

***Dharma, Discourse, and Diaspora:*
When Work and Family Demands Overlap**

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INTRODUCTION

I was traveling through western Uttar Pradesh, India in May 2001. Chachaji, the youngest brother of one of my research contacts in the United States, had found me a seat on the train in Delhi and told the other passengers in the compartment that I was a student from the United States. Filling the role of protective uncle, he sat with me until the electricity came on, signaling our immanent departure. He said his goodbyes and left me in the compartment with a young couple, their two children, and an older gentleman. As the train pulled out of the station and the comfort of the early morning gave way to the increasing intense heat of the blazing, summertime sun of India's northern plains, we began talking. My fellow travelers asked me what I did and in my rusty Hindi I explained that I was interested in the connections between Hinduism in India and the diaspora. I told them that I had received a fellowship to study how Indian families in the United States balance work and family life. The younger man, who had the coveted, breezy window seat next to his wife and two children, responded that work and family are two completely different worlds in India. He explained that at work he is required to be modern, dressed in western-style clothes and speak English.¹ In contrast, he felt that he was more Indian and traditional at home; it was a space where he could wear Indian clothes and speak Hindi. This was a more natural place for him to exist because he did not have to think about how to act, but could just be himself. For him the distinctions between work and home spaces were significant. Workplace represented modernity and British influences while home was the more familiar world of an India that had existed for centuries with little change.²

This narrative parallels a common assumption in the United States that work and family spheres are distinct. Recent literature that addresses work and family issues has begun to question this assumption. Authors such as Arlie Russell Hochschild now recognize the blurred boundaries between the two spheres (Hochschild 1997).³ Chuck Darrah, for example, remarks that the people he observed in his study of working families in Silicon Valley often did family activities at work and performed work tasks at home (Darrah 2002). Despite their acknowledgment that the spheres of work and family are not distinct, neither Hochschild nor Darrah question their assumptions that tasks either met expectations from the realms of work or family. If the spheres overlap can actions ever simultaneously fulfill the needs of work and family?

Indian, Hindu immigrants in the United States feel the competing demands of work and family life just as their neighbors do. Their experiences differ, however, because the Hindu system can explicitly recognize work and family actions as religious.⁴ Examining the narratives of Hindu immigrants reveals the ways that work and family spheres and their demands may overlap. Their narratives may also express the tensions of the ideal Hindu system in which work and family roles are often compatible and lived experiences in which these immigrants must decide to meet the demands of one sphere over the other. There are still moments in which these narratives demonstrate that specific actions can meet the goals of both work and family life at the same time, however. This argument builds on the work of Hochschild and Darrah, examining the ways that the realms of work and family may overlap *and* the ways that some actions might simultaneously fulfill the needs of both spheres. These Hindu immigrants' experiences with work and family demands often parallel their neighbors' in many ways and can reveal important

information about work and family life for Americans in general. The narratives I examine in this paper have emerged in conversations I have had with and observations I have made of a transnational, Hindu family (the Guptas), their social networks, and other transnational Hindus I have worked with since 1996 in North Carolina, Georgia, and India.

After a brief introduction to the Guptas I will begin with an analysis of the *Dharmaśāstras*, fundamental Hindu texts that prescribe proper activities for work and home life, followed by a brief discussion of contemporary Indian examples of the relationship between work and family. I will then closely examine a conversation in which Mr. Gupta blurs the categories of work and family through his use of language. These data demonstrate that the ambiguous relationship between work and family (or home) falls under the jurisdiction of “religion” in both texts and contemporary stories Indian immigrants have told me.⁵

The Guptas

I first met the Atlanta branch of the Gupta family in March 1999 when I began attending a *Συνδαρκζλ· Μαλ·αλ* (a *RāmāyaṢa* recitation group) on a regular basis.⁶ Mr. Gupta originally came to the United States in the 1970s to study for a master’s degree in Engineering but stayed to earn a Ph.D. and eventually began to work as a university professor. Mrs. Gupta moved to the United States after she married her husband. While she did some work outside the home when her two children were young, she says they remained her first priority. She took a job in the cashier’s department of a major retailer after their daughter and son were both in college.

Didiji, an intermediary between the *μαλ·αλ* and Guruji, the Guptas’ spiritual leader, taught Mrs. Gupta how to perform the *pūjā* (worship ritual) for the *Συνδαρκζλ· kathā* (the recitation of a chapter of the *RāmāyaṢa*) and entrusted her to lead the group as organizer and religious specialist.⁷ I began my relationship with the Guptas outside of the *μαλ·αλ* later that year when they invited me to their house for Divali, a major Hindu festival that occurs in October or November. I began to interact with their son and daughter (at that time they were both attending college in Atlanta) during these family occasions. The way the entire family constructed stories about family members’ experiences intrigued me because they would often tell the story together, yet from different perspectives, to convey their understandings of past events to me and other guests. My most intense fieldwork has been with Mr. and Mrs. Gupta, but I have had previous experience working with a Hindu community in North Carolina and I have worked with other members of the *Συνδαρκζλ· Μαλ·αλ* and the Guptas’ Indian relatives. I listen to the Guptas’ stories in this context.

DHARMA IN TRADITIONAL HINDU SYSTEMS

Another context in which I interpret the Guptas’ stories includes Hindu traditions and customs, which are an important source of understanding work and family as overlapping realms. Although the Guptas have lived in the United States for approximately thirty years, their experiences growing up in India remain vital influences on their identities and the way they see the world around them. The traditions they grew up with are influenced by regional, caste, and family customs in addition to the larger

Hindu textual tradition. *The Laws of Manu*, a text written around the beginning of the Common Era, and other *Dharmaśāstras*, or legal texts, provide instructions on work and family life as elements of an entire religious system and not as distinct spheres in competition with the other for an individual's attention and time (The Laws of Manu 1991: xvii). The texts demonstrate that religion, family and livelihood all fall under the jurisdiction of Hindu law.

