Hindu Bonds at Work: Spiritual and Commercial Ties between India and Bali

MARTIN RAMSTEDT

The article focuses on the spiritual capital negotiated in the Indian-Indonesian networks of an Indian Hindu missionary currently living in Bali. These networks bridge different social groups and thereby foster—like the American mainline Protestant churches examined by Robert Putnam—the conditions for transnational community building and commerce. The value of spiritual capital is gauged against the backdrop defined by the rise of Hindu nationalism and a new economic agenda in India since the end of the 1980s. Parallel to these developments, Indonesian Hindus began to grow wary of the growing influence of Islam and Islamism in their country.

This article addresses the following overall questions: Is spiritual capital negotiated in Indian-Indonesian business networks? If so, what kind of spiritual capital is used as currency? And finally, how can we gauge the value of such spiritual capital? In tackling these questions, I have drawn upon relevant insights of Robert D. Putnam, which have been supported by the findings of the World Values Surveys 1981–2001, published by Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart in 2004.

In his best-seller Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community, Putnam stated that social capital consists of “social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (2000, 19). It generates “capacity building for communities, just as the investment of economic capital is productive for manufacturing goods and services” (Norris and Inglehart 2004, 227). He furthermore claimed that “[f]aith communities in which people worship together are arguably the single most important repository of social capital in America” (Putnam 2000, 66). He then argued that American mainline Protestant churches in particular have played “a vital role in bridging diverse groups within local communities, encouraging face-to-face contact, social linkages, and organizational networks that, in turn, are thought to generate interpersonal trust and collaboration in local communities on issues of common concern” (Norris and Inglehart 2004, 227).

The social capital provided by the mainline Protestant churches in the United States is particularly efficacious, precisely because their networks are “bridging”
networks. They cut across or “bridge” different social groups and thereby foster the conditions for collective action, both in terms of community building and economic production (Norris and Inglehart 2004, 181–82, 191, 192, 227).

Extending Putnam’s definition for my purposes, I define spiritual capital as consisting of spiritual and religious networks and the ethical norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. My concept tallies with the one recently propounded by Peter Berger and Robert Hefner, who defined spiritual capital as “a sub-species of social capital, referring to the power, influence, knowledge, and dispositions created by participation in a particular religious tradition” (n.d., 3). Like Putnam, they asserted, however, that in order for a network to generate social capital for economic viability in the global market,

It must instill open and inclusive attitudes, whereas some religious associations and some forms of spiritual capital encourage closure and exclusion. Similarly, for spiritual capital to be conducive to market activity, it must create networks and values that work with rather than against the trust and collaboration of the marketplace. (4)

Recommending a comparative study of spiritual capital across cultures, Berger and Hefner suggested with regard to India that one should examine “the implications of the spiritual capital created by the Hindu resurgence for pluralist democracy and the booming market economy” (5). In this essay, I have in fact followed their recommendation with regard to Indian-Indonesian networks entangled in the endeavor to tap into the booming market economy of Asia-Pacific. Besides, I was motivated by the wide interest that the international success of overseas Indians has generated as to the role played by ethnic, religious, and cultural ties in the constitution and maintenance of their networks.

It is, however, rather difficult to actually shed some light on how transnational Indian business networks are constituted, and on which terms they are operated:

Today, the Overseas Indians form an extremely viable business force in Asia… Yet, efforts to chart the Overseas Indians’ influence often fail. Few from this business network assume prominent or high-profile public positions, often preferring to operate behind the scenes. Also, where the business climates allow, Overseas Indians tend not to report specifically their firms’ structures. Some families, like the Hindu-Jas, have a reputation for extreme secrecy about business operations, discussing them only in encrypted fax and e-mail messages, taking long walks in parks to avoid being overheard and sometimes … refusing to divulge return addresses on business correspondence. These tendencies often obfuscate researchers’ and competitors’ efforts to ascertain the firms’ ownership, structure and strategies. (Haley and Haley 1998, 304–5)
The general secrecy notwithstanding, I have been able to observe that spiritual capital has been negotiated to economic ends in Indian-Indonesian relations. From 1997 to 2003, I conducted altogether fifteen months of fieldwork in Indonesia and India in connection with a research project on Hinduism in modern Indonesia, which I was pursuing at the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden, The Netherlands. In the context of my fieldwork, I got access to Indian-Indonesian Hindu networks that were obviously generating spiritual capital geared toward transnational community building as well as economic exchange. The concrete circumstances under which Hindu bonds were forged and traded hint at salient rationales for investing in spiritual capital.

There are first of all the material conditions under which business operations have to be performed in Asian countries such as Indonesia. George and Usha Haley have, for instance, highlighted the fact that in terms of business intelligence, such as market-survey data and so forth, Asia-Pacific is in essence an “informational void relative to the amount of information available in industrialized economies” (1998, 303–6). Asian business networks have apparently responded to this challenge by relying on their webs of friends and government officials for necessary information. As the desired information often reflects subjective views or beliefs, it is trust and loyalty that by necessity form the central criteria around which Asian networks revolve. Overseas Indians have frequently expanded into industries of which they originally lacked detailed understanding. Yet they have usually empowered trusted people who, they feel, have the skills to manage the new ventures successfully (Das 2002, 143; Haley and Haley 1998, 306).

Another important factor was highlighted by Peter Boomgaard and David Henley in a paper they presented at the Fourth EUROSEAS Meeting in Paris, September 1–4, 2004. Pointing to the notorious lack of savings and a general scarcity of cash available to Southeast Asian entrepreneurs, they demonstrated that there is a constant need for advance payments in order to initiate commercial transactions. What follows from this is a high level of debt making and hence debt bondage, which implies trust in the honor and loyalty of debtors. Finally, I would like to mention the precarious infrastructure in Asia in general and the resultant dependency on the cooperation of many different people whom one cannot control by Western management tools.

A major backdrop, against which the functionality—and hence the value—of spiritual capital for Indian-Indonesian business relations has to be gauged, is the rise of Hindu nationalism in India, coinciding with a new economic agenda implemented by the Indian government since the loss of the country’s foremost trade partner, the Soviet Union, in 1989. The ensuing negotiations of “India Inc.” with potential partners in Asia-Pacific have also been accompanied by a high degree of explicit Hindu nationalism, fed by frustration caused by Islamist violence, especially in Kashmir, and Western claims to political, technological, and economic hegemony. These sentiments have, in turn, resonated with
ethnic Indian, Balinese, and Javanese Hindus in Indonesia, who have increasingly felt threatened by the Islamization of Indonesian society since the end of the 1980s.

