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THE NONDUAL EDUCATIONAL TEACHINGS OF J. KRISHNAMURTI: THE LINKS WITH EDUCATIONAL DRAMA AND THEATRE

Kriben Pillay

ABSTRACT

This article will explore how Krishnamurti's educational teachings treat the important nondual categories of nondual perception, nondual action, and nondual thinking, for these constitute the transformative areas of experience within nondualism. The article will also alert the reader to the resonances of these categories with educational drama and theatre. The last section, perhaps controversially, looks at Krishnamurti's teaching styles as acts of educational drama and theatre. This article will present an argument that Krishnamurti's ways of teaching share similarities with good educational drama and theatre, which have implications for the experiential dimensions of both nondual spirituality and educational drama and theatre. This exploration will occur against a general background of Krishnamurti's educational philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

Within the context of the kinds of methodology and learning identified in educational drama and theatre, Krishnamurti's approach may be said to be "heuristic"[1], that is, promoting self-discovery, within what Richard Courtney called the "intrinsic" and "aesthetic" areas of learning.[2] Certainly the kinds of learning that Krishnamurti is pointing

to do not overlap neatly with those in educational drama and theatre, but as the following exploration will reveal, there are tangible links.

A GENERAL VIEW OF KRISHNAMURTI AS EDUCATIONIST

While Krishnamurti refrained from using the word "spiritual" because of the obvious connotations that he wanted to avoid—belief, isolating religious images that promote guilt and fear, religious divisions, etc.— and in his attempt to not further condition the mind, but to de-condition it, his use of the words "integral", "whole", and other suggestive words makes it clear that he was talking about education furthering the spiritual development of the learner in a way that brought about a new human being. His objective is entirely consistent with Ken Wilber's spectrum of consciousness, which sees the development of the integral and transpersonal phases of the human being as the next step in our evolution. However, what may appear contradictory is Krishnamurti's denial that there is any kind of spiritual evolution. This is a paradox that is observed repeatedly in nondualism, and therefore it is worth elucidating here.

With Wilber's model, what has to be understood is this paradox—that the apex of the development of consciousness is to see that there is no evolution, spiritually, at all. Wilber writes:

> This state never has a beginning in time precisely because it is indeed ever present. You can neither run from it nor toward it; you are it, always. This is exactly why Buddhas have never entered this state, and sentient beings have never left it.3 (emphases in original)

It is the illusion of dualistic thinking that prevents us from seeing that the nondual state is both the means and the end, and this echoes the paradoxical title of Krishnamurti's classic book, *The First and Last Freedom*. However, A.H. Almaas further clarifies the problem:

Krishnamurti says his teaching is simple and direct. He has said that a person can listen to him and understand him, and be transformed right there, before leaving the lecture hall. This is all very true, but it is simple and direct only to Krishnamurti's own perception. The state he is describing is experienced as simple. It is simple, and ordinary, and very near to the individual. It is, in fact, the very nature of awareness: simple, empty, clear.[4]

Almaas further states that this simple awareness, which is the nondual state, is hidden because of the average person's dualistically entrenched psychological make-up, which needs to be cleared before the nondual is experienced. So, it is in this sense that the process is developmental in order to acquire, paradoxically, that which is ever present. While acknowledging the place of the development of the intellect in education, Krishnamurti sees that the primary aim of education is to help the learner de-condition the mind from the overwhelming ideological conditioning of racial, religious, political and scientific dogma. He says that:

> Conflict and confusion result from our wrong relationship with people, things and ideas, and until we understand that relationship and alter it, mere learning, the gathering of facts and the acquiring of various skills, can only lead to engulfing chaos and destruction.[5]

This quotation contains the kernel of Krishnamurti's thoughts on education; that intellectual development on its own is insufficient, there has to be self-understanding, which is to see that there is no self separate from society. Educationist Brij Khare, in his book that features dialogues that Krishnamurti had with American students, comments:

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The real problem facing mankind is how to become free of the conditioning that enslaves us and divides us and divides one from the other. Ultimately, there may be no individuals.[6]

Lastly, we must understand that Krishnamurti was talking about two kinds of knowing. In his view, dualistic knowing produces symbolic knowledge, while nondual knowing produces actual knowledge. Wilber amplifies this view in terms of Krishnamurti's teachings:

One might say that Krishnamurti's entire message is that we must disperse (or rather see through) the fictitious primary dualism and thus awaken the second mode of knowing, our non-dual and conceptual awareness, for that and that alone will reveal Reality, which is always already the case.[7]

The following sections on nondual perception, nondual action and nondual thinking, will elaborate Krishnamurti's basic educational teachings in terms of these categories.

