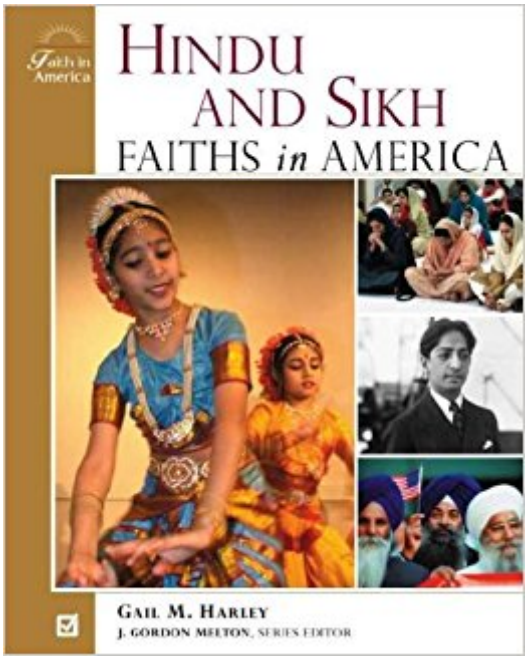
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Hindu And Sikh Faiths In America (Faith In America)



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Synopsis

The Hindu faith in America is complex and compelling, and it is determined to find a home in America far from the land of its birth - India. The first American Hindus were pathfinders, nurturing Hindu philosophy until it gained acceptance in society. Today, Hindu temples dot the American landscape and unite Hindu peoples eager to have their ancient religious principles co-exist in a modern, technological country. Hindu and Sikh Faiths in America also addresses the historical, ethical, and moral issues of the Sikh religion and its noteworthy entrance into traditions in America. From humble immigrants laboring in the timber trades in 1910, the Sikh tradition has flourished here in America as followers developed businesses, restaurants, and farms. This volume explores the couplet history of Hinduism and Sikhism in America and looks at the valuable contributions Sikhs and Hindus have made to the quality of life in the U.S.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 6-9-Following a lengthy introduction to the broad beliefs of each of these India-based religions, Harley narrates the history of Hindus and Sikhs in the U.S. and their sometimes-rocky path to equal treatment under the law. The remaining five chapters attempt an overview of these groups' lives in the U.S. and their connections to their homeland, including examinations of their impact on American culture and society. The author includes thumbnail biographies of important Hindu and Sikh contributors to American society, whether through technology, the arts, or religious practice. Plentiful black-and-white photographs are chiefly of prominent persons or of religious events such as weddings and celebrations. There are a few errors (Thomas Merton's birth year is

given as 1932 instead of 1915, and Pulitzer Prize-winning short-story writer Jhumpa Lahiri is referred to as a novelist), but overall this is an inviting overview of two religions and their adherents, still too little known in this country. Content, especially in the early chapters, is similar to that in Gurinder Singh Mann's Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs in America (Oxford, 2002), but any library that does not already have that book should certainly have this one. Libraries serving large Indian populations or readers especially interested in religion will likely want both titles.Coop Renner, Blackshear Elementary School, Austin, TXCopyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This well-produced volume offers a fine overview of how India's many indigenous religious faiths have integrated with the landscape that is America, 'perhaps the most religiously diverse nation in the history of the world.'Those curious about yoga, turbans, bindis, and the Hare Krishnas will find thought-provoking answers to their questions in the form of biographical sketches, descriptions of key historical events, heaps of captivating black-and-white photographs, and background information pertaining to the origin, beliefs, culture, society, politics, and future of the Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and Zoroastrians in America. Included is a chronology of events, glossary, index, and a list of paper-based and Web-based resources.Particularly riveting are the discussions on the racial barriers faced and overcome by pioneering immigrants and the short biographies of those responsible for interpreting Hindu philosophy for American audiences, including Jiddu Krishnamurti, Osho Rajneesh, Deepak Chopra, Satya Sai Baba, Mahesh Yogi, Sri Chinmoy, Ram Dass, Alice Coltrane, Joyce Green, and many others. Surprisingly, however, Harbhajan Singh Puri (better known as Yogi Bhajan), the enormously successful and controversial leader of American converts to Sikhism, merits just one short paragraph.Whereas the book's coverage of Hinduism and Hindus in America is quite comprehensive, one cannot help but wonder if 'Sikh' was added to the book's title as an afterthought in response to the post-9/11 milieu. The treatment accorded to the Sikhs in this volume may seem in proportion to their tiny numbers in India but doesn't do justice to their significant profile in America. For example, the list of festivals fails to mention Vaisakhi, which celebrates the onset of the harvest season in Punjab and commemorates Guru Gobind Singh's innauguration of the Khalsa, the orthodox order within Sikhism.Furthermore, the book commits grievous errors in its portrayal of Sikhism, which is referred to as the 'Sikh Dharma,' a term employed by American converts to Sikhism but largely unacceptable to the wider Sikh community. The only commonality acknowledged with Islam is monotheism. Readers aren't told that both Sikhism and Islam condemn idol worship and are religions of the book. Also, there is no mention of some of Sikhism's most honored traditions such as langar, the free community kitchens at

gurdwaras (Sikh places of congregation and worship) open to people of all faiths.The author, Gail M. Harley, who teaches religious studies at the University of South Florida, also omits a discussion of Buddhism in the context of a religious faith that was born in India and has gained significant popularity in America today.The glossary entry for 'Singh' states, 'The name taken by male Sikhs. This is also the last name of some Hindus who are not Sikhs.' Perhaps accordingly, though incorrectly, the chronology at the end of the book lists 'Dalip Saund Singh' as the 'first Indian American elected to Congress.' Within the book's pages, however, he is referred to by his correct name (Dalip Singh Saund) but as a 'Hindu.' In his autobiography, Congressman from India (Amritsar: Satvic Books, 1960), Saund is explicit about his Sikh heritage. Saund's grandson, Eric, told The Sikh Times, 'My grandfather Dalip Singh Saund was a Sikh' (private email correspondence with the author, February 3, 2003).Sanjiv Singh Sidhu, the billionaire C.E.O. of i2 Technologies and a Sikh, is also erroneously referred to as a 'Hindu.' A luminary such as like Narinder Singh Kapany, widely regarded as the father of fiber optics, receives no mention. Also unacknowledged is the strong pro-Khalistan sentiment prevalent among many Sikhs in America.There are several typos. But more serious are errors such as the reference to Nehru as the 'first president' of India, which, according to another error in the book, attained its freedom from Britain 'in 1948.'Despite its shortcomings, Harley's volume is an irresistable read that is sure to delight its readers with numerous gems of little-known facts about an extraordinarily dynamic section of the American mosaic.[...]

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