In this essay, I will analyze what kind of Hindu bonds have been negotiated in recent Indian-Indonesian relations and how they have been forged over time. I hope to demonstrate that the spiritual capital in question draws on modern forms of Hinduism that possess a high potential for bridging different social groups. They thereby provide values and institutional frameworks conducive to transnational community building and commerce.

AN INTRODUCTION TO INDIAN-INDONESIAN NETWORKS

I got in touch with Indian-Indonesian networks through my Indian friend and colleague Dr. Yadav Somvir. I first met him in 1997 through my old mentor, the late I Gusti Ngurah Bagus, professor of anthropology at Udayana University in Denpasar. He introduced me to the new Indian lecturer for Hindi and Sanskrit on the faculty, who held a doctorate from the Sanskrit Department of the University of Delhi.

Somvir had been purposely solicited by the rector of Udayana University. While studying the Old Javanese Ramayana at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta in 1993, he had established contacts with Hindu intellectuals throughout the country. As a result of the high standard of his scholarship and his modest, obliging manner, Somvir had earned himself an excellent reputation, which accounted for his recruitment by the rector through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).1

The ICCR was established in 1950 as an autonomous organization of the government of India with a mandate to engage in cultural diplomacy. This has entailed the promotion of cultural exchange with other countries by organizing symposia, exhibitions, and artistic performances both at home and abroad, as well as administering scholarship schemes for foreign students wishing to enroll at an Indian university.2 The ICCR branch office in Jakarta, called the Jawaharlal Nehru Indian Cultural Centre (JNICC), was established after a cultural agreement was signed between India and Indonesia in 1955. Apart from promoting cultural exchange between the two countries, it has also catered to the cultural interests of the Indian diaspora and nonresident Indians in Indonesia.

In the nineteenth century, the British colonial government of India sent thousands of illiterate villagers from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh as

2See the ICCR’s Web site at http://members.tripod.com/~iccr/.
indentured laborers to British plantations in North Sumatra. A famous descendant of this group is Marimutu Sinivasan, the founder and chief executive officer of Texmaco, a “one of the largest diversified industrial conglomerates in Southeast Asia with business interests in Chemicals and Fibers, Polyester, Textiles and Garments, Engineering, Machine Tools, Automotive, Plant and Process Equipments, Heavy Fabrications.”

A second group of Indians was soon brought over to serve on the plantations as soldiers, overseers, or clerks. And then there were those who came on their own account, members of the merchant castes from Gujarat, Bombay, and Tamil Nadu, to establish textile businesses or iron and steel companies in the urban centers of western Indonesia. Some of them arrived in the first half of the twentieth century. Yet the bulk of them immigrated after the partition of India. A fair share of the last newcomers was formed by businessmen disillusioned with the protectionism and rigid control of business on the part of the socialist Indian government under Indira Gandhi. Lakshmi Mittal, for instance, the world’s number one steel tycoon, and the Indonesian television entertainment mogul Ram Punjab belonged to this group.

The last wave of Indian migrants consisted of Indian professionals who were drawn to the booming Indonesian economy between 1990 and 1997.

Unfortunately, no official data on the strength of Indonesians of Indian descent have ever been released by the Indonesian government. Yet according to an unofficial estimate from the early 1990s, there were then about 300,000 ethnic Indians living in North Sumatra alone. With the onset of the monetary crisis, their numbers dwindled to some 50,000 people countrywide, as many turned to Malaysia, Singapore, or the Middle East for better opportunities. Some, however, just moved to Jakarta and other Indonesian cities with greater economic promise. In 2000, the Indian government announced that there were then 55,000 ethnic Indians living in Indonesia.

Somvir and I soon found out that we had something in common, as we had both recently finished our doctoral theses on similar topics. In due course, I learned that he came from a rural family of Yadavs—classified among the so-called Other Backward Classes—in the North Indian state of Hariyana. He had been afforded a higher education by the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reform organization founded in the late nineteenth century. It propagates pure monotheism,

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3For biographical information, see http://www.tokohindonesia.com/ensiklopedi/m/marimutusinivasan/index.shtml.
4See http://www.texmaco.com/.
supposedly revealed in the four Vedas, castigating polytheism, idolatry, the caste system, discrimination against women, and other denigrating practices. It also denounces traditional ritualism in favor of a small number of simple, “reinvented” Vedic rites and daily prayer.

In 1901, the Arya Samaj leader and freedom fighter Swami Shradhanand founded a school in the village of Kangri near the holy city of Haridwar at the feet of the Himalayas to educate young Indians from diverse backgrounds in the new and radical faith. It was based on the traditional gurukul system, involving an intimate relationship between a spiritual teacher and his students living as servants in his household. At Shradhanand’s gurukul, however, Vedic studies were complemented by training in Hindi—that is, the new “national” language—and the modern sciences. As the Arya Samaj also pursued missionary activities both in India and among the Indian diaspora, the gurukul in Haridwar soon became popular worldwide. Mahatma Gandhi stayed there for longer periods, and Western visitors were attracted, too. In 1962, the Indian government accorded the status of university to the gurukul, henceforth called Gurukul Kangri University. It nowadays also offers graduate and postgraduate courses in economics, psychology, mathematics, physics, microbiology, and environmental studies, as well as management and business administration.

At Gurukul Kangri University, Somvir received a thorough grounding in the Vedas, Sanskrit, Hindi, and English. After graduation, he moved on to the University of Delhi, while participating in activities at the Arya Samaj head office. In the course of our discussions, I also learned that back in 1987, I Made Titib had received a stipend by the ICCR in order to study at Gurukul Kangri University. This caught my attention, as I knew Titib as a leading Balinese Hindu intellectual whose books I had frequently encountered in various bookshops in both Bali and Java.

Titib had originally served as an officer in the Indonesian Armed Forces before he became vice secretary of the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI), the sole representative body of the Indonesian Hindu community recognized by the Ministry of Religion. Parallel to his studies in India, he became head of the Department for International Relations at the PHDI, a position he held until 1996. While in office, he initiated pilgrimages to holy places in North India. This initiative met with a growing response among well-to-do Balinese and Javanese Hindus. In the same period, Somvir visited Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta in order to pursue his research on the Indonesian Ramayana. At present, Titib is director of the State College of the Hindu Religion in Denpasar.