KRISHNAMURTI AND NONDUAL PERCEPTION

It is perhaps useful to emphasize here that nondual perception is not a distinct category from nondual action and nondual thinking. Nondually, perception, action and thinking are a simultaneous whole, but for the purposes of analytic examination we can usefully employ these three categories. Nondual perception is essentially concerned with the removal of the sense of subject-object duality. As David Loy[8] states, "what must be transcended is not sense-perception in toto, but a certain type of sense-perception", the duality of the observer and the observed. This we can understand within a philosophical framework, but what needs to be displayed is how Krishnamurti developed this non-common-sense view within his educational teachings.

Krishnamurti maintained that the observer *is* the observed. That is, our ordinary perception of the world as discrete objects separate from

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the observing subject, is a false duality. In scientific analysis, this observation is confirmed, in that all physical observation is really light waves being interpreted by the brain, which has constructed out of memory a sense of self that apparently sees the objects. Of course, this is not to deny that discrete physical objects exist, only that there is no discrete psychological subject who is observing these objects. The ordinary subject-object perception is really a process of endless conceptualizing rather than seeing the *thing-in-itself.* Within the nondual perspective, this process is also the source of our human conflicts. Krishnamurti elucidates this further:

> ... observe without a single image ... then relationship is something extraordinary.[9]

Krishnamurti stresses that this kind of observation is really an holistic attention where:

> Attention is a state of mind in which there is no contradiction. There is no entity, or centre, or point, which says, "I must attend". It is a state in which there is no wastage of energy, whereas in concentration there is always the controlling process going on ... [10]

This kind of observation is the shift to what I have termed the "seeing mode", where there is no psychological self in opposition to the world, therefore no inner conflict. Psychiatrist Arthur J. Deikman, who has conducted extensive scientific investigations into the psychology of observing writes—using different terminology—that:

> The observing self has been ignored by Western psychology because it is not an object and cannot fit the assumptions and framework of current theory.[11]

Like all nondual teachings, the first practice is to extract the observing self, one's innate awareness, from the identifications with the body-

mind. Krishnamurti's epistemology focuses on this separate self so that we see experiences are not "something we go through", but "something we ourselves are".[12]

His call to teachers was to cultivate this "choiceless awareness" in the classroom. He gives a practical example:

> A boy in school looks out of the window at the birds and the trees, at the movement of the leaves, or at the squirrel climbing the tree. And the teacher says: "You are not paying attention, concentrate on the book"; or, "Listen to what I am saying". This is to give far more importance to concentration than to attention. If I were the teacher, I would help him to watch; I would help him to watch that squirrel completely; watch the movement of the tail, how its claws act, everything. Then if he learns to watch that attentively, he will pay attention to the book.[13]

This kind of observation happens naturally when we are deeply interested in something, where very often the sense is of unself-conciousness, characterized by a loss of the sense of time. In fact, the scientific method owes its success to this quality of observation, where the intellect is temporarily suspended in order to simply watch. However, it is always in the service of thinking, while Krishnamurti is calling for thinking to be in the service of this observation, this seeing. Krishnamurti writes in his diary of the effects of this observation without the observed subject:

> To "see" that mountain peak, so splendid with the evening sun, though one had seen it a thousand times, with eyes that had no knowledge, was to see the birth of the new. This is not silly romanticism or sentimentality with its cruelties and moods, or emotion with its waves of enthusiasm and depression. It is something so utterly new that in this total attention is silence. Out of this emptiness the new is.[14]

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It appears to be the same state that artists touch upon and which is the bedrock of their vision that they so struggle to articulate in dualistic language. But this state is the important first link with educational drama and theatre, which intrinsically is about the artistic process. Educational drama and theatre arose with the vision of the processes of drama and theatre adding another dimension to the process of education. This dimension is not simply the experiential dimension, of doing, nor is it about the equally important objective of bringing the physical and the emotional into alignment with the mental; but, it is suggested here, it is also about finding ways to stumble upon this nourishing perspective of nonduality. But, unlike the other arts, central to drama and theatre is a process that aids observing without the observer, and this is the taking on of role. It useful to note that role-taking involves the displacement of the ordinary self-concept, and, perhaps for this reason, educational drama and theatre is seen to have the potential to shift learners to a more heightened state of learning. Nondualism gives us a deeper sense of this practice. Stephen Nachmanovitch, in his book *Free Play*, details an exercise on observation devised by theatre director Keith Johnstone:

> (1) Everyone keeps eyes popped open and round, as big as possible; (2) Everyone (on signal) march around the room and point at any and every object and shout as loudly as possible the wrong name for it (call a rug a bus, call a chandelier a dog, and so on; (3) Go! Fifteen to twenty seconds of this chaos is plenty. Suddenly everything looks as fresh as can be; all our habitual overlays of interpretation and conceptualization are removed from the objects and people in front of us. This is very much like what people report of psychedelic states induced by drugs, a very pure awareness of things-in-themselves; but it is much less costly to the physiology.[15]

Clearly, the reason for this outcome is that the exaggerated naming process throws thought into abeyance for a brief while, allowing nondual perception to take over, which nondualism asserts to be our

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natural state. For a few seconds the self constructed by thought is paralyzed by a seemingly meaningless, irrational exercise to allow *apperception* to take place. It is interesting to note that once students understand the rationale behind the exercise, they cease to obtain similar results. What has happened here is that a new concept has rapidly given our rational self a way of seeing the exercise—which is no seeing at all but simply intellectual understanding—and this knowledge prevents the apperception of the world. But as mentioned earlier, drama and theatre, indeed art in general, have this ability to suspend thought for a short period of time, and this more than anything, may be the ultimate value of art.

Wilber makes an interesting point about Buddhist art and nondual perception, but this should not be interpreted to be simply an eastern view, because theories of art from many cultures say the same thing in different language:

> Finally, these artworks, such as Buddhist icons, themselves serve one and only one main purpose: they are supports for contemplation. By gazing on the artwork, the viewer is invited to enter the same meditative and spiritual state that produces the art in the first place. That is, the viewer is invited to experience nonduality, the union of the subject with all objects, the discovery of universal or transcendental awareness, in an immediate and simple and direct fashion—and this is the purest reason one views art in the first place.[16]

KRISHNAMURTI AND NONDUAL ACTION

Nachmanovitch, writing about the obstacles of addiction and procrastination to the creative process, observes that these obstacles are "vicious circles":

> The fundamental thing about vicious circles, by definition, is that there is no logical way out. No matter which way we turn,

we are stuck in the loop of doing or not doing, of being and seeing in a certain way, until our options narrow and finally disappear. There is no logical way out; but fortunately there *are* a number of nonlogical ways out.[17] (emphasis in original)

Nachmanovitch has identified a crucial characteristic of nondual action. That it is an action that arises when we "dispense with success and failure altogether, and just get on with it."[18] In other words, action that is not constrained by a thinker. This affirms Krishnamurti's observations in the following quotation:

> Action means doing, moving. But when you have idea, it is merely ideation going on, thought-process going on in relation to action. If there is no idea, what would happen. You are what you are. You are uncharitable, you are unforgiving, you are cruel, stupid, thoughtless. Can you remain with that? If you do, then see what happens. When I recognize that I am uncharitable, stupid, what happens when I an aware it *is* so? Is there not charity, is there not intelligence? ...
>
> ... Action which transforms us as human beings, which brings regeneration, redemption, transformation—call it what you will—such action is not based on idea. It is action irrespective of the sequence of reward or punishment. Such action is timeless, because mind, which is the time process, the calculating process, the dividing, isolating process does not enter into it.[19] (emphases in original)

The above quotation presents not only Krishnamurti's sense of what nondual action is, but also points to the process of attaining it, as well as its transformative potential. Central to this exposition is the view that nondual action is limited by concepts, and requires the *percepts* of nondual perception to come into being, which is perception without a perceiving centre, the "me". Already we see how unwieldy it is to use the categories of nondual perception, action and thinking in

presenting Krishnamurti's overall educational philosophy, because these are simply conceptual categories with no such distinctions of division in reality. But within this conceptual framework, one is forced to adhere to these categories in order to discern comparative features that would otherwise be lost. But this is also at the expense of some repetition of concepts, which is clearly the case here where we see that nondual action cannot be separated from nondual perception. The objective of both is the dissolution of the self-concept through the act of seeing, which is both the means and the end. Loy[20] uses the term "intention" to designate the self-conscious dualistic movement that brings into being a time gap between idea and action. This action is thus superimposed upon by the self-concept and does not have creative energy; it is fragmented. Krishnamurti says:

> What is important is to consider life not as an inner and outer, but as a whole, as a total undivided movement. Then action has quite a different meaning, for then it is not partial.[21]

