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Musing on a Muse: An Image Encounter

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ABSTRACT

Engaging with a photograph of Ursula King and family at the Hindu temple in Leeds in 1976, I explore some aspects of Ursula's early academic life and work at the University of Leeds. I ask whether the photograph can be used to frame and open up issues in the study of religions from the 1970s that might subsequently have borne fruit. This requires me to look beneath the visual surface of the photograph to the ritual event it depicts, to its participants, their position and interests, and to the wider historical, academic and local contexts to which it was intimately connected. As I do so, I consider my own relationship to the photograph, and its capacity to connect several aspects of my academic autobiography. In addition to reflecting on Ursula's work, this 'image encounter' allows me to discuss the formation and work of the Community Religions Project with its focus on religion and diversity in the locality, engaged and collaborative research and its public impact, and novel research on religion and migration, specifically on British Hindus and Hinduism. Furthermore, this photograph, and its generation as part of an early exhibition on religious diversity in an English city, foreshadowed later developments in visual analysis and the study of religion.

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Introduction

> Yes, they want to put a label on me, but I am much more a person of multiple identities, and I believe much more in multiple kinds of connections. It's not exclusive, it is relational, making the bridges and the connections, I can see the enrichment in that, the way the landscape becomes much more diverse and colourful than when you have only one little garden, and that's what you cultivate exclusively…

> Just as a person can't divide herself – you can't cut yourself up into your different roles, as an academic, as a mother, as a wife, as a friend, as a teacher – you know, it's all the same person. (Ursula King in an interview with Darlene Bird, in King & Bird, 2006, 26)

It is the autumn of 1976, and the early days of the fledgling Community Religions Project at the University of Leeds. It is probably a Sunday, as this is the day when the *Havan* fire ritual takes place at the Leeds Hindu Temple in Burley, Leeds. The *pandit*, a Gujarati Brahmin, is conducting the service, and making offerings of ghee with hymns to the god, Agni. Around the fire on two sides sit members of the King family; children from the neighbourhood – regular attenders at temple events – watch on. Everyone is immersed in the ritual process as either participant or observer.[1]

Were we to turn the camera, we might see other local Hindus – both Gujarati and Punjabi, some migrants from India and others from East Africa. Behind the camera, we would find Nina Kellgren, a photographer commissioned by the Community Religions Project and funded by Kodak, to visually record religion in Leeds in black and white images for a public exhibition.

Although I played no part in this photograph, the actual event it records or the exhibition in which it first appeared, this is very much my story, so much so that I included the image in the first edition of *Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction* (Knott, 1998, 3). The caption read 'Learning about Hinduism through participation – Dr Ursula King and her family and other local children at a Hindu ritual in Leeds, 1976'. The photograph, I suggest, is an example of Henri Cartier-Bresson's conception of capturing the 'decisive moment'. Heidi Larson (1988, 416), in her visual anthropological study of how children in Southall drew on and reconciled the worlds of both England and South Asia, saw such moments as essential to the progress of fieldwork in so far as they

[1] Photograph courtesy of the Community Religions Project, https://arts.leeds.ac.uk/crp/research-archive/ (accessed 20 August 2017).

captured 'fleeting, but telling gestures… crucial to a true understanding of the ethos of a culture'. Such images were often spontaneously 'urged by the subject or prompted by the anthropologist's own instinct' (Larson, 1988, 416), and had the potential to open up new fields of enquiry or new directions of interpretation. As John Berger (2012, 18) noted, 'A photograph is already a message about the event it records… At its simplest, the message, decoded, means: *I have decided that seeing this is worth recording*.'[2] The photograph of Ursula and her family was the outcome of the photographer Nina Kellgren's instinctive decision to record an event or moment. I cannot say what she saw: perhaps an encounter between East and West; almost certainly, a moment of participant observation and profound concentration by children and adults, specialist and visitors.