In the course of my fieldwork, I got more and more drawn into Somvir’s personal network, not only in Indonesia but also in the north of India. I accompanied Arya Samaj leaders from Haridwar and Delhi on their trip around Bali and to the Hindu community in Yogyakarta. In India, I traveled with a small number of Balinese pilgrims to Gurukul Kangri University and a number of North Indian pilgrimage places, such as Kurukshetra and Rishikesh.
Somvir was frequently invited to give talks on religion to both Indonesian and Indian Hindus in different parts of Bali and Java. His nonsectarian attitude endeared him not only to more traditionally minded Hindus but also to the growing number of local adherents of new international Hindu movements such as the International Society of Krishna Consciousness, Ananda Marga, Brahma Kumari, Art of Living, or the Satya Sai Baba Mission. He was increasingly sought after by the governor of Bali, Indonesian Hindu officials such as Titib, and middle-class Balinese professionals eager to visit India. In 1999, he eventually became the representative of the ICCR in Bali on the recommendation of the Indian ambassador in Jakarta, with whom he regularly convened on matters relating to Indian-Indonesian relations. At the same time, he got more and more involved with the Indian expatriates doing business in Bali, finally marrying a girl from a well-to-do Balinese Brahmin family.

Somvir kindly invited me to participate in some of his activities, which we enjoyed discussing for long hours. Once he asked me to accompany him on a trip to Jakarta, where he introduced me to the Indian ambassador, the director of the JNICC, and the local Sindhi community of some 1,500 people. The latter belong to a merchant caste originating in the region of Sindh in present-day Pakistan. Even as Indonesian citizens, they still maintain relations with an international network of fellow Sindhi businessmen stretching from Jakarta to Bombay, Antwerp and Colon (Panama) (Markovits 2000). They have furthermore been closely involved in the development of Hinduism in modern Indonesia.

Universalizing “Hindu Dharma” in Modern India

In order to understand the “value” of the Hindu bonds negotiated in Somvir’s transnational network, it is imperative to turn to the concrete circumstances in which they have emerged and under which they continue to operate. We will therefore have to first call to mind the development of open and inclusive forms of Hinduism in modern India that have transcended the host of exclusive orthopraxies linked to caste and place, thereby facilitating the evolution of transnational Hindu network based on a universal Hindu identity. We will subsequently turn to the economic and political contexts in which they have been embedded ever since.

The universalization of Hindu Dharma began in the early nineteenth century, when the propaganda of Christian missionaries and the introduction of the colonial census in the 1870s, demanding firm definitions of ethnic and religious identities for administrative purposes, started to challenge Indian religious traditions. Three men responded to this challenge by constructing “Hinduism” as a coherent religious system along the lines of the three Semitic “world religions” (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), supported in this effort by elitist European Orientalists.
The notion of Hinduism as a supposedly monolithic world religion is thus a nineteenth-century construct that has lent itself to the promotion of Hindu nationalist interests of various kinds, to the detriment of a whole range of other—or “othered”—indigenous religious beliefs and practices (see Frykenberg 1989; King 1999; Stietencron 1989, 1997; Thapar 1989).

The first of these men was the Bengali Raja Ram Mohun Roy (1774–1833), the founder of the Brahmo Samaj at Calcutta in 1828 (Klostermaier 1989, 389–91), advocating monotheism, tolerant universal mysticism, and social reform. Whereas today, the Brahmo Samaj has faded into the background of Hindu public life, its much more radical sister society, the aforementioned Arya Samaj, founded by Swami Dayananda Sarasvati (1824–83) in Bombay in 1875, is still influential in the religious and political arenas of contemporary India (Klostermaier 1989, 391).

Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), the third of the great Hindu reformers of nineteenth-century India, initiated the “high noon” of the Hindu revival (Klostermaier 1989, 392). Successfully propagating to the world in 1893 the virtues and vision of a modernized, monotheistic, and inclusive Hinduism at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, he then founded the international Ramakrishna Mission.

Together, these three organizations constituted the so-called neo-Hindu reform movement (King 1999, 161), initiating the great “Hindu awakening,” as modern Hindu nationalists have put it. In its emphasis on monotheism, devotion (bhakti), meditation, prayer, and the study of religious texts by all Hindus, the reform movement encouraged a form of religiosity that Romila Thapar (1989) has denounced as “syndicated Hinduism” for being a fabrication of certain Brahmins and European Orientalists rather than a cultural phenomenon that developed among the people. Veena Das, for her part, has called it “semitificated Hinduism” (King 1999, 172) because it developed in response to colonial Christianity, echoing Judeo-Christian and Muslim notions of religion. The ethos of the neo-Hindu reform in fact reflected the influence of other Western ideas, such as democracy and empowerment of the disenfranchised. It transcended the narrow confinement of caste and local tradition by advocating social reforms in conformity with the modern age and by establishing new social institutions such as schools, hospitals, and colleges open to all castes as well as women. As all three neo-Hindu reform organizations pursued missionary activities analogous to the Christian missionary efforts, their schools were particularly important in spreading the reforms across castes and ethnic groups, efficiently generating a new Hindu identity.

I have already mentioned the Arya Samaj gurukul in Haridwar. From the tradition of the Brahmo Samaj has sprung a similar school, called Vishva Bharaty, in Shantiniketan. It was founded in 1910 by Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore, whose father, Maharshi Debendranat Tagore, took over the leadership of the Brahmo Samaj in 1863. In 1921, Vishva Bharaty acquired university
status and grew into a center of learning that combined the best of both East and West, drawing eminent artists, thinkers, and spiritual seekers from all over the world. In 1951, it became an accredited national university, producing such eminent alumni as Indira Gandhi and the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen. Among the schools founded by the Ramakrishna Mission is the well-known Institute of Culture in Calcutta, sponsored by the Indian government and the Ford Foundation (Klostermaier 1989, 394). In light of Putnam’s theory, the neo-Hindu reform movement has thus provided spiritual capital that has generated social capital for wider common purposes, including economic pursuits such as the swadeshi movement in India.