In the following excerpt, Krishnamurti stresses that in educational practice, the environment for bringing about this sense of nondual action is located in the attitude towards learning. This has important resonances with the practice of educational drama and theatre:

> So, your learning generally consists of adding more and more information. Now is that learning? There is another form of learning—which is learning as you go along, never accumulating. And then from that to act, to think. Do you understand what it is to learn in doing? This does not mean having learnt and then doing. They are two different states, are they not? There is a state where I have learnt and from that knowledge I act, and there is learning as I am doing. They are completely different. When I have learnt and then do, it is mechanical, whereas learning from doing is non-mechanical. It is always fresh. Therefore learning as I am doing is never boring; it is never tiring, whereas to do, having learnt, becomes

mechanical. That is why you all get bored with your learning
… Learning is doing, so that in the very act of doing you are
learning.[22]

Although Krishnamurti is not necessarily referring to "doing" as
physical activity, it suggests learning *in situ*, which educational drama
and theatre has long advocated as one of its key tenets. The other
important aspect of the learning environment is the role of the teacher.
To Krishnamurti, the teacher is not separate from the taught. This
implies that the teacher must also be in a state of constant learning:

… there is no pupil and the teacher…there is only teaching and
learning, which is going on in me. I am learning and I am also
teaching myself; the whole process is one. That is important.
That gives vitality, a sense of depth … [23]

This way of learning while doing brings about a radical attitude
towards knowledge. Knowledge *per se* is not denied, but of greater
importance is the investigation of how it functions in the individual.
Either one acts out of the knowledge that one has acquired—in other
words this knowledge acts as the filters for perception, action and
thought—or knowledge becomes purely functional which is used
appropriately if useful, or discarded if not. Krishnamurti stresses
repeatedly that our fragmented actions, especially in regard to our
human problems, stem from the fact that we are acting from our
accumulated past knowledge. We operate through images, concepts,
rather from apperception. Even scientific and technological knowledge
is benefited from seeing anew. In academia, the word "research" often
means gathering information to support old ideas rather than an
activity—the meaning of which is located in the word itself—where
we *search anew*.

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KRISHNAMURTI AND NONDUAL THINKING

Of the three categories of nondual perception, nondual action and nondual thinking, it is the last which nondualism holds to be the crucial process to healing our fragmented selves born out of subject-object duality. The word "thought" is common in Krishnamurti's vocabulary, and in emphasizing the need for its ending, we find that it is here that the greatest gap between nondualism and educational drama and theatre lies. In relation to the first two categories of nondual perception and action, it is the illusory emergence of the "thinker" that gives rise to needless conceptualization and the idea of a separate doer. The root concept is the idea of the thinker, which gives birth to the separate thinker, perceiver and doer. This is very logically explained by the philosopher John Levy:

> If the notions of subject and object are both the separate objects of consciousness, neither term has any real significance. An object, in the absence of a subject, cannot be what is normally called an object; and the subject, in the absence of an object, cannot be what is normally called the subject. It is in memory that the two notions seem to combine to form an entirely new notion, *I am the perceiver or the thinker.* [24](emphasis in original)

Krishnamurti, to bring into sharp relief the identification with thoughts, changed his vocabulary over the sixty years that he taught—from using words like "creative thought" to designate nondual thinking, to talking almost polemically about the need to end thought. In a talk to teachers he says:

> Thinking is the response of memory. Thought becomes the slave of words, the slave of symbols, of ideas, and the mind is the word and the mind becomes slave to words like god, communist, the principal, the vice-principal, the prime minister, the police inspector, the villager, the cook. See the nuances of

these words and the feelings that accompany these words ... So the word for most of us has immense significance. For most of us the mind is the word. Within the conditioned, verbal, technical symbolic framework, we live and think; that framework is the past, which is time. If you observe this process taking place in yourself, then it has significance.[25]

From his earlier use of the term "creative thought" to his later negation of thought, one can discern that Krishnamurti is not talking about a state of mind in which the thinking process does not occur, but one in which it functions creatively, rather than chattering endlessly as it does in dualistic minds.