While many workers in the United States discuss the need to “balance” work and family, implying that they place contradictory demands on people, the traditional Hindu system makes the mutual goals of work and family more explicit. The background for understanding these goals comes from the *varṣāśrama* system which is composed of two elements: *varṣa* (caste) and *āśrama* (stage of life). Each element taken separately defines appropriate behaviors for certain categories of people.

Manu divides *varṣa* into four main castes, *Brahmin* (priest), *kṣatriya* (warrior or ruler), *vaiśya* (commoner), and *śūdra* (servant), and describes the duties and appropriate livelihoods for each of the first three (the three “twice-born” castes, who are allowed to study the Vedas):

Priests who remain within the womb of the Veda and are steadfast in carrying out their own innate activities should make a living properly by six innate activities, in order, the six innate activities of a high-born priest: teaching (the Veda), reciting (the Veda), sacrificing for themselves, sacrificing for others, giving, and receiving...As a means of livelihood, bearing weapons and missiles is for a ruler, while trade, (tending) livestock, and farming are for a commoner. But their duty is giving, reciting (the Veda), and sacrificing. Teaching the Veda, for a priest, protecting, for a ruler, and trading, for a commoner, are pre-eminent among their own innate activities (Manu 1991: 10.74-75, 79-80).

In this traditional (and ideal) Hindu system, men are born into particular castes with innate abilities to perform certain activities.⁸ Thus, the family into which a man is born determines his livelihood. Texts such as *Manu* link work and family in ways that have been transmitted from generation to generation.

Traditionally, *varṣas* are divided into subcastes called *jātīs*. Even today (although this tendency is declining) *jātī* determines a family's profession (so that within the *vaiśya varṣa* there are various *jātīs* responsible for specific tasks such as selling jewelry or making wooden toys). Therefore, in the traditional Hindu system, one's profession is tied to one's *dharma*. According to Wendy Doniger and Brian K. Smith *dharma* encompasses our “concepts of ‘religion’, ‘duty’, ‘law’, ‘right’, ‘justice’, ‘practice’, and ‘principle’” (Manu 1991: xvii). *Dharma* is determined partly by a person's gender, family, and stage of life. One's profession is also part of one's *dharma* in the traditional Hindu system, designated by one's family and *jātī*. The Guptas and most of their associates are *baniyas*, a *vaiśya jātī* specific to eastern Punjab (and what is now Haryana) and western Uttar Pradesh. Traditionally a trading *jātī*, *baniyas* are now engaged in a wide variety of professions. Although many *baniyas* in the United States (or in India for that matter) may not be merchants, their caste is traditionally responsible for creating

wealth in the *varṢa* system. While their *jātī* tradition may no longer be a motivating factor for *baniyas*, they are still tied to this ideal through their caste identity.

In addition to caste, *Manu* discusses the responsibilities (or *dharma*) of people at particular stages of life. Hindu texts discuss four ideal life stages (*āśramas*) in a Hindu's life: student, householder, forest dweller, and renouncer.⁹ These stages are connected to one's responsibilities to one's family, as are professions discussed above. In the traditional Hindu system family is based on exchanges between family members. One of the most important relationships within a Hindu family is between father and son. When the father is a householder and the son is a student, the father is responsible for supporting his son (and the rest of his family) materially, while the son returns this support when he becomes a householder and his father retires.¹⁰ The second *āśrama* allows the householder to fulfill his duties to his father and his son. *Manu* states:

Just as all living creatures depend on air in order to live, so do members of the other stages of life subsist by depending on householders. Since people in the other three stages of life are supported every day by the knowledge and the food of the householder, therefore the householder stage of life is the best. It must be carried out with zeal by the man who wants to win an incorruptible heaven (after death) and endless happiness here on earth... (Manu 1991: 3.77-79)

Not only does the remainder of the family reap the rewards of the householder's material gains, but the householder himself will earn rewards in this life as well as in death. *Manu*'s message is quite different from that of the New Testament in which spiritual rewards are independent of material gain or, as certain passages imply, are even hindered by material gain.¹¹ Hindu texts such as *Manu*, in contrast, link the material (gained by working in an appropriate livelihood) to familial and spiritual happiness.

Thus, the *varṢāśrama* system, as discussed in *Manu*, is a key concept in Hindu religious systems. It prescribes activities appropriate for people in certain stages of life and born to certain families. Family, livelihood, and ritual are intertwined in such a way that each part is explicitly dependent on the other, allowing many tasks to fulfill the expectations of several spheres at once.

MODERN SHIFTS IN INDIA

Despite these strong traditions rooted in the *varṢāśrama* system, modern, urban, Indian professionals may feel a disjuncture between work and family. Some Indians, such as the man I met on the train, might feel that at home they are able to live a more traditional Hindu life with their families, while the workplace may represent a more modern, "western" sphere. Hence, there may be a large gap between the expectations one must fulfill for work and the expectations one must fulfill for family.

Although the man on the train felt strongly about his experiences in living his life at work and with his family, I expect that there is a range of experiences for people working in modern, urban India. For example, Mausaji, Mrs. Gupta's brother-in-law, runs a family business with his son. While Mausaji would often change out of his work clothes (usually a button-down shirt and slacks) into traditional Indian clothing when he came

home after work, he may not have felt the same pressure the man on the train felt because he worked for himself. His was a family business and he may have understood his work and his family's well being as more connected because of this. Additionally, although work may feel like a different world than home, Indians working in India do not always have to make the same choices that people have to make in the United States. In India workers commonly leave in the middle of a workweek for several days to attend a family wedding. Although modern Indian work culture is based on a western model, it is also Indian, with time off for the many festivals in the Hindu and Muslim calendars.