At the time the photograph was taken, I was beginning an MA in the study of religion, the dissertation of which was a study of the daily *Arti* ritual enacted at this temple. This was the first step towards a doctoral thesis on religious practice among Leeds Hindus (Knott, 1982; 1986), supervised by Dr Ursula King, as she then was. The ritual specialist in this photograph – Pandit Pandya – was a key informant; his wife and I shared lessons in faltering Gujarati and English; and I was kindly hosted by his extended family whilst undertaking fieldwork in India. At this time, I was also employed part-time on children's play projects and as a youth and community worker in the neighbourhood of the temple (and may well have worked with some of the children in the photograph or their siblings). During all of this, I was one of a small number of researchers involved in the Community Religions Project (CRP), and in mapping religions in the area, bibliographic data gathering, and logging the early working papers and research reports produced in association with the Project. I went on to direct the CRP, taking over the role from Ursula in 1989.[3]

In the 1970s, Theology and Religious Studies was a small Department in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Leeds. The comparative religion scholar, Trevor Ling, had been Professor and Head of Department in the early 1970s, and was superseded by the theologian, John Tinsley. Religious Studies staff included Michael Pye, who taught Buddhism, method and theory and specialised in Japanese religions, William Weaver, who taught Islam and the religions of early Egypt and Mesopotamia, and Ursula King, responsible for Indian religions, particularly Hinduism, with a research specialisation in the spirituality of Teilhard de Chardin (her focus on women, gender and religion came later). Several other colleagues contributed from their positions in Philosophy (Hugo Meynell), Sociology (Robert Towler), and Psychology (Roger Ballard).

In the 1960s, after reading theology and philosophy in Germany and France (Institut Catholique and the Sorbonne), Ursula travelled to India to study for an MA in Indian philosophy at the University of Delhi. Her doctoral studies were undertaken part-time at King's College London (and formed the basis of her

[2] Italics in the original.

[3] The first director had been Michael Pye. After my directorship, the role passed to Seán McLoughlin and later to Mel Prideaux.

1980 book, *Towards a New Mysticism. Teilhard de Chardin and Eastern Religions*). Her PhD was awarded in 1977, by which time she was working as a lecturer at Leeds (from 1971) and was busy raising her children. As she said in the *Discourse* interview quoted earlier: 'you can't cut yourself up into your different roles, as an academic, as a mother, as a wife, as a friend, as a teacher – you know, it's all the same person.' The 1970s was a fruitful and busy period for Ursula.

This photograph – and Ursula's place within it – is at the intersection of a number of diverse stories. It brings together for the viewer a complex array of external references (Berger, 2012, 20), to Hindus and Hindu practice in Britain, migration, religion and community relations in the city of Leeds, the Community Religions Project and locally-engaged research, photography in the study of religions, and gender and work-life balance. The image, and the 'decisive moment' it captures, provides an opportunity for me to muse on these themes and to set out some of the lingering questions it raises, whilst also honouring Ursula's contribution both to her discipline and to my own career development. In what ways can this photograph and its subjects be said to frame and characterise issues in the study of religions, and how they were researched in the 1970s? Did the image and the issues it raised foreshadow changes in approach that have subsequently borne fruit?

Community, locality and fieldwork

These three words may well epitomise teaching, learning and research on religion at the University of Leeds, at least an important strand of it. As the development of this photographic exhibition on 'Religion in Leeds' (Community Religions Project, 1977) illustrates, there was a keen interest in and commitment to recording the diversity of local religious communities, their places, practices and priorities. The exhibition focused on images of Anglican clergy sporting an array of beautiful vestments, black and white Christians giving thanks for the harvest, Reform Jews celebrating weddings and youth work, Hindus dancing and role-playing the characters from the *Ramayana* during the festivals of *Navaratri* and *Dashera*, and Leeds people of all persuasions participating in the West Indian Carnival.[4]

In the 1970s, Leeds and neighbouring Bradford were northern industrial cities, though they were moving into a post-industrial phase. They were shaped increasingly by postcolonial migration, particularly from the Caribbean, Indian sub-continent and East Africa, but also – during the immediate post-war period – from Central and Eastern Europe.