The swadeshi movement resulted from the partition of Bengal into the province of Hindu West Bengal and the province of Muslim East Bengal in 1905 by an administrative reform launched by Lord Curzon. It incited a nationalist fervor among the thriving Bengali intelligentsia, who strongly rejected the partition. Swadeshi as a concept revolved around the “doctrine of passive resistance” against everything British, which was linked to an emergent Hindu nationalism that soon washed over other parts of India. It entailed the development of swadeshi industries, including Indian cotton mills, glassblowing shops, porcelain manufacturing, and cigarette and soap factories, as well as iron and steel foundries, schools, and arbitration courts. It also involved a movement for national education, which was reflected in the gurukul at Kangri and Vishva Bharaty at Shantiniketan, culminating in the private Banaras Hindu University, founded in 1910 by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya (1861–1946) in the holy city of Varanasi.

The most poignant expression of Hindu nationalism evolving from the “Hindu awakening” in Bengal was the concept of Hindutva (essence of Hinduism). It was put forward in 1920 by V. D. Sarvakar, a Brahmin from Poona, who held that the term “Hindu” encompasses not only the various traditional and modern Hindu sampradaya (religious orders or sects) but also all those nonorthodox religions that have originated in India, such as Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. In 1925, Kesham Baliram Hedgewar, a Telugu Brahmin, founded the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which sought to implement the politics of Hindutva in society by providing a solid organizational structure. It represented the militant Hindu faction within India's independence movement that strongly opposed Mahatma Gandhi’s strategy of passive, nonviolent resistance, although Gandhi had also integrated essential elements of Hindu nationalism, such as swadeshi, into his movement of satyagraha.

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Hedgewar’s successor to the leadership of the RSS was M. S. Golwakar, a Karhada Brahmin and an open admirer of Adolf Hitler, who led the organization from 1940 to 1974. In 1964, the RSS founded an international missionary organization, the so-called Vishva Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council), or VHP. It was first chaired by Shivam Shankar Apte, a Maharashtrian Brahmin who closely cooperated with Swami Chinmayananda, a disciple of Swami Shivananda, the founder of the international Divine Life Society in Rishikesh, which had, for instance, already made headway in Bali. Swami Chinmayananda, for his part, founded Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, a training institution for Hindu missionaries in Bombay (Klostermaier 1989, 397). In 1965, he was taken to America by an Indian businessman who wished to export yoga to the United States. Chinmayananda’s influence, however, also stretched to Southeast Asia and Indonesia (see Bhambhri 1999; Gangadharan 1970; Ludden 1996; Patnaik and Chalam 1998; Sarkar 1996).

Representing a Brahmin take on Hindu Dharma, the RSS and VHP failed to attract wider support in India at a time when Jawaharlal Nehru’s version of socialism and secularism was successfully being marketed by the Indian National Congress (INC), which ruled the country continuously until 1977. By the end of the 1970s, however, many enterprising Indians had grown disillusioned with the inert and corrupt state socialism that Nehruism had become under Indira Gandhi, especially as there had already been a thriving Indian business class before World War II (Klostermaier 1989, 387–88). Kasturbhai Lalbhai, a Jain businessman from the merchant Marwari caste, and G. D. Birla, a Hindu industrialist from a Marwari subcaste, were the most prominent Indian magnates of the time. Their houses had made huge trading profits during World War I, reinvesting them in the growth of large industries. By the time of independence, Birla’s assets, for instance, had reached more than US$100 million.

Despite the fact that Birla was the largest supporter of the INC freedom movement, a close friend of Gandhi, and a sponsor of the Hindu nationalist mission, Nehru denied his family any role in the industrialization of India. Instead, the state controlled all economic activities, fixing prices, limiting dividends, controlling foreign trade and foreign exchange, licensing production, allocating capital goods, and distributing consumer goods. Aditya Birla, the MIT-trained inheritor of the Birla empire, grew so disillusioned with the economic policies of the Indian government that he—like many others—decided to expand outside India, eventually setting up dynamic and successful firms in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines (Das 2002, x, xi, 20, 23, 44, 61–62, 87, 93, 180, 182, 262).

Back home, Indira Gandhi continued to rouse opposition, which became increasingly marked in right-wing Hindu nationalism. By 1977, the latter had

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temporarily consolidated itself as a political force in the Janatha Party, which briefly took over the government until the INC could regain electoral victory in 1980. Rajiv Gandhi, who succeeded his mother in 1984, eventually made some modest attempts at economic reform. Economic liberalization became all the more pressing when India lost its main trade partner with the collapse of the Soviet Union. This motivated Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to push the Indian economy into the global market. His reforms soon took effect, and India began to prosper. The increasing inequality in wealth, however, gave rise to a growing sense of corruption and inequality. This, and a common frustration in the face of rising Islamist militantism in Kashmir, prepared the way for a call for a new moral force that would provide a new social consensus (Das 2002, 217–26; The Economist 2001).

For many, the Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) seemed to be the answer to this call. Together with its parent organizations, the RSS and the VHP, it propagated the ideology of Hinduwaya and swadeshi throughout the country—and among the Indian diaspora. In 1996, the BJP finally became the strongest fraction in the Lok Sabha, the Indian House of Commons. In 1998, it was ready to rule, forming a coalition government under the leadership of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. As ruling party, the BJP soon curbed its extremist rhetoric and started to court the liberal strands of Indian society. It dropped the issue of rebuilding Ram’s temple on the ashes of the destroyed mosque in Ayodhya, it opened up its ranks to the lower castes, and it carefully retracted its former antiliberalization and pro-swadeshi stance. At the same time, Vajpayee began to woo the economically dynamic south, home of the country’s world-class information technology industry. Focusing on the branding of “India Inc.” (The Economist 2001), he also looked for allies among the affluent nonresident Indians and the Indian diaspora (see Agrawal 1999; Gardner 2000; Jaffrelot 1996, 25–79, 193–229; Maitra 1999).

In 1999, the New Indian Express from Chennai published an interview with Yogesh Chandra, leader of the India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO), a front organization of the Indian Ministry of Commerce. It attested to the fact that “[o]ne is witnessing a concerted bid by the government and the industry to promote India as a distinct brand.” It was to be the ITPO’s role to launch “India promotions” both within India and abroad, including the organization of “Hindi workshops” and the annual celebration of a Hindi Day at Delhi’s fairground Pragati Maidan.