Thus, despite the traditional Hindu system, modern Indian conceptions of work and family have shifted. They allow for a range of experiences of the boundaries (or lack thereof) between work and family spheres. Although the conflicts between these realms may be foregrounded in certain discourses, the traditional understandings of householder and caste remain an important subtext of Indians' experiences of work and family.

HINDUS IN THE UNITED STATES

Like their Indian relatives, Hindu immigrants in the United States may feel the incongruity of the modern, western world experienced at work and a more traditional Indian world at home.¹² This incongruity may be amplified outside of India as the Indian calendar has little relevance in places like the United States. Thus, holidays such as Diwali, typically associated with extended school breaks and several days of vacation from work in India, may fall in the middle of a workweek. The American work schedule does not allow for the elaborate North Indian celebrations of Diwali. The Guptas and their friends work around these difficulties, guided by work norms and adjusting family time to celebrate in a modified way. For example, Diwali fell on a Wednesday in 2001. Because Mrs. Gupta works, she did not have the time to cook all day on Diwali and began preparing food for the festival the weekend before. Most years, the family does a *pūjā* and then eats dinner. The Guptas' son, however, had an academic study group meeting this year on Diwali. While his presence was missed, the Guptas seemed to understand that their son's *dharma*, to succeed in school, was more important than celebrating the festival as a family. The son's compromise was that although he had several projects to finish by the next Tuesday, he did come home after the study session to see his family and light sparklers with them, a traditional Diwali activity.

I have witnessed several examples of how work (or school in the children's case) takes precedence over family activities and religious celebrations. Over the past several months, Mr. Gupta has been working on a project at work that requires extended hours. Sometimes he does not get home until 9:00 pm at night on weeknights, so he is unable to share dinner with Mrs. Gupta. He has also worked several weekend days, missing, on occasion, community *pūjās* that he would never miss otherwise.

The Narratives

Despite these conflicts between work and family time that I have both witnessed and been informed of, I have also heard several narratives that blur the boundaries between work and family spheres. As religious texts, the *Dharmaśāstras* discuss ways in which both work and family have religious implications. In some of these contemporary, personal narratives, religion plays a role in bridging the spheres of work and family so

that the distinctions between the two sometimes disappear altogether. Religion can be both explicit and implicit in these narratives. In the following story religion is implied in the Guptas' discussions of their transition from student to householder stages of life. It demonstrates the tensions between the religious ideal in which work and family needs overlap and the reality in which workers have to make choices between competing demands.

A range of linguistic and performance theories and analytic tools inform my interpretation of these narratives. Beginning with Bakhtin, I understand language in use (*parole*) to contain value. Words are not neutral but create social experience and communicate intention and the speaker's point of view (Bakhtin 1981). Following this interpretation of discourse as creative, performance studies and linguistic anthropology recognize the creative act as a process of speech, action, and their contexts (Bell 1998; Briggs 1988; Goodwin and Duranti 1992; Hymes 1975; Schieffelin 1998). Thus, we shall see below how the Guptas' speech both reflects and creates the spheres in which they live. I use Norman Fairclough's methods of discourse analysis (Fairclough 1988).

This recorded conversation occurred about a year into my relationship with the Guptas on April 2, 2000 in their home.¹³ We were seated around their kitchen table as I recorded the conversation in which we discussed their experiences immigrating to the United States. The Guptas had recently agreed to be the primary family on which my research would focus. I had prepared them for this conversation by explaining that I was interested in their immigration experiences. I wanted to know why and how they came to the United States and I felt that this conversation would be a good way to discover their motivations for coming here when, as I had seen with previous consultants, it was an ambivalent decision to leave home and family to advance a career and invest in hoped-for financial success.

A linguistic analysis of this conversation reveals patterns in the ways that the Guptas speak about work and home (representing the sphere of family), here and there, and the United States and India. The conversation reveals that although Mr. Gupta initially intended the United States to be a site for school and work, it inevitably shifts to include family and home. India, in contrast, was always the site of both work and home life although eventually it becomes associated with extended family and home more than work. A detailed examination of this conversation discloses the overlap of these categories in portions of the Guptas' discourse. Additionally, the creative aspect of this conversation allows the Guptas to bridge these categories.

From the beginning of his narrative, Mr. Gupta associates the United States and "here" with graduate school or higher education (see lines 3, 5, 8 & 10-16).¹⁴ Although he comes here with only one thing "on his mind" (that is, higher education – a phrase he repeats three times in his first four conversational turns) which does not pose a problem for him, he had "overlooked" the differences he would find in other aspects of life once he arrived. Thus, he discovered cultural differences and experienced "social shock" because the "system was different over here" and the food was not the same (12-15). This sets up a dichotomy between the United States, the place that he has chosen to help him with his higher education and India, where the system and food is familiar. Additionally, he had focused so much on relegating the United States to the education sphere (which I equate with work because education was his "task" or *dharma* at this student stage of his life, eventually preparing him for a job when he moved into the

householder stage) that his narrative reproduces his surprise when he arrived and realized that he also has to live a life outside of school in this American environment. Therefore, although he initially sets up the United States to be strictly work, he cannot avoid living a social life here as well “outside” of school (18-21). The “cultural difference” he experienced here requires “adjusting in the social life” and a “transition period” (20-21 & 23-26). He repeats “adjustment” twice in lines 30 and 40, highlighting this inevitability.¹⁵ Although necessary, these adjustments are secondary to his intention of pursuing his higher education.