Loy[26] presses home the point that nondual thinking is the ground of creativity, and he uses the examples of Mozart and others, whose descriptions of the creative process at best resemble mediumship because they all attest to not being in control. Even when critical reflection takes place to shape a piece of writing that emerges out of inspiration, it is the nondual thinking that is the genius behind it. The Christian mystic Jakob Boehme writes of his own creativity:

Art has not written here, neither was there any time to consider how to set it down punctually, according to the direction of the Spirit, which often went in haste ... the burning fire often forced forward with speed, and the hand and pen must hasten after it; for it goes and comes like a sudden shower.[27]

Theatre practitioner Peter Brook makes a similar observation:

In any text, a structure exists, but no true poet thinks *a priori* about this structure. Although he has integrated in himself certain rules, there is a very intense impulse, which pushes him to make certain meanings come to life.[28]

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Creativity as an outcome of nondual thinking has been consciously emphasized, because creativity is so closely connected to drama and theatre. But within Krishnamurti's teachings, a crucial difference remains because he later distinguishes, for pedagogical reasons, between man-made creativity and that which stems from the Unknown:

> The writers and philosophers have read and accumulated; although they developed their own style they were always moving, acting or writing from that which they had accumulated—the known. And this we generally call creativity.

> … Generally we start with the known and from that we create, but is there a creative impulse or movement taking place that can use the known, but not the other way round?[29]

Because Krishnamurti's method of inquiry with his questioners was Socratic, that is, a heuristic probing that was relentless so that the questioners discover the answers for themselves, we can see that Krishnamurti's denial of what we commonly call creativity must be seen in context; to have upheld popular creativity, even Mozart's, would have given the impression that the creative acts of the surface mind are being equated with the radical transformation that he was pointing to—where the self is not momentarily absent, but completely eradicated. For the comparison with educational drama and theatre, it is worth noting that the psychological problems artists have been prone to may be located in this constant shift from nondual thinking to ordinary thinking, where the former is felt as a release from the habitual feelings of separation that the latter engenders.

In an educational context, Krishnamurti saw that the learning about thought and its ways must take place simultaneously with learning about the world, and learning about learning itself. The method that he used, and which he advocated for teachers was heuristic; he saw great value in inquiry, but the danger is that this very inquiry can strengthen

the thinking mode. Educational drama and theatre can perhaps play a significant role in this meta-learning, finally creating a bridge from the thinking mode to the seeing mode. But this bridge can only be constructed when educational drama and theatre understands the qualitative difference between thinking and seeing.

As always, Krishnamurti stresses that the teacher must speak from actual knowledge rather than conceptual understanding:

> To talk from an idea, a formula, a concept is one thing, but to talk from an actual fact which you have seen—that the student must be free and therefore orderly—is totally different. When you as a teacher are free and orderly you are already communicating it, not only verbally but non-verbally and the student knows it immediately.[30]

The above could imply that Krishnamurti is advocating some kind of ideal situation where the teachers are all radically transformed human beings. On the contrary, he simply asks that teachers recognize in themselves their own psychological processes and that they should be honest about their own states of being. Of significance to the processes of learning in educational drama and theatre is the following statement:

> There is attention when the teacher and the taught, both have a drive to learn and to teach. You have to create a feeling, an atmosphere, in the room. Just now we have created an atmosphere—because I want to find out and you want to find out. Is it possible to maintain this atmosphere, in which alone teaching and learning are possible?[31]

The above speaks about something that is common in educational drama and theatre practice, the creation of a special atmosphere so that learning through self-discovery can take place, where "the classroom becomes more than a testing ground of society: it becomes

the crucible of human experience".[32] What may be considered artificial is Krishnamurti's insistence that the teacher approaches each learning situation anew. In the transcripts of his talks he states repeatedly—in a way similar to Socrates—that each inquiry he undertakes with individuals and audiences is new. Yet, the texts in Krishnamurti's many books show great similarity of expression and development of arguments, although it must be noted that answers to the same question may vary. This can only be accounted for in the seeing mode; that is, knowledge as the past is used in the service of knowing in the present. The same phrases, jokes, lines of discussion, may emerge, but it is happening to a mind that is centred in the *now*, therefore, it is untainted by the past although it uses the past. This mind always has the quality of the new, and we see an almost magical power attendant upon someone in this state. It would appear that drama practitioner Dorothy Heathcote is also seen as having power "that is like that of a medium"[33] because intrinsic to educational drama and theatre is the process of discovering new processes, new knowledge. This may not be the radical state of people like Krishnamurti and others, but it does appear to approximate it. Perhaps one can say that there are "differences of depth which are quantitative rather than qualitative".[34]

KRISHNAMURTI'S DISCOURSES AS EDUCATIONAL DRAMA AND THEATRE

To regard the public discourses of Krishnamurti as educational drama and theatre may evoke controversy, simply because it is