

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No: IJAR-54143

Date: 03-10-2025

Title: Synthesis and Evolution: Cultural Syncretism and the Historical Formation of the Contemporary Hindu Spiritual landscape.

Recommendation:

Accept as it is

Accept after minor revision.....

Accept after major revision

Do not accept (*Reasons below*)

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality	✓			
Techn. Quality		✓		
Clarity		✓		
Significance	✓			

Reviewer Name: Khursheed Sultan

Reviewer's Comment for Publication:

Introduction:

- Indian society is multi-ethnic and has a pluralistic spiritual history, featuring orthodox, heterodox, and tribal influences.
- Syncretism has been a key factor in shaping Hinduism, resulting in regional, pan-Indian, and blended spiritual traditions.
- A distinction exists between elite (Brahmanical) and non-elite (tribal, heterodox) traditions, which influenced spiritual and cultural hierarchies over time.
- Integration, rather than rejection, is a hallmark of Indian cultural evolution.

Concept of Syncretism:

- Syncretism merges diverse beliefs while preserving their uniqueness.
- Offers a comprehensive framework for studying religion, culture, and art.
- In India, syncretism explains regional variations in ritual and cult practices, reflecting historical integration and cultural continuity.

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Evolution of Religious practices:

- Religion is more than belief—it is **ritual, scripture, ethics, and community**.
- Hinduism evolved from **local, nature-based animistic traditions** to **temple-centric institutionalized worship**.
- Anthropologists highlight concepts like **Sanskritization, assimilation, and cultural hybridity** to explain this evolution.
- Social hierarchies and Brahmanical influence played a **central role in shaping ritual, deity worship, and temple structures**.

Historical Syncretism in India:

- Terms like **Hindu, Brahmin, and non-Brahmin** evolved historically; colonial and nationalist interventions shaped modern understandings of Hinduism.
- Early settlements (Harappan and Neolithic cultures) had **fertility and animistic cults**, influencing later Dravidian and South Indian spiritual practices.
- Archaeology and linguistics suggest **Pan-Indian Proto-Dravidian cultural continuity**, indicating early syncretism.

Temple-Centric Worship in South India:

- Temples function as **religious, social, and cultural centers**, often featuring hierarchical roles and transactional relationships between devotees and priesthood.
- Major South Indian branches: **Shaivism and Vaishnavism**.
- Temples reflect **syncretic blending**, integrating local deities and rituals into structured Brahmanic frameworks.

Key Findings:

1. Modern Hinduism is a **syncretic evolution** of diverse traditions.
2. **Brahmanisation** transformed crude animistic worship into **refined, temple-centric rituals**.

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- Local ethnic practices influenced Brahmanic traditions (**visible counter exchanges**).
- Worship shifted from **nature-based ecological spirituality** to a **centralized temple-focused system**.
- Syncretism remains **dynamic**, reflecting the adaptability of India's spiritual heritage.

Conclusion:

The study emphasizes that contemporary Hinduism emerged from **centuries of cultural integration**, reflecting a **complex interplay between Brahmanic and non-Brahmanic traditions**. The syncretic approach demonstrates the **flexibility, diversity, and resilience** of Indian religious culture, offering a model for understanding how multiple traditions can **coexist and evolve**.

References (Selected Highlights):

- Appadurai & Breckenridge, *The South Indian Temple*, 1976.
- Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*, 1996.
- Parpola, *The pre-Vedic Indian background of the Śrauta rituals*, Motilal Banarsidass.
- Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion*, 2004.