Lines 29-32 represent the first time that Mr. Gupta associates “here” (referring to the United States) with “home” in this conversation. He continues to associate Indian food with home as he does in line 13.¹⁶ Even though he was able to live in a community of Indians (he refers to “living in their own community” but I believe “their community” is “Indians’ community” and therefore his own community), he “slowly-slowly...got blended in the...outside community” (37-38).

Although it took time (“slowly-slowly”) and he admits no agency (he “got blended”) for his adaptation to his surroundings, he eventually adapts. Again, he highlights the importance of food in this process because he adjusted in his eating habits (40-41). In adjusting, he also learned to understand the “local people,” but a few lines later he explains that his problem understanding people was more about the Southern accent he heard in North Carolina than a problem with understanding people in the United States in general (41-42, 50-57, 59-60 & 64-65). He claims some agency in pursuing his higher education, but talks about his adaptation to life here in the United States more passively. This corresponds with his surprise at the need to negotiate cultural differences here. He is more active (he wants to pursue higher education, he came here, etc.) when he talks about his schooling here and it is his decision whether to stay here for work (76-79). Adapting to actually living a life here just happens out of necessity and circumstances.¹⁷

In addition to his use of words such as “social shock” and his use of passive constructions when speaking about adapting to cultural differences, Mr. Gupta also distinguishes between his desire to come to the United States for higher education and the inevitability of “adopting the change over here” (26). For example, when talking about coming here for school he says that he “*wanted* to pursue higher education” and that the higher education was “initially” his “only *intention*” (2-3 & 5-6). Later he says that he “*wanted* to get some professional experience” but that staying here and putting down family roots just happened (77-85, 87-89, 91-93 & 95-100). In contrast to what he wants from staying here (that is, education and professional experience), he never intends to build a home and family here. He says that “things never...got materialized...So it’s like one thing after another thing...It’s not, didn’t have any...intention...then had children over here and children education then we stayed for children basically” (85, 87 & 91-93).¹⁸ Again, this discourse reinforces the experience of wanting to come to the United States simply for education and work (thus identifying the United States with work) yet staying because home and family inevitably happen. Despite his intentions, the United States becomes home. He has no control over keeping the boundaries between the land of work and the land of family distinct.

In the larger picture of the conversation, Mr. Gupta begins talking about the United States (or “here”) as being identified with school or work, shifts to talking about it as

home (identifying with other Indian students), and seems ambiguous about how he views his social life outside. He mentions his extracurricular activities at his school in North Carolina as being a reason for his deciding to take a faculty position in the United States (82-83). On the surface, it does not seem to be a reason why somebody would stay here. So why does he say that he “was president of the international student body and came in touch with a...lot of international students over there on campus” when he talks about his decision to stay after graduation (81-83)? I believe he uses this as a reason to stay because he feels that it shows he has roots here outside of school and work. As a social person he could not just come to the United States and continue to treat this new place as purely the realm of school. He had to connect to other people outside of school, transforming this new space into one that encompasses both work and home life.

For Mr. Gupta, India is a less ambiguous space than the United States. Although there are moments when school and work become a part of that world (see lines 46-48 & 73-75), Mr. Gupta associates it much more with home and family. He talks about India as home much less directly than he talks about the United States being for school and work because he uses his parents’ experiences to represent India for him in this conversation. They did not like visiting the United States because they were not at home (113-127). In India they are used to crowds and being able to walk outside and be in the marketplace.¹⁹ Mrs. Gupta adds that “transportation was the problem too” for her in-laws (128). Mr. Gupta explains that in India his parents had the conveniences of public transportation and rickshaws, whereas in the United States they had to rely on their children to drive them places (134-137). Although India is home in one sense, Mr. Gupta’s father prefers not to be “at home” in the more restricted sense of the term. Thus, Mrs. Gupta explains that “[Mr. Gupta’s father] likes to go out because in India he never stay at home” and being stuck in his son’s home in the United States made him feel “like he was in...prison” (157-158).

Although the older generation was unable to adapt to life here, the Guptas were able to make the shift between experiencing the United States as a temporary place where they could focus on advancing their careers and a place where they were able to make a home. There are several reasons why the younger Guptas could make the adjustment, but the most important one for my purposes here is that they worked in the United States while the older Guptas did not. It appears that one important way to create a home in the United States for these immigrants is, ironically, to work here.²⁰ However, the shift from work to home was not intentional; it happened. Although India remains a place where family resides and where the younger Guptas think about retiring, their children and religious and social communities are here.²¹ In this sense, the Guptas believe that their immediate family and their careers both demand the same thing – that they remain in the United States.

The Guptas still experience conflicts between family demands and work demands and many Indian immigrants often have to make choices between the two. For example, Mr. Gupta has missed religious functions (family) in order to work overtime on time-sensitive projects. Indian immigrants may have to uproot their nuclear families for work as well and the Guptas have moved for Mr. Gupta’s work several times. They have also decided to compromise when work and family demands conflict, as when Mr. Gupta started a new job about two hours from where the family lived at the time. Instead of moving and uprooting their high school aged children, the Guptas kept their house in

Atlanta's southern suburbs and Mr. Gupta rented an apartment in the town where he worked. They eventually moved about an hour closer to his job (to Atlanta's northern suburbs) once their youngest child graduated from high school. They did not, however, move closer to his job in a small city in north Georgia because they wanted to remain in the Atlanta area where their children were in college and where they participated in an Indian community. They do make choices on occasion between work and family. However, as I have explored above, these realms do not always conflict and, particularly because of their Hindu and Indian backgrounds, the Guptas understand on some level that prioritizing work is actually prioritizing family because the connections between earning a living and supporting one's family are explicit in the Hindu textual tradition.