Until 1999, Pragati Maidan had been the only place to host international trade fairs in India. Now, Chandra was planning to open further fairgrounds in different parts of the country. One of the first was constructed in Whitefield, a suburb of Bangalore situated close to the Chennai–Bangalore highway.11 Since the 1960s, Whitefield has evolved into one of the fastest-growing industrial

areas in India, with several medium and large-scale industries (such as electronics, garments, and graphite).\(^{12}\) Whitefield also hosts the famous Sathya Sai Baba General Hospital and one of the two major ashrams of the guru, whose worldwide following runs into the millions. Three of his most elevated disciples are allegedly Narasimha Rao, Atal Vajpayee, and the present president of India, Aki Pakir Abdul Kalam, a Muslim.\(^{13}\)

In the 2004 general elections, Vajpayee’s National Democratic Alliance lost out to a stronger INC coalition, but economic liberalization and a certain amount of Hindu nationalism seem to have become deeply entrenched in contemporary Indian society. The continuation of economic liberalization is, at any rate, guaranteed by India’s new prime minister, Manmohan Singh, who previously attained a reputation as minister of finance in the cabinet of Narasimha Rao, where he was the driving force behind the latter’s economic reforms. Besides, Singh is a member of India’s affluent Sikh community who has particularly resented the stifling economic climate created by the economic policy of the INC under Indira Gandhi (Das 2002, 215–227).\(^{14}\)

Abdul Kalam, India’s new president, for his part, is an acclaimed scientist and the architect of India’s missile program. His ambitious goals for his country are spelled out in the much-noticed book India 2020: a Vision for the New Millennium (2002), which he cowrote with Yagnaswami Sundara Rajan, at the time scientific secretary in the Office of the Principal Adviser to the Government of India and former executive at the Department of Space. Their book contains passages that promote a mild form of Hindu nationalism:

> Economic growth, urbanization and exposure to foreign value systems can also bring in various conflicts and alienation. These are aspects which need to be attended to on the social and cultural planes. Perhaps India may have to devise suitable organizational and educational systems and the media to address social and cultural aspects of life. No doubt our ancient wisdom and traditional knowledge would prove invaluable in this effort. Newer information technologies can help in capturing this knowledge and experience of our common people in various parts of the country and make it available to others to learn from. (Abdul Kalam and Rajan 2002, 17–18)

We do not know if or to what extent the Satya Sai Baba Mission has influenced Abdul Kalam’s vision. We have to bear in mind, though, that the mission is


\(^{13}\)Oral information from Sathya Sai Baba circles; see also “On the Indian P.M. Vajpayee, Sai Baba, Rama and Ravana,” http://home.hetnet.nl/~exbaba/engels/articles/onvajpayee.html.

possibly the most inclusive of the aforementioned neo-Hindu sects, as the guru claims to be the reincarnation of the famous Indian Muslim saint Shirdi Baba, thereby also co-opting Islam. Sai Baba’s influence has spread among the Indian diaspora in Southeast Asia, where he has gathered a large following. This opens up avenues for speculation on how certain Hindu bonds are traded in the present. Before embarking on them, let us briefly turn to the construction of universal Hindu Dharma in postindependence Indonesia to complete our reflections on the context in which Indian-Indonesian bonds have operated.

**Universal Hinduism in Modernizing Indonesia**

Elsewhere, I have more comprehensively dealt with the construction and development of Hinduism in twentieth-century Indonesia along the lines of Indian neo-Hinduism (see Ramstedt 2002, 2004, forthcoming). Here, I will merely concentrate on some essential details.

When the Dutch colonized Bali from the mid-nineteenth century onward, they introduced both “religion” and “Hinduism” to the islanders. These concepts contested their sacred cosmology, which comprised the visible world of humans and the invisible realm of the spirits, ancestors, and gods. While Orientalists were discovering elements of “ancient India”—and hence “Hinduism”—in Bali, Christian missionaries were rallying against the “animist” essence of Balinese religious practice, which was, they held, barely covered by a thin “Hindu” veneer.

In 1933, the Dutch Protestant missionary Hendrik Kraemer ingenuously called Rabindranath Tagore as witness, as he had visited Bali in 1927, attracted by its growing reputation as a storehouse of ancient India. Tagore eventually expressed regret that he had not encountered “real Hindu spirituality” even among the Balinese Brahmin priests. He furthermore suggested the invitation of the Indian Brahmins to stimulate a Hindu renaissance in Bali (Kraemer 1933, 107). Some Balinese reform organization had, in fact, already emerged, advocating sociocultural changes like their Indian precursors. Yet they had not had a larger impact on Balinese society.

When Bali became part of the unitary Indonesian nation-state in 1950, the emissaries of the Muslim-dominated Ministry of Religion failed to recognize Balinese religious practice as “religion,” thereby following the judgment of missionaries such as Kraemer. As adherence to a monotheistic world religion was compulsory for every Indonesian citizen by way of the Indonesian Constitution, the Balinese consequently became designated targets for both Muslim and Christian proselytizing. Thus threatened, their religious leaders started to act concertedly on Tagore’s earlier advice and turned to Indian neo-Hinduism to reform their religious culture along its lines.

Balinese concerns meshed with the friendly Indian-Indonesian relations of the time, which had evolved in the common struggle for independence and
nonalignment. In 1948, India convened a conference of Asian countries protesting the return of the Dutch to the archipelago (Dutt 1984, 254). Nehru was the first foreign head of state who visited independent Indonesia in 1950. After the 1955 cultural agreement between India and Indonesia, the ICCR began to provide scholarships for Indonesian students seeking to study at Indian universities. Some Balinese took advantage of the opportunity and enrolled in Shantiniketan Vishva Bharaty, Banares Hindu University, and the International Academy of Indian Culture, established by the famous Indian intellectual Raghu Vira in New Delhi. Besides, Indian Hindu scholars visited Bali, and relations were established with the Gandhi Peace Foundation, the Divine Life Society, and the Ramakrishna Mission.