> The City of Leeds itself contains population elements from south and east of the Hindu Kush. In addition the hymns of Martin Luther

[4] Selected images from the 1977 exhibition, along with others taken in 2011, can be viewed in a photographic archive on the CRP website: https://arts.leeds.ac.uk/crp/research-archive/photographic_archive/ (accessed 21 August 2017). In 1977, some communities and their leaders were reluctant to have their places of worship and rituals photographed, and were thus not included in the exhibition.

> are sung in German, the Catholic mass is celebrated by Poles, and Greek Orthodox perform their exits and entrances in the Church of the Three Hierarchs directly beside the main West Indian and Sikh communities of Chapeltown. Moreover, Yorkshiremen are interesting too, and so is the Church of England in its mysterious empirical forms. (Pye, 1977, 1)

It was the work of the CRP to describe, understand, and where appropriate explain the impact of these migrations on the religious life of the region, its physical forms and fabric, culture, calendars, social relations and intercommunal interactions. Such work was not to be limited to academic outputs – theses, publications, papers and presentations – but to have a public face, enabling the region's inhabitants to see themselves and their neighbours anew, and to improve institutional awareness and knowledge (among the police, local councils, education providers and community relations officers) of the beliefs, values, organisations and practices of local religious groups.

The founding documents of the CRP stated its original purposes to be studying the apparent diversity of religious groups, and the variety of their beliefs and practices, in Leeds and neighbouring cities, and relating 'such research to associated matters such as community relations, inter-religious understanding, religious education and teaching programmes within the university' (Pye, 1976, 1; cf. Knott, 1984). Noteworthy was the focus on religious diversity, which has subsequently become an important subject for academic research and public policy (e.g. European Commission, 2011; Knott, 2014; Religion and Diversity Project, 2017; Stringer, 2013; Weller, 2008). Engagement with broader civic, interfaith and educational issues was certainly an innovation at the time.

Engagement, collaboration and impact

The study of religious diversity at Leeds was not restricted to the work of doctoral students and staff. Within a decade of the CRP's inception, undergraduates and taught postgraduates were involved. In 1985, Leeds was, I believe, the first university to offer a course on contemporary religious diversity in the UK. Entitled 'Ethnic Minority Religions in Britain', it introduced third year and MA students to migration and settlement issues, ethnic, social and cultural background, religious traditions, practices and forms of organisation, all with local case studies, visits and invited speakers. Although I was responsible for much of the teaching, the course would not have arisen had it not been for the vision and research of the CRP and the work of its founders in gaining university funding for the study of minority religions in Britain.[5] By this time, Ursula King had become Director of the CRP and had

[5] This took for the form of a three-year university research fellowship for which the Department of Theology and Religious Studies applied (a position I held from 1983-86).

initiated the publication of a new series of research papers and monographs.[6] CRP resources available to support the course included books, articles and reports on Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims in Leeds and Bradford (and Ursula's 1984 report – first published in German – on Hindus in Britain); later publications included work on the local Greek Orthodox and Vietnamese Buddhist communities, Buddhists in the city of Bath, Polish Catholics in London, Sikhs in Coventry and Afro-Caribbean Christians from across Britain (for details, see Knott, 1984; for a discussion, Prideaux, 2014). Other papers covered relevant thematic issues, on religious statistics, photography, fieldwork, bibliographical resources, and mapping religions in Leeds.

This last theme became the subject of a new taught module a decade later. 'The Religious Mapping of Leeds' has been well documented (Knott, 1998; Knott, 2000; Prideaux with Merrygold, 2014).[7] Based on group work in a designated Leeds neighbourhood, students in 1995 mapped religious organisations and their local relationships in Beeston, with groups in later years working on areas such as Burley, Chapeltown, Moortown and Leeds City Centre. The module – which was extremely popular with those who took it – had at its heart the CRP principle of engagement between the academy, religious bodies and local organisations involved in community relations and diversity policy (as it was later to become known). Each year since its inception, students have been introduced to informants in their designated neighbourhood; they have interviewed local religious people, professionals and policy makers. They have been required to present their findings to a public audience, and to subject their work to critical scrutiny by those mentioned in it and affected by it.