As the *Dharmaśāstras* demonstrate, work and family needs both fall under the auspices of religion. Both also exist in the category of *karma yoga* or religious action. Hindu religious systems recognize that action and work are necessary to maintain the world. For example, Kṛṣṇa (Krishna) teaches Arjuna in the *Bhagavadgītā* to:

Perform necessary action;
it is more powerful than inaction;
without action you even fail
to sustain your own body (Gita 3.8).²²

The following anecdote displays such connections between work and religion. Although Americans usually distinguish between work and religion and often place religion in the family sphere of one's life, this example demonstrates the ways that religion may pervade every aspect of a Hindu immigrant's life, perhaps even erasing some of the borders between such seemingly disparate worlds as work and family.

Geetha is a woman that I met in North Carolina in 1997 while I was collecting data for my master's thesis. A devout woman from South India, Geetha was in her early thirties, married, and with no children at the time.²³ She used to attend a Hanumān Chālīsā recitation at the local temple every Tuesday evening and she and her husband were regular participants in temple activities.²⁴ During this period of time she would often stop by the temple in the evening on her way home from work. We also had several conversations about her experiences growing up and immigrating to the United States. During one of these conversations she explained that every morning when she arrives at work, she sits at her desk and recites the Hanumān Chālīsā to herself. I have met several people who recite Hanumān Chālīsā first thing in the morning. One woman explained that it is good to start the day with God's name on your lips. Although I know that many of my consultants recite Hanumān Chālīsā when they are doing their morning *pūjā* at home or when they are in the car on the way to school or work, Geetha is the only one who told me that she recites it at work.²⁵ I am sure that she could recite it during her commute if she wanted to – she does have it memorized. Therefore, it is significant that she recites it at the beginning of her workday after she has arrived at her desk. Not only is she sacralizing her workplace, but her recitation in this context indicates that she does not view her devotion to God and her daily work life as separate and distinct realms of her life. She purposely takes the time at the beginning of her workday to praise God, in this case in the form of Hanuman who, she says, gets things done. Perhaps he helps her get things done at work just as he helps her in other aspects of her life. Such outward

religious expressions in the workplace are visible in public spaces in many Indian businesses where there is often space set aside for a small altar.

The narrative examples I have outlined above reveal that religion may be a realm that overlaps work and family life and their needs for Hindus living in the United States. The tellers of these stories do not make the same kinds of distinctions that the literature I review at the beginning of this paper makes between the different expectations of work and family. Instead, these narratives acknowledge the connections between the two. They indicate that the categories of work and family or work and home are more fluid than much of the literature assumes.

CONCLUSION

I have taken Hochschild and Darrah's recognition of the overlap between work and family spheres as my base adding that actions may not always be distinctly performed for work or family. The Hindu textual tradition provides a source of this understanding that certain tasks fulfill the expectations of both work and family simultaneously. An analysis of Indian immigrants' stories and conversations reveals some of the ways that these immigrants express the possibility of this overlap. The significant lesson these discourses can teach us is to question the assumption that work and family demands are always incompatible and in competition with each other for a person's attention and time. Although the discourses I have examined above reflect the dominant understanding that work and family needs may conflict, they also reveal moments in which they complement each other, moments in which work and family needs are the same, and moments in which one inevitably leads to the other.

There are several ways in which these ideas can be explored further. First, I invite my colleagues to discover the ways in which their data may reveal similar discourses. Second, a direct comparison of Indian immigrants' experiences with work and family life with other American experiences may reveal the ways in which Indian immigrants reflect trends in the United States as well as the ways they challenge those trends. Last, it may be fruitful to conduct more research in India to compare the ways that work and family support and compete with each other in a more systematic way. Such a study would enrich our understanding of these issues for Indian immigrants in the United States.

NOTES

¹ Although I wish I had asked him what he did, I realize now that I was too dazed from my journey that had begun over thirty hours previously in Atlanta, Georgia to ask him such a simple question.

² While I do not believe that traditional India has been static for centuries, his characterization of it implies a lack of change over time. For him it represents a sphere where he can act according to his nature, the way his ancestors lived their lives. In reality, most Indian homes I visited were not immune to western influences introduced by the British colonialism of previous times and today's economic colonialism. Business practices, too, are influenced by Indian mores. Although there is much more continuity between work and home than this man admitted, his characterization of such a significant difference between the two spheres indicates that he felt a strong conflict between work and family obligations.

³ For Hochschild the work and family categories become blurred when many of her informants contradict a common assumption that home is a refuge from the demands of work. She found many employees of Amerco, her pseudonym for a midwestern corporation, who told her that work was a refuge from family demands. These employees felt that they were appreciated and rewarded for their accomplishments at work but not at home.

⁴ I use "Hindu system" to represent the varied traditions that fall under the category of Hinduism. Despite the variety of traditions within Hinduism, there are common elements that allow them to be grouped together in a not-so-unified "system." One example of this unity in divergence is apparent in the *RāmāyaṢa* traditions. Many traditions (although not all) within the Hindu system incorporate Rām and Sītā's story into their mythology (here, I'm using mythology without any negative connotations of falseness but as a foundational story). However, as Paula Richman's collections demonstrate, different traditions (and even distinct social groups within the different traditions) have alternate versions of the *RāmāyaṢa* as well as unique interpretations of the various versions (Richman 1991 and 2001). Thus, while there are a variety of *RāmāyaṢa* traditions, there is enough of the story that the traditions share to refer to them as part of a single system of *RāmāyaṢa* narratives. The same is true for the varieties of Hindu traditions. Although there are many ways that these traditions differ, they have enough coherence to be grouped under the term "Hindu."