An Arya Samaj missionary, Narendra Dev Pandit Shastri, eventually married a Balinese wife and stayed on the island for life. His Indonesian treatise on Intisari Hindu Dharma (The Essence of Hinduism), published in the early 1950s, served as a blueprint for the reformulation of Balinese theology and ritual along the lines of neo-Hinduism. In 1961, Hindu Dharma finally became one of the five religions adhered to by the Indonesian people (for more details, see Ramstedt 2002, 152–56; 2004, 10–15). Interestingly, Pandit Shastri received an award of 5,000 Indian rupees for his successful book from the Indian Birla Foundation,15 which had been established in the mid-twentieth century by the aforementioned industrialist Ghanshyam Das Birla and his brother Jugal Kishor Birla. Both had been close to Golwakar, the leader of the RSS. The Birla foundation, too, sponsored Hindu projects, such as temple constructions, religious schools, and the publication of religious books (Jaffrelot 1996, 22, 81).

In 1964, the very year that the VHP was founded in India, Balinese Hindu Dharma took a further step toward universalization, too, albeit on a national scale, as members of different ethnic groups and “castes,” such as the various Balinese descent groups, the different Tamil “castes” in North Sumatra, the Sindhi in Jakarta, and some adherents of the syncretistic Javanese religious tradition were rallied in a common representative organ, the Parisada Hindu Dharma. By then, official relations between India and Indonesia had declined. When Nehru’s assertive claim to the leadership of the nonaligned countries clashed with Sukarno’s own aspirations, the climate between the two rulers began to freeze. The violent Indian–Chinese border conflict and the emergence of the so-called Jakarta–Beijing axis aggravated the growing rift. A point of no return was reached when India supported Malaysia against Sukarno’s “Crush Malaysia!” policy, and Indonesia became an ally of Pakistan (see Agung 1990, 193–95, 218–20, 222–47; Dutt 1984, 255–56; Ramstedt 2002, 151–52).

These political circumstances were possibly not the only reason why neither Pandit Shastri nor any other member of the Indian diaspora was offered a leading

15Personal interview with the late Pandit Shastri at his home in Denpasar in 1999.
position in the evolving Hindu bureaucracy in Indonesia. These were filled by the Balinese graduates of Indian universities. In my interviews with both Balinese and Indian-Indonesian Hindus, I learned that differences in mentality have also contributed to the marginalization of ethnic Indian Hindus in official Indonesian Hindu institutions until now. While Balinese were hinting at the “arrogant” outspokenness of Indian Hindu scholars, Indian-Indonesians were insinuating that Balinese Hindus were not really interested in spiritual questions. Despite perceived differences of mentality, Pandit Shastri continued to earn a comfortable living as a merchant in the textile business, owning a manufactory in downtown Denpasar. Many other Indian-Indonesian Hindus also began to prosper, while keeping a low profile in order not to incur animosity from the Indonesian “natives,” as the ethnic Chinese did. Yet they did actively participate in Indonesian economic life as they joined forces with Balinese religious leaders in order to further modern Hindu education among the Indonesian Hindu constituency at large.

After Suharto’s ascent to power in 1965, relations between India and Indonesia normalized. Nevertheless, there were few official ties between the two countries because of the different economic and political orientations of Suharto and Indira Gandhi. The two leaders also pursued divergent policies where “religion” was concerned. While Indira Gandhi exercised a strictly secular regime, Suharto reaffirmed the constitutional “Belief in the One Almighty God” as binding for every citizen. His religious policy, in fact, became a major tool for the integration of citizens with ethnic, political, or religious loyalties considered ambiguous or even dangerous to his “New Order” regime. Targets of this policy included adherents of indigenous religions, atheist “Communists,” as well as supporters of political Islam.

In due course, the leaders of ethnic religions in East Java, South Sulawesi, Central Kalimantan, and North Sumatra sought to emulate the Balinese by proclaiming themselves “Hindu,” too. They chose Bali as a model because they had observed close parallels between Balinese religious practice and their own in their contact with Balinese migrants. Between 1969 and 1980, they were indeed recognized as local variants of Hinduism, a decision that was very much motivated by the fact that the Hindu bureaucracy would expose them to the modernizing disciplinary regime of a universal religion under strict surveillance of the government (Ramstedt 2004).

Their self-effacing attitude toward official Hindu representation notwithstanding, ethnic Indians were, as I have said, quite influential, not the least because of their large donations to various Hindu projects such as the publication of religious literature, the construction of temples, and the founding of educational institutions. Private initiatives were increasingly important at a time when Indonesian Hindus felt more and more disadvantaged vis-à-vis their Muslim—and Christian—compatriots. In 1997, the Directorate of Hindu Affairs registered 5,987,134 Hindus in relation to an overall population of 210
million people.16 Because of the much larger size of the Muslim constituency, representing 88 percent of the total population, Islam received the lion’s share of state funding. It also profited from ample donations from abroad, just like the Christian churches, with a constituency of 10 percent. State funding for Hindu affairs worsened after 1989, when Suharto began to cautiously promote the cultural Islamization of Indonesian society (Ramstedt 2004, 19–21).

Moreover, rigid state control discouraged an increasing number of Hindus from relying on official channels for their individual spiritual quests. This was especially true for the affluent members of the emergent Hindu middle class, consisting of Balinese, Javanese, and ethnic Indians living in the urban centers of Java and Bali. Estranged from their rural traditions, many turned to spiritual inspiration from India. In 1977, the Hare Krishna movement was introduced to Indonesian Hindus in Jakarta. Other Indian sects were gaining headway, too. The Satya Sai Baba Mission has been the most successful movement by far. In 1973, it was first introduced to Indonesia by members of the Sindhi community in Jakarta. Soon afterward, Sai centers were opened throughout the country. At present, there are more than 6,000 Sai devotees in Indonesia, some of whom are Javanese Muslims from a syncretistic background who feel drawn to the Indian saint with a Muslim “past” (see also Howe 2004; Somvir 2004, 260).