Although the University of Leeds is no longer alone in encouraging its theology and religious studies students to engage with local community partners, it was certainly formative in foregrounding the value of local engagement and collaboration for teaching, learning and student employability, as well as research. The idea of 'knowledge exchange' – that people within and beyond the university might share ideas, information and expertise – was not new to those who had undertaken theology and religious studies at Leeds.

As the photograph at the top of the article reveals, expertise is not one-sided. In fact, the principal expert on show is not an academic but a ritual specialist, the *pandit*, with his knowledge of Sanskrit verses and neo-Vedic practice (for a discussion of the work of the *pandit*, and the conduct of *Havan* at the Leeds Hindu temple, see Knott, 1986). As my own fieldwork with British Hindus in the late 1970s and early 1980s made clear, without their activities, beliefs, organisation and testimonies, research was impossible. In the absence of

[6] For details, see the CRP research archive which has digitized copies of all research papers and monographs from 1984 (earlier working documents are not available, but a list can be found in the appendix of Knott, 1984). https://arts.leeds.ac.uk/crp/research-archive/ (accessed 22 August 2017).

[7] The reports produced by groups of students on religion in the neighbourhoods of Leeds can be downloaded from https://arts.leeds.ac.uk/crp/religion-in-leeds/mapping/ (accessed 22 August 2017).

earlier in-depth studies of Hindus and Hinduism in the West, immersive fieldwork was essential.[8] Several decades later, this formative period of phenomenological ethnography would be criticised – with some justification – for its lack of ideological nous and for contributing to the construction of the very system it sought to study – British Hinduism (Bhatt, 1997; Mukta, 2000). However, this initial period of thick description undoubtedly provided the basis for later critical studies, and for more informed public policy, equality and diversity training and, in some cases, legal advice and judgements.

From the award of its first grant from Kodak in 1976, members of the CRP obtained funding from diverse external sources (as well as conventional research funding) to undertake socially useful research on religion at national, regional and local levels. To take just a few examples, in 1986, Ursula King, with Haddon Willmer and myself applied successfully to the Hibbert Trust for funding to research Afro-Caribbean Christianity in Britain (see Howard, 1987). In 2002, with funding from the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly, the CRP was commissioned to assess the feasibility of establishing a regional faiths forum (Knott et al, 2003). At a local level, the relationship between Leeds Church Institute (LCI) and the Department of Theology and Religious Studies led to the funding of a study of interfaith action in Leeds (Burlet & Reid, 1998), to a collaborative resource and training on religious literacy (Knott & Randolph-Horn, 2002), to the writing of a history of the LCI (Mason, 2000), and to collaboration over public lectures and reading groups.

In the UK in the last decade research collaboration – and latterly research co-production – have become central to the conduct of socially, culturally and economically beneficial research, and to the higher education 'impact agenda'. Where research is publicly-funded, it is necessary to show an impact (unless it can be justified on its theoretical or 'blue skies' merits). In the UK's Higher Education Research Excellence Framework, submissions must be accompanied by impact statements and illustrative case studies (Knott, 2017). A close relationship with partners and stakeholders beyond universities, that is reciprocal and not merely one of academic dissemination, is understood as central to both knowledge exchange and creative research collaboration leading to wider impact. This is held to be of particular value in relation to community-based projects: the co-design and co-production of research with community organisations has been actively promoted by the UK Research Councils' 'Connected Communities Programme', for example (Facer & Enright, 2016). The principles and early work of the CRP were pioneering in recognising that research and teaching on religion and diversity could not be undertaken without embedded relationships of trust, nor could they be published and disseminated without reference to the interests and needs of wider constituencies.