⁵ Religion is a problematic term when applied outside of traditions such as Christianity and Judaism. Talal Asad argues that defining religion across time and culture "converges with the liberal demand in our time that it be kept quite separate from politics, law, and science" (Asad 1993:28). This categorization of the various spheres of human existence is not as well defined in traditional Hindu thought as it is in modern, Western intellectual and popular traditions (although orthodox Hinduism certainly categorizes people). Despite the lack of "religion" as a separate category in traditional Hindu systems, I use the term cautiously, acknowledging the ambiguous nature of the term in these traditions.

⁶ *Μαλ·αλ·* literally means group. In this instance it means the group that meets to recite the *Συνδαρκζλ*; a chapter of Tulsīdās' Hindi version of the *RāmāyaṢa*, one of the two major Hindu epics.

⁷ *Pūjā* literally means worship but implies certain rituals in which devotees offer various substances to the gods. *Kathā* means telling, so in *Συνδαρκζλ·Kathā* participants recite the *Συνδαρκζλ*.

⁸ I use "men" here specifically because the texts assume that men are the ones who earn a livelihood.

⁹ I must stress that these stages are ideal and most people only pass through the first two. If they do move on to the fourth stage, the third is often skipped. Furthermore, these stages are an ideal for the higher castes. These stages are also often traditionally limited to males.

¹⁰ Other aspects of this equation include the son's responsibility to undertake the necessary rituals for his ancestors (including, eventually, his father).

¹¹ For example, Jesus says “Truly, I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19.23-24).

¹² This “traditional, Indian” world is different than it would be in India, however. There is just so much that clothing, food, and family roles can do to create this world. The physical space would probably be quite unlike the space they would live in if they had remained in India.

¹³ I use the term “recorded conversation” instead of “interview” because it subverts the interview dynamic in which the interviewer directs the discourse. Although I did have certain questions that I wanted the Guptas to answer I was more interested in seeing where the Guptas wanted to take the conversation than have them answer every single question I wanted to answer at the time. The purpose of this conversation was to obtain some of the Guptas’ background information about why and how they had come to the United States. Because I did not control the direction of the conversation, for example, Mrs. Gupta repeatedly discussed her religious life, something I had not necessarily intended but which reveals the importance that religion has in her life.

¹⁴ Please refer to Appendix A in which I have included excerpts of the conversation’s transcripts. He also uses “there” in lines 6 and 11 but the context suggests that “there” refers to Raleigh where he did his graduate work. It is still, therefore, part of the United States.

¹⁵ Note that I echo his “adjustment” from line 30 in line 39 so his repetition of “adjustment” in line 40 may be only in response to my question.

¹⁶ Food is an important concern for Indians in India when they imagine life in the United States. When I was in India in the summer of 2001, the Guptas’ daughter’s relatives kept asking her if she cooked and what she made and ate. Mrs. Gupta also focuses most of her family’s concerns with her emigration around food later in the conversation. Many of our discussions revolve around food and cooking. Mrs. Gupta is an excellent cook and takes pride in making Indian food most evenings after she comes home from work. A few of the stories she has told (and I have recorded) refer to how she has brought food back with her from India. One particular story she has repeated for me several times tells how she did not like the rice she could obtain in the United States (this is during the first few years after she came here so the event probably occurred in the middle to late 1970s). She had told relatives back in India about this problem and so the first time she returned for a visit, they sent her back to the United States with a few ten pound bags of Basmati rice. At that time, United States customs did not permit foreign travelers to bring back food so she was unable to transport this rice back into the country. The story tells of the hardship that she underwent to bring the right food back to the United States even though she was unsuccessful (attempting to make it more like home), the importance that her relatives placed on being able to eat the right food (because they went through all the trouble of buying the rice and insisting that she bring it back with her), and contrasts that more difficult period with today in which there are several Indian grocery stores where she can find almost everything that she would need to cook a proper Indian meal. The availability of Indian food in the United States has helped to transform this space, once seen as strictly the realm of education and work, into a place where Indians can make a home and raise their families.

¹⁷ Mr. Gupta has a tendency to use passive verbal constructions more often than a native speaker of Standard English. I recognize this as a common pattern when Indians speak English in my own informal conversations. This may be due to the fact that Hindi (and possibly other Indian languages) uses passive constructions much more freely than we do in Standard English. Although Mr. Gupta does use passive verbal constructions frequently, it is more pronounced when he talks about making a life in the United States than when he talks about coming here for his education.

¹⁸ Several Indian immigrants have expressed similar experiences. They come here for education, professional experience, and/or to make a certain amount of money but since their children grow up here they feel that they have to stay. Ironically, when I talked to the Gupta’s son in the summer of 2001 about what he thinks about his parents staying in the United States he said that he wished they had all moved back to India because that is where his family is and that is where he feels at home.

¹⁹ The area where Mr. Gupta grew up in India and where his parents lived is very urban, old and crowded.

²⁰ Additionally, the older Guptas' stage of life at that time, forest dweller, usually includes behavior that would have been impossible if they had stayed in the United States. For example, many retired Hindus make pilgrimages to sacred sites in India, spend time in local temples singing devotional songs, and spend time with their friends. They were unable to do their *dharma* here in the United States.

²¹ In India “family” has a different sense from the nuclear family that we are familiar with in the United States. Family organizes life in India much more than it does here. For example, Indians generally use kinship terms when addressing each other (including situations such as asking a stranger for directions) to establish relationships (whether hierarchical or not). Additionally, kin tend to be closer in India than we might experience in the United States. For example, cousins call each other brother or sister (and introduce each other as such) and, I have been told, feel like siblings more than cousins for whom there may be more distance (at least for many families) in the United States.