It has to be stated quite clearly, though, that this influx of more recent strands of neo-Hindu spirituality from India into Indonesia has met with growing suspicion on the part of the majority of the Balinese Brahmin priests and their clientele. The traditional priests of the other ethnic groups identifying with Hinduism in Indonesia have been exposed to Indian neo-Hinduism to a much lesser extent but tend to display the same attitude toward “foreign” influences as most Balinese Brahmin priests. Claiming that they share the same Hindu theology with Indian Hindus, Balinese conservatives have nevertheless resisted Indian influence on the ritual level. After local ritual traditions identified as “Hindu” in post-independence Indonesia were modified along the lines of modern Hindu Dharma, these traditions continued to provide an important source of local identity. Moreover, they were considered valuable cultural capital for the cultural tourism promoted by the New Order regime (Picard and Wood 1997). Hence, Balinese Hindus were encouraged to continue their modified local orthopraxies, thereby verifying Sudipta Kaviraj’s definition of the “Hindu system”:

[T]he historical peculiarity of the Hindu system lies precisely in the historically shifting, unstable combination of … intellectual diversity with orthopraxy. Hinduism is very particular about the orthodoxy of practice, rather than the orthodoxy of beliefs. (Kaviraj 1999, 53)

16According to Data Statistik Tahun 1997, Jakarta: Departemen Agama RI, Direktorat Bimbingan Masyarakat Hindu dan Buddha, p. 3.
A rift was therefore growing between the traditionalist faction, which had roots in the rural communities and traditional aristocracies, on the one hand, and the pro-India, “modernist” faction that was rooted in the emergent urbanized Hindu middle class, on the other.

**Transnational Hindu Bonds at Work**

In the 1990s, bonds between Indian and Indonesian Hindus began to multiply, the resistance of traditionalists notwithstanding. They grew even stronger after the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, which coincided with the ascendancy of the Hindu nationalist BJP to power in India. The trend has continued under the present INC-led government and can generally be attributed to three major factors.

First, the loosening of tradition among both the Indian diaspora and Indonesian Hindus, boosted by integration, modernization, and the influence of neo-Hindu missions, has predisposed them toward a universal Hindu identity that surpasses local, ethnic, and caste loyalties. This is borne out by the various Hindu temples in the major Indonesian cities. At the Shiv Mandir in Jakarta, for example, one encounters Vaishnava as well as Shaiva images of the Absolute, including a human-size statue of Satya Sai Baba. Religious practice consists predominantly of sermons in Hindi and the singing of religious songs in the bhakti tradition, joined by Indian-Indonesians and nonresident Indians of various backgrounds. Balinese migrants and other Indonesian Hindus in Jakarta usually congregate in Balinese-style temples, such as the Pura Aditya Jaya, where religious practice consists of attendance at public talks on yoga, meditation, or religious texts, occasionally delivered by Indian masters, sermons in the Indonesian language, and prayers in Sanskrit.

Second, the accelerated Islamization of Indonesian society and the concomitant anti-Hindu manifestations especially under the B. J. Habibie government have enhanced solidarity between Indonesian and Indian Hindus (Ramstedt 1999). Third, the economic liberation and reorientation toward Asia-Pacific, which has taken place in India since the demise of the Soviet Union, has boosted interchange between Indian and Indonesian Hindus.

In 1996, the year of the ascent of the BJP to power, I. K. Gujral, India’s minister for external affairs, gave a speech on the foreign policy objectives of India’s United Front government:

Our imagination is now riveted on the Asia-Pacific Century that is knocking at the door of humankind…. Pan-Asian regionalism will take some time to emerge as a stable international phenomenon; when it does, it will truly change the world. Jawaharlal Nehru foresaw even in the late forties and the early fifties this great historical turn-around casting its silhouette on the horizon. For three and a half centuries Europe and
America have dominated the world; almost the whole of Asia was a colony. Now in the 21st century Asia and the Pacific Rim are likely to be the West’s true peer in wealth, in technology and in skilled human resources.\(^{17}\)

In the course of India’s reorientation toward Asia-Pacific, the Indian government appealed to the Indian diaspora for support (Jaffrelot 1999). Vajpayee issued a nonresident Indian investment policy scheme with the objective of soliciting them as active partners in the economic development of the country. His successor, Manmohan Singh, even initiated a new Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. Parallel to these measures, the ICCR was asked to develop new initiatives for interaction between overseas Indians and India. By 2002, Vajpayee had already launched a special Indian Diaspora Day. The 2005 Indian Diaspora Day took place in India’s commercial capital, Mumbai, where Manmohan Singh announced that the twenty-first century was to be “the Indian Century.”\(^{18}\)

India’s initiatives have found eager response in Indonesia, which has been suffering from a slow economic recovery in the aftermath of its monetary crisis. In addition, the country has had to bear severe cuts in its tourist business because of the various outburst of violence that have been haunting Indonesia since 1998, the 2002 and 2005 bomb attacks in Bali in particular. With fewer and fewer Western tourists visiting the archipelago, Indonesia has now started advertising its tourist resorts in other Asian countries, including India. This effort has been linked to initiatives of cultural diplomacy. Dr. Edi Sedyawati, Indonesian director general of culture, for instance, recently visited India to deliver what was judged a “captivating lecture” on the Indian influence in Indonesian culture, in which she underscored the fact that

In the many historical and cultural surveys, it has been made clear enough that two great religions, originating in India, namely Hinduism and Buddhism, had cast a penetrating influence on Indonesia’s cultural life. It was through the attraction of these two great religions that the cultural relation between India and Indonesia was geared in the past.\(^{19}\)

In November 2001, at a work meeting dedicated to promoting cooperation in the tourist business between India and Indonesia in Bandung, the Indian ambassador, Shyam Saran, outlined several possibilities. Indonesia could, for example, invite Indian film producers for shootings in suitable environments. Through

\(^{17}\)See *India Digest* IV/8 (September 1996), Embassy of India, p. 5.


\(^{19}\)See http://www.ignca.nic.in/nl_00405.htm.
their films, Indian audiences would be stimulated to visit the country. The tropical paradise of Bali in particular would lend itself as the perfect honeymoon location for newly married Indian couples. Saran also promised to provide Indonesian students with stipends in order to study tourism in India.20

The August 2001 issue of Travel Tourism, an online newspaper of the Indian Express Group in Mumbai, affirmed that Indonesia was already promoting its country as an attractive tourist destination in India by organizing cultural and social events in connection with its national celebration day. The 2001 festivities took place at the Oberoi in Mumbai. In the previous year, I had the honor to meet with Kamal Kaul, general manager of the Oberoi hotels in Southeast Asia at a similar event, the opening ceremony of the Ramayana and Mahabharata conference in Bali, convened by Udayana University under the guidance of Somvir. It was actually the second conference of its kind. The first had taken place in the previous year in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The third conference was to be hosted by Mauritius, a country with a large Indian diaspora, too. While each country advertised its tourist attractions during the conferences, emphasis was placed on a common Indic link.