[8] Such fieldwork, using qualitative research methods, was the hallmark of studies of religion and religious education in association with the CRP at Leeds and the Institute of Education at the University of Warwick, and later, with the study of religions at Bath Spa University, SOAS and the Open University. An inductive argument for such an approach was put forward by Sutcliffe (2004) in the introduction to *Religion: Empirical Studies*.

Although Ursula (King & Bird, 2006, 19) spoke out against the instrumentalisation of university teaching and research – on the grounds that staff and students should be able to follow their interests irrespective of normative external expectations and demands – she was not against engaged teaching and research: 'you can't really cut off the academy from the society so that university teaching in theology and religious studies just happens and has no relationship to what occurs in society.' (King & Bird, 2006, 20) Her own academic path exemplifies this, especially in the last decade, during which she has turned her attention to writing and lecturing on spirituality and its application to global issues, evolution, gender, ageing and interfaith matters (King, 2009).

Hindu settlement, thought and practice in Britain

Ursula's interest in Hindu thought, her time in India, and her research on the encounter of Teilhard de Chardin with Eastern religions (King, 1980a) contributed to her appointment at Leeds in Theology and Religious Studies with a responsibility for Hindu studies. During her early years in Leeds, she made contact with local people with an interest in India, Hinduism and migration from South Asia, including Peggy Holroyde (1970), who had studied Hindu and Buddhist thought and written on Eastern religions and culture, David Bowen, a lecturer in religious studies at Bradford College, and W. Owen Cole, a religious education specialist who taught at James Graham College in Leeds (both David and Owen were later to become Ursula's doctoral students). In 1969, Owen had co-founded the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education; he went on to write collaboratively on Sikhism with a Leeds Sikh, Piara Singh Sambhi.

Ursula's contact with the local Hindu community reflected her broader interest in exploring the relationship between contemporary Hindu forms and their precursors in Hindu texts, sects and earlier practices. Her 1980 article 'Who is the ideal *karmayogin*?' is an example of the way in which she strove to interrogate the formation and development of modern Hindu expressions. The *karmayogin*, a compelling and powerful figure brought to the fore by Vivekananda and Aurobindo (King, 1980, 46), was a novel symbol but one rooted in the *Bhagavad-gita*'s teachings on *karma* and *karma yoga*. Given new meaning in the intercultural context of nineteenth century East-West relations, it embodied contemporary concepts of work and service. Ursula also saw in it a symbol with global spiritual significance.

> In a wider sense, the *karmayogin* symbol also relates to many efforts elsewhere to provide a suitable theological foundation for the development of a more actively engaged spirituality, so urgently required for the profoundly changed world of today. Evidence of these efforts can be witnessed in many religious movements of the present and far transcends the confines of Hinduism. (King, 1980, 55)

Although it was not the dynamics of Hindu thought and spirituality, but of migrant Hindu settlement and practice that motivated me, it was on Ursula's initial contact that I was able to build in developing my own local relationships (from 1977 onwards). My preliminary understanding of the hermeneutics of East-West religious encounter and of the relationships between colonial Britain, India and modern Hinduism had been shaped by Ursula's teaching and the academic literature to which she had directed me. To this, I added extensive reading in anthropology and sociology – on religion, race and ethnicity – and latterly in Hindu ritual, Indian castes and community, and the history of South Asian migration and settlement in the West and beyond. My research expertise on Hindus and Hinduism in the UK developed from an initial visit to the Leeds Hindu temple in January 1977, just a few months after the photograph was taken, to a doctoral project (Knott, 1982) and beyond.[9] Although I then broadened my interests to include the religions of other South Asian communities in the UK and to questions of migration and identity, and place and space more generally, I retained an interest in British Hindus.

I revisited the themes of my doctoral research in 2009 with an article on the politics of representation and the production of British Hindus as 'a faith community' (Knott, 2009), and compiled the entry on 'Hinduism and Migration: United Kingdom' for *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (Knott, 2013). A second edition of *Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction* in 2016, contained an updated if brief account of Hinduism outside India. Through this long journey, from the 1976 photograph to the last of these publications, Ursula's interest in contemporary Hinduism continued to have an impact on this strand of my research.

