	Shallcross
8 September 2004	Dr D Moodley	Representative Hindu Maha Sabha	Durban
3 October 2004	Bharat Ramkissoon	Hindu scholar, Honours student at UKZN	UKZN, Westville
3 October 2004	Anonymous philanthropist	Householder	Pinetown
9 October 2004	PRO – ABH Shamilla Surjoo	Public Relations Person	ABH – Chatsworth
11 October 2004	Sitaram	Professor of Hindu Studies	UKZN
23 October 2004	Focus group women	Women engaged in temple duties	Chatsworth
17 November 2004	Ashwin Desai	Sociologist and welfarist	Durban
24 November 2004	Receivers	Old and frail	ABH
25 November 2004	Bala Naidoo	Chairperson, KwaZulu Natal South African Tamil Federation	Durban
28 November 2004	Focus group interview with men	Householders	Chatsworth
28 November 2004	Focus group men	Householders	Cape Town
2 December 2004	Representative from Hindu organisation	Unofficial member	Johannesburg

24 August 2005	Anand Singh	Professor of Anthropology and member of the Ramakrishna Centre - SA	Durban, Asherville
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## Appendix 1

### Organisational Biographies

According to Ramson (2005) the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) popularly known worldwide as the Hare Krishna Movement, was founded by A C Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada in New York in 1966. It has since expanded throughout North and South America, to Europe, Africa, Australia and Far East, and back to India, the land of its origin. In South Africa, the Movement was established in 1972 in Durban.<sup>107</sup> This *Hare Krishna Movement*,<sup>108</sup> as it is popularly known, was introduced to South Africa in 1972, when two American disciples, Rsi Kumar Swami and Ksudhi das Brahmachari, arrived in Johannesburg under the instruction of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. The accounts of how they established ISKCON in South Africa is recorded by Riddha das<sup>109</sup> (1997) in *Destination South Africa* which describes their trials and tribulations, especially with the South African police in the apartheid era. It was Bhaktivedanta Swami's instruction that a Temple be built on its current site in Chatsworth, that gave the devotees the impetus to develop this project (Sooklal, 1985). After much fundraising all over the country, the *Sri Radha Radhanath Temple of Understanding* was officially opened on 18th to 20th October, 1985.

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<sup>107</sup> This has been popularized by its core teachings- the chanting of the Mahamantra:  
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

<sup>108</sup> These devotees moved to Durban where they were helped by prominent members of the Gujarati community

<sup>109</sup> Prior to becoming a devotee, he emigrated with his parents to Canada in 1954 due to the apartheid policies. At 22 years he joined ISKCON in Vancouver, Canada and returned to South Africa in 1975 to help with the ISKCON's mission.

The South African Tamil Federation was established to try to systematise the workings of different temples and smaller organisations under one body. It has 89 affiliates and oversees about 52 temples. The organisation is exclusively for Hindus. Funding is generated from affiliation fees (R50 p.a.) but largely through fundraising efforts. Appeals are made to business houses and the community to support identified religious events during the year.

Established in 1949, the headquarters of the Divine Life Society of South Africa is located in Reservoir Hills, Durban. The society has seventeen branches and prayer groups throughout the country. A major regional centre, called the Sivananda International Cultural Centre, is located near La Mercy on the north coast of KwaZulu Natal. Conceived in 1987, this centre has grown into a complex suitable for the multifarious activities of a rapidly growing congregation who are involved in some or other form of social giving.<sup>110</sup>

The Aryan Benevolent Home has an 83 year old history and is well placed in the public eye. In 1918 a challenge was presented to the Hindu community to establish a home for those who were indigent. The Aryan Benevolent Home was established in 1921 and was described as the greatest step taken by the Hindus in the community to blot out the stigma of shame inflicted on the poor and hungry.<sup>111</sup> In October 1926 children were admitted for the first time as there was no institution to accommodate children in need of care, and the organisation was registered in terms of the Children's Act as a Home for Children in need of care in 1933. In May 1965, the Clayton Gardens Home for the Aged was purchased from the Durban City Council and was registered as a private grade hospital with 18 beds certified by the Natal Provincial Administration in 1967. The ABH is presently located in Arena Park, Chatsworth.

The Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa was established in 1959 by Swami Nischalananda. An *ashram*, printing press and Ramakrishna Clinic was established on a fourteen acre property in Glen Anil, Durban. Printing and dissemination of literature, organised medical relief operations, distributing food and clothing to the needy are the primary activities of the Ramakrishna Centre. This organisation was one of the pioneer organisations that worked closely with the black community.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Interview with Divine Life Society member, 19 July 2005

<sup>111</sup> Interview with PRO, ABH, 16 June 2005

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Ramakrishna devotee, 1 March 2005