Kaul, for his part, has been living permanently in Bali for many years together with his Indian wife. Both have greatly supported Somvir’s work. Kaul had also maintained a long-standing friendship with the late Cokorda Gede Agung Suyasa, former head of the palace of the royal lineage of Ubud, one of Bali’s major tourist destinations. Suyasa and Kaul, for instance, cofinanced the construction of Pura Semeru Agung, a modern Balinese-style Hindu temple in the East Javanese village of Sundoro on the eastern slope of Mount Semeru, consecrated on July 3, 1992 (Bakker 1993, 238). Kaul furthermore provided funding for five Balinese Brahmins to travel to India in order to take holy water from the Ganges back to this temple. Kaul and Suyasa subsequently funded a host of temples throughout Indonesia, as well as the religious education of several youngsters from the Indonesian Hindu community. They have also recently set up a joint business venture consisting of an Oberoi franchise in Ubud.

Beginning in 2000, Somvir—ICCR representative in Bali—began to lobby for the funding of an Association for Balinese-Indian Friendship. He successfully enlisted Kamal Kaul as one of its founding members. At the same time, he looked for sponsorship of a gurukul to be established in Bali. In October 2003, Somvir’s efforts were crowned with success, as the Hindustan Times reported under the heading “A one man army out to propagate Hinduism”:

He is an academic, a Hindu missionary, a master of Hindu philosophy and religion, an Indian in love with Indonesia, all rolled into one…. When he married a Balinese girl one and a half years ago, the wedding

was solemnized at the residence of the Bali governor [I Dewa Made Beratha, for whom he had facilitated a visit to India a few years earlier], no less…. He has just been given two hectares of land to start a gurukul, a boarding school modeled on Hindu lines, to cater to some 400 students. The gurukul that will come up in 2004 will teach modern subjects as well as Sanskrit, English and local languages.

By September 2005, the concept of the gurukul had been successfully localized, as the governor of Bali, I Dewa Made Beratha, supported each village (desa pakraman) with 25,000,000 rupees to form a pasraman desa. A pasraman desa is a village-level educational institution that is, first of all, intended to educate local students on the intricacies of Hindu ritual and doctrine. Moreover, it is designed to prepare villagers for the globalization of the local economy and to enhance local technological development.21

Through the mediation of Somvir, about 500 Balinese now visit India annually, and three students are sent to Gurukul Kangri University every year to study Hindi.22 Meanwhile, Haridwar has become so popular in Bali that efforts are being made to construct a Balinese-style temple on the banks of the Ganges just outside of Haridwar to accommodate Balinese pilgrims. In 2003, Somvir approached a visiting Hindu master from Haridwar, the venerable Pujya Swamiji, to this end. Before coming to Bali, Pujya Swamiji had just held a retreat in Switzerland, attended by some fifty European business people, bankers, and other professionals.23 The intervention by the guru on behalf of the Balinese pilgrims thus held considerable promise as to the funding of the venture.24

The opening ceremony of the 2000 Ramayana and Mahabharata Conference in Bali was also attended by Suresh G. Vaswani, chairman of the Gandhi Memorial International School in Jakarta, and Shyam Rupchand Jethnani, president of the adjacent social service institute Gandhi Seva Loka and member of the Bombay Merchants Association. Soon afterward, I met both men in the office of the ambassador of India in Jakarta, an indication that Indonesia’s Sindhi community has hailed the call of India to support cultural and economic relations with their adopted country.

Although religion has not been particularly mentioned in official parlance—which India’s steadfast adherence to secularism and potential conflicts with Indonesia’s Muslim majority would, in any case, preclude—it does seem to facilitate economic exchange between Indians and Indonesians. This is supported by the cooperation between Kaul and Suyasa and by the fact that both Jethnani

23As to the enterprising spirit of Hindu gurus, see Lise McKean (1996).
and Vaswani have been long-standing members of the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia as well as important sponsors of the Indonesian Hindu community. That Hinduness is indeed a vital reference point for Sindhis is corroborated by a remark of Raj Sital, the Sindhi chairman of the Indian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong:

We all have the sense of culture and religion that we are ingrained with when we grew up. For us, we are Hindus, not Indians from India. Our feelings are not towards a nation or a country but towards a culture.\(^{25}\)

The growing interaction between Balinese and Indian Hindus since the 1990s has increased common appreciation of their similarities and differences, resentments on the part of conservative Balinese notwithstanding. International Hindu summits have twice taken place in Bali: The World Hindu Federation met in Bali in 1992, attended by Hindu scholars and leaders from Nepal, England, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Mauritius, the United States, Fiji, Singapore, and Indonesia, and in 2004, Bali hosted the World Youth Summit, an organization with membership from Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, the United States, and India. Balinese Hindu youth have thus been learning to view themselves as part of an international Hindu community without losing pride in their distinct local tradition. In a 1998 interview with the Hindu fundamentalist journal *Hinduism Today*, some Balinese youth even voiced the opinion that “Hinduism fares better in Bali than in India, because it’s cared for by the government, the Hindu Parishad, teachers and village customs. Most schools have a Hindu religion teacher who, besides parents and priests, is the Balinese equivalent of a guru. Most girls wish to marry a Hindu.”\(^{26}\)

**Conclusion**

In this essay, I have demonstrated that modern Indian-Indonesian networks have engaged in the exchange of both economic and spiritual capital. This exchange has testified to the emergence of transnational forms of Hinduism in Indonesia, paralleling the development of transnational forms of Islam, albeit on a much smaller scale. The spiritual capital exchanged in the postindependence Indian-Indonesian networks has obviously been of an open and inclusive nature conducive to business activity in the booming market economy of Asia-Pacific, as it has provided social linkages, face-to-face contact, and organizational structures thought to generate trust and cooperation on issues of common concern. It has,


in other words, provided a web of associates to a common course, that is, the
development of universal—but not necessarily monochrome—Hindu Dharma,
in which vital information for doing business is circulated, and in which capital
for both commercial and spiritual ventures can be raised. Because of the necess-
arily highly personalized nature of these social linkages, individual agents such as
Somvir are of vital importance. His appointment as representative of the ICCR in
Bali tallies with the common feature of overseas Indian business strategy,
whereby trusted people receive empowerment to initiate and manage new ven-
tures. In the case of Somvir, we have, in fact, encountered a Hindu missionary in
the service of India Inc.

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