Such substantive and methodological impact – of a supervisor on a research student – is perhaps to be expected. In the annals of the CRP, it can be seen in the research theses of other students supervised by Ursula: Stephen Barton, on Bengali Muslims in Bradford; David Bowen, on the Sathya Sai Baba fellowship in Bradford; Owen Cole, on Sikhs in Indian context; and Sewa Singh Kalsi, on Sikhs in Leeds. Following her move to the University of Bristol, it can be witnessed in the research of those she supervised on gender and religion, including Tina Beattie and Sue Morgan (see King & Beattie, 2004). The tradition of empirical and often locally-based studies of religion at Leeds continued after Ursula's departure (under the supervision of Kim Knott and Seán McLoughlin), including among many other doctoral projects those of Philip Lewis and Ron Geaves on Muslim communities and organisations, Joy Barrow and Jasjit Singh on Sikhs and the transmission of Sikhism, and Mel Prideaux on Muslim-Christian co-working in South Leeds.

[9] By 1977, several short research pieces had been published on Hindus in Britain: Pocock's (1976) article on Swaminarayan Hindus, Jackson's (1976) on the Holi festival, and a note on the Maratha community by Chansarkar (1973). Rashmi Desai (1963) had proffered a view about the slow development of Hindu organisations in Britain; Joan Brothers (1971) had included a reference to an early Hindu temple in her book on religious institutions.

Images, photography and the study of religion

In her genealogical analysis of the *karmayogin* as an emerging Hindu symbol (King, 1980b), Ursula concluded that the visual image of Krishna, the charioteer, teaching Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra was largely a modern one. The few earlier depictions had focused on Krishna *bhakti*, with the *karmayogin* figure coming to the fore in miniatures and calendar pictures only in the later nineteenth century, at a point when social and political reformers, such as Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Gandhi, were drawing attention to the ideal (King, 1980b, 49). From her analysis, Ursula concluded that,

> When analysing the literary and iconographic usage of a symbol, one may first of all ask what it means within a certain religion and culture but beyond that one may also enquire whether it possesses significance in a more universal context. (King, 1980b, 54-55)

She went on to suggest ways in which the ideal and its image might have wider relevance in relation to an 'actively engaged spirituality' (King, 1980b, 55), a theme to which she has returned repeatedly in her writing.

In the *karmayogin* article, Ursula showed a keen awareness of how images and symbols might act as focal points for a deeper historical and cultural enquiry. Writing soon after the exhibition of photographs of religions in Leeds, her analysis illustrated one of the points made by co-founder of the CRP, Michael Pye (2015 [1977], 1), in an earlier research/working paper on the methodological value of photographs in the study of religion. Images are more than just illustrations, he had said: 'We need a more systematic view both of the auxiliary roles of photography in research and also of its possibilities as an integral component in the presentation of data and the articulation of theory.' (Pye, 2015 [1977], 3)

Pye took the opportunity raised by the Kokak grant and exhibition to reflect on 'photography as exploration'. He made the far-sighted observation that such exploration begins not with the academic who views the image with an eye on what it can reveal for understanding and researching its subject matter, but with the photographer or image maker. Commenting on the CRP's intentions when commissioning Nina Kellgren to photograph the religions of Leeds, he wrote,

> [O]ur interest lay basically in whatever human realities appeared to be of visual interest to a person skilled in visual perceptions. The photographer was simply asked to explore whatever she found visually interesting as a photographer, in the general area of religion.' (Pye, 2015 [1977], 3)

Here there was a recognition that photographers and researchers (though both roles might be combined in a single individual) may well see things differently and employ different logics, supported by different professional intuitions, in selecting material to photograph. He also noted the dissonance between the views of local religious insiders and outsiders (whether

researchers or artists) in deciding what might properly constitute a subject for photography. These perspectives, as we now know, provide diverse opportunities for the use of images in research and its dissemination (Pink, 2013; Prosser, 1998).

Pye's working paper made reference to several issues that have subsequently become important in the study of religions: the challenges of understanding and analysing that which is proximate and familiar; the opportunity for interpretive engagement between scholarly observers and religious participants; and new research issues – on body, space, drama and ritual – all opened up through the use of photographs and the addition of visual analysis.

Whilst Pye (2015 [1977], 1) bemoaned the absence at that time of any serious use of photography and photographs in the social sciences,[10] writing some thirty-five years later, Sarah Dunlop (2012) was able to summarise with some confidence the strides taken in the sociological and anthropological use of visual methods from the later 1970s onwards. In addition to contributing to observation and discussion of religious practice, as Pye had suggested in 1977, visual material, 'due to its ability to evoke embodied experience, opens opportunities for deeper conversations about what is sacred with people than the traditional interview question and answer format within qualitative research' (Dunlop, 2012, 2). Dunlop discussed four aspects of using visual material for research on religion: the collection of visual data; photo elicitation; studying visual data created by a social group; and the visual communication of research findings. She also considered the problems and ethical challenges.

Some of the challenges and opportunities identified by Pye and Dunlop were realised in a research project in which I collaborated with research colleagues from the universities of Bochum and Utrecht and photographers from the Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen: 'Iconic Religion: How Imaginaries of Religious Encounter Structure Urban Space.'[11] It focused on religious icons – buildings, public events, posters, dress, religious monuments and art – as both triggers of encounter between different religious traditions and between the religious and the secular. The main question of the project was to understand how mental imaginaries of such encounters were evoked and expressed, bearing in mind their historical, social and political contexts. Not only did the project require the team to develop a working definition and theory of 'Iconic religion' (Knott et al, 2016), it raised the challenge of how to represent the dynamism of urban religious icons and their encounters in

[10] In making this point, Pye cited a book by Ursula's husband, Anthony D. King, who can be seen sitting next to Ursula in the photograph. His research, on colonial and postcolonial urban development, has made a significant and long-standing contribution to sociology, art history, and architectural and urban studies: 'With a worldview that was profoundly international and cross-culturally oriented, King spearheaded the study of the global city long before the terms globalism and globalization became commonplace in academic circles.' (https://www.binghamton.edu/art-history/news/anthonykingconference.html).

[11] The project was funded by HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area) as part of its Cultural Encounters programme (2013-2016). Led by Volkhard Krech (PI), Kim Knott and Birgit Meyer and coordinated by Susanne Lanwerd, the project involved research in Amsterdam (Daan Beekers), Berlin (Susanne Lanwerd), and London (Steph Berns).

space, time and movement. Given the shortcomings of using text alone in communicating the 'urban sacred' to wider audiences, we grappled with how best to use visual (and sonic) resources. Working with three German photographers and a design team from Berlin, we produced an exhibition which was shown in four locations, in London (Southwark), Berlin, Bochum and Amsterdam, and later digitised (*The Urban Sacred*).

Like the CRP team in 1976, we understood that the perceptions of artists and academic researchers would differ, yet wanted to incorporate both, without diluting either (Lanwerd, 2016, 11). The result, mediated by the design team, was a judicious juxtaposition of local stories, objects, research photographs and maps, art photographs and film, and accompanying sounds from the neighbourhoods in question. Whether in the physical exhibition spaces or the virtual spaces of the exhibition website, the visitor enters the urban sacred via one of three routes: through the three cities and their religious icons, the portfolios of the three artists, or the field research of the academic collaborators.[12] A time-line and map contextualise each urban site; an essay describes its characteristics; an iconic object represents it and offers a specific point of encounter. Although the totality of the exhibition and its various routes and stopping points were all carefully crafted by the team, they can never in fact exhaust the encounters of those who behold and engage with the exhibition, the meanings they attribute to it or the memories it stirs.

With the development of such visual approaches, and the material turn more generally, discussion has moved to theoretical questions about images, iconography and aesthetics. Taking a lead from Gottfried Boehm's (1994) edited collection, *Was ist ein Bild?* (What is an image?), this body of work has deepened our understanding of images and icons and their connection to broader issues of materiality, power and culture ('iconicity') (Alexander et al, 2012). We might ask how this theoretical development contributes to our engagement with the photograph above.

Werner Binder (2012), in his work on secular icons, distinguished four dimensions of iconicity: reference (the authenticity of the reference as a manifestation of the referent); transcendence (the power of an icon to go beyond reality); syntagmatic openness (the relationship between the various elements of an image that 'encourage the spectator to explore its iconic depth); and paradigmatic openness (the interconnection of these elements to other images and contexts, leading to multiple readings). Together, these offer a means of going beyond the 'visual surface' of a photograph and engaging its 'iconic depth' (Binder, 2012, 107).

Although I have not formally used Binder's model to interrogate the photograph with which I began, it is possible to see how my musings have in fact taken the elements within the photograph and examined them in relation both to one another and to other references beyond the frame. As well as being an authentic reference (although one that has periodically been cropped

[12] Cities, http://www.urban-sacred.org/CITIES/; artist portfolios, http://www.urban-sacred.org/artistic-research/; research essays, http://www.urban-sacred.org/field-research/.

and tinted), it can be said to have iconic power in having transcended its immediate time and place. It has been seen by global readers, through multiple translations of the first edition of *Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction* (Knott, 1998), and has reached out across forty years to address an audience of scholars of religion.

> An image is more than simply a surface, for it has a material presence, a biography and representational abilities. (Sonnavend, 2012, 219)

Our engagement with this picture and other ethnographic photographs (CRP Photographic Archive; see also Larson, 1988) constitutes what Sonnavend (2012, 219) refers to as an 'image encounter', a deep one which is more than simply visual. It engages our senses and intellect, our memories and contemporary experiences beyond the immediate content of the image. Furthermore, for me at least, this photograph brings about an 'iconic ritual' (Sonnavend, 2012, 219), a powerful outcome that 'opens up a larger "world" to us and contributes to our personal and collective identity-formation'. It speaks to the way in which I have shaped and (re)experienced my own academic biography.

Work/Life and Other Relationships

Early in the article, I questioned whether the photograph of Ursula and family at the Hindu temple in Leeds could be used to frame and open up issues in the study of religions from the 1970s that might subsequently have borne fruit. I looked beneath the visual surface of the photograph to the ritual event it depicted, to its participants, their position and interests, and to the wider historical, academic and local contexts to which it was connected. I considered my own relationship to the photograph, and the way in which it has offered me a means to draw together several aspects of my academic autobiography. This 'image encounter' allowed me to discuss Ursula's early academic life and work, the formation and work of the Community Religions Project with its focus on religion and diversity in the locality, engaged and collaborative research and its public impact, and novel research on religion and migration, specifically on British Hindus and Hinduism. Furthermore, focusing on this photograph, and its generation as part of an early exhibition on religious diversity in an English city, foreshadowed later developments in visual analysis and the study of religion.

Ursula King left Leeds in 1989 to take up the post of Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Bristol. By then, she was publishing on women and spirituality. The rich vein of writing and supervision on religion and gender subsequently led to many international invitations and honours, which have only grown in number since Ursula's retirement and return to her personal and academic interest in global issues and the spiritual quest.

Throughout her academic career, through her time as a student, lecturer and early days as a professor, Ursula broke ground in being a woman in an academic environment almost solely occupied by men; in a university world

shaped by and for men. Despite this, she was able to innovate and make progress whilst being a mother, wife, friend and teacher.

> It's not exclusive, it is relational, making the bridges and the connections, I can see the enrichment in that, the way the landscape becomes much more diverse and colourful than when you have only one little garden, and that's what you cultivate exclusively. (King and Bird, 2006, 26)

From her earliest days at Leeds, Ursula cultivated a broad landscape rather her own small patch, making many strong and lasting relationships – in and beyond the academy, with students and staff, female and male – and sowing seeds from which others have been able to benefit. I am grateful for having been one of her principal beneficiaries.

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