²² For more information on *karma yoga* see Agarwal 1993.

²³ Geetha now has two children. She continues her engineering job while her mother, who came to the United States from India after the birth of her first child, takes care of the children.

²⁴ Hanumān Chālīsā is a forty verse devotional song praising and worshipping Hanumān. He is the son of Vāyu, the wind god, and a monkey who possesses incredible strength, the ability to fly (or leap) over great distances and can change his size at will. His most remarkable characteristic, however, is his unfaltering devotion to Lord Rām. Hanumān plays an integral role in the *RĒmĒyaŚa*. He is also extremely popular throughout North India. Devotees have told me several times that he is the proper deity to worship in this *Kali Yug* or degenerate age. Geetha told me that she worships him because he gets things done.

²⁵ I use the term “consultant” as a substitute for the more common “informant.” I believe that speaking about my consultants and viewing them in this way recognizes the specialized knowledge that they have about their own lives and experiences. It also raises them to a level of authority that a term such as “informant” does not.

APPENDIX A

Transcription: Tape # 4.2.00-G

Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Gupta about immigrating to the United States
Gupta Residence, Cobb County, GA, April 2, 2000

I have chosen a simple, transcription format that reveals the words and sounds spoken in a turn-taking format. For reading ease I have not included information about pause length, verbal intonation, tone, or non-verbal cues. The conversation lasted for approximately 45 minutes but I have only included relevant excerpts to keep the length down. A dotted line indicates the beginning of the next excerpt. JBS is me, Mr. G is Mr. Gupta and Mrs. G is Mrs. Gupta.

1 **JBS:** I wanted to hear about how you came to the United States.

2 **Mr. G:** OK, sin...Back in early 70s I did my undergraduate in Engineering and then
3 wanted to pursue higher education so came here to join graduate school, basically.

4 **JBS:** Mhmm.

5 **Mr. G:** Initially that was the only intention. To come here and, and pursue the higher
6 education there.

7 **JBS:** Mhmm. So...

8 **Mr. G:** So I just bought a ticket, jumped in the plane and came over here.

9 **JBS:** And how was that experience?

10 **Mr. G:** Well, like when I came here only, only thing that I had on my mind is to get some
11 higher education there but after arriving over here other part which I overlooked was
12 basically like a cultural difference and social shock and other stuff, you know, which I
13 had to cope with for a period of time. You know, the food was different over here and
14 basically the system was different over here and I had no knowledge about that...that
15 kind of change in here. So, I had to work on that, that thing was like one or two (?) at a
16 time. So, in brief was kind of...I was kind of homesick in the beginning...

17 **JBS:** Hmm.

18 **Mr. G:** ...when I came here. You know, education part I had no problem, you know,
19 understanding the, the faculty over here and, and doing good in the course work, you
20 know, had a little difficulty in adjusting in the social life outside, basically. Because of
21 the, because of the cultural, cultural difference there.

22 **JBS:** Were there any other Indians at the school?

23 **Mr. G:** Yeah, I mean, they were the, they were the, uh, people who did help me in, in the
24 transition period, people who arrived, arrived before, before I did. And they had gone
25 through same thing which I was going through so they were kind of helping hand in, in,
26 in accommodating the, the change, for me to adopting the change over here.

27 **JBS:** Were, I mean, were you able to find things, um, that, I guess, made you feel less
28 homesick?

29 **Mr. G:** Yeah, of course. Because uh, uh, I was staying with the Indian students who
30 arrived here like a couple of years before I did and they already made adjustment to their
31 life. So, by staying with them and then cooking our own Indian meal at home, you know,
32 we were living, living off campus so we had our own kitchen.

33 **JBS:** Mhmm.

34 **Mr. G:** So basically could enjoy the same, same kind of food and same kind of
35 atmosphere a little bit.

36 **JBS:** Mhmm.

37 **Mr. G:** You know, living in their own community. Then slowly-slowly I got blended in
38 the, in the, in the outside community, you know.

39 **JBS:** And what kind of adjustments did you have to make?

40 **Mr. G:** Adjustment in terms of uh, I would say in the, in the food, uh, food part, eating
41 part basically. Uh, and other one may be uh understanding the local people. You know,
42 uh in terms of their accent.

43 **JBS:** [laughs]

44 **Mr. G:** You know [laughs].

45 **JBS:** [lauging] yeah.

46 **Mr. G:** It was this was much different. The school I went to there was a, uh, we had
47 some British professors and the, the phonetics they teach you is more or less like a, like a
48 British style.

49 **JBS:** Right.

50 **Mr. G:** Phonetics in England. So when I came over here, uh, had, I had no prof...I had
51 no problem understanding the professors. Maybe they were, maybe different part of the
52 country, had a little problem understanding the local, local people here. I remember
53 during my first week, uh, I met somebody at school and we were talking, you know.
54 Talked for more than half an hour and later on I was surprised I had no problem
55 communicating with him and, and I told him "I have problem understanding the local
56 people here in America. How come I have no problem understanding you?" He said, "I
57 had the same feeling too." He was from Massachusett.

58 **JBS:** Right [laughs].

59 **Mr. G:** And he told me "I have same problem too. I can understand you ok but I cannot
60 understand local, local, local people over here." So, that adjustment took some time.

61 **JBS:** That was in Raleigh?

62 **Mr. G:** In Raleigh, mhmm.

63 **JBS:** Yeah, so a southern accent.

64 **Mr. G:** Southern accent. I had, basically, then I figured out it's, it's not my problem, it's
65 problem over here too between north and south.

66 **JBS:** So, what made you decide to stay?

67 **Mr. G:** Well, after finishing school, uh, I came here for master's program basically, two
68 year program. Then advisor talked to me into, into uh pursuing the, the uh the Ph.D.
69 program. You know, my initial intention was to do two years and go back and he said
70 "you are brightest, brightest students, we need you," something like that and he had some
71 research money, basically, and a project for me to work on. And that was pretty
72 convincing to me and he said, it'll take another, another three years or so. So I started
73 doing Ph.D. program and then uh, uh it's one thing after another then. After, after
74 finishing my Ph.D. program I did apply to, to schools in India. And had a faculty job
75 offer from there, the school I went to initially. And then I had applied over here too and I
76 had a faculty position job over here too. So I had a choice to go there or stay here and it
77 was a big struggle, you know, mine to decide whether should I go or here. Then I decide
78 maybe I just finished my school maybe I should work here like a year or two and get

79 some more experience, you know, practical experience. How things are in professional
80 life because I had been a student so far, you know, in the school. And beside, beside
81 studies I was also taking part in the extracurricular activities there. I was the president of
82 the international student body and came in touch with a lot of, lot of international
83 students over there on campus. And I wanted to get some professional experience, you
84 know. Uh, and after completing those (?) years then I said maybe another year another
85 year and things never...

86 **Mrs. G:** [laughs]

87 **Mr. G:** ...got materialized, you know. And we still think maybe after I retire now
88 maybe I'll retire over there, you know go back over there. We'll never know until it
89 happen.

90 **JBS:** Right.

91 **Mr. G:** So it's like one thing after another thing, you know. It's not, didn't have any
92 inten...initial intention basically then had children over here and children education then
93 we stayed for children basically. All those kind of excuses you can say.

94 **JBS:** Right.

95 **Mr. G:** You know one after another one. And language barrier was gone basically, the
96 accent barrier was gone a long time ago when I was in school. I took a lot of part in
97 activities, met a lot of students over there and commun, communica, committed to talking
98 to them and all you know those accent was cleared up. A little bit, you know, had no
99 problem understanding it. So, initial homesick I had in the first year that was gone,
100 basically.

101 **JBS:** Uhuh.

102 **Mr. G:** So only thing now was when to go back, you know, how much experience I
103 need. And make sure I take care of other obligations over here before I leave. Those
104 things never got called up.

105 **JBS:** And your brother, did he stay?

106 **Mr. G:** Yeah, he stay, he stayed.

107 **JBS:** Was that another kind of...

108 **Mr. G:** No, not at all that was not a, that was not in the decision process – well he's here
109 I need to be with him.

110 **JBS:** And did any other family members come over?

111 **Mr. G:** They have come and visited and gone, gone back basically.

112 **JBS:** Uhuh.

113 **Mr. G:** Like a, like parents came over here and they hated this place basically, you know
114 to tell you the truth. Means, uh in their opinion, like they came here, they had a ticket,
115 return ticket for two months to stay over here. You know, we suffer two months, but
116 after one month they went back because they say in terms of material worth there's no
117 doubt this place may be at the top of the world basically you know in terms of material
118 luxury and everything but social life is, is way different and I think problem, basically
119 they had what I had when I came here first time. I was young so I had no problem
120 adjusting myself, but for them at old age it's very hard for them to adjust. Cause they
121 wanted, when they go to market they like to see crowd walking up and down the road just
122 like in Chandni Chowk you see over there. Here when they go out they don't see nobody
123 in the street walking. That was disappointing to them. They had nobody to talk to. Over
124 there in the evening walk, when you're walking in the evening you say hello to somebody

125 every ten yard, you know a lot of faces, you know in the evening time. They come to
126 your house maybe talk or drink cup of tea basically. And that, that social life was gone, I
127 mean didn't have it over here.

128 **Mrs. G:** Transportation was the problem too. They could not go anywhere.

129 **Mr. G:** Yeah without...

130 **Mrs. G:** They were at home, you know, unless we take them somewhere...

131 **JBS:** Right.

132 **Mrs. G:** ...or something. That was the, that was the...

133 **Mr. G:** See over here when you go outside your house, it's, it's market out there walking
134 distance basically, if you're had to go a little distance then you had some kind of
135 transportation available, you know, rickshaws and all. All public transportations, bus
136 service and other stuff. Over here, you know, you had to have own transportation and
137 they couldn't drive over here so and we were at work so they were feeling bored at home.
138 And TV program, they were different then the program they were used to see over there
139 so they couldn't enjoy that either.

140 **JBS:** Uhuh.

141 **Mrs. G:** Yeah, at that time the, the Indian satellite programs nothing was here...long
142 time ago. Like fourteen years ago.

143 **JBS:** Did, did they both speak English?

144 **Mr. G:** They could understand and speak a little bit, mmmm.

145 **Mrs. G:** Father did but not mother.

146 **JBS:** Not really? So you think it would have been different if you had the Indian TV
147 now?

148 **Mrs. G:** Yeah but...

149 **Mr. G:** I mean they could understand the program...

150 **Mrs. G:** ...how much could they watch, you know, all the time you cannot watch it.

151 **JBS:** Right.

152 **Mr. G:** Yeah, they say...

153 **Mrs. G:** We had lots of uh, you know, video tapes, like uh, religious movies, like
154 Ramayan, Mahabharat, something like that...

155 **JBS:** Uhuh.

156 **Mrs. G:** ...so they could watch but it's not that, all day long it was hard. Especially for
157 his father. He likes to go out because in India he never stay at home. Was just going one
158 place to another place. So over here he felt like he was in like in prison.

159 **JBS:** Right.

160 **Mrs. G:** And "I cannot go, I could not go anywhere or do anything." It was hard for
161 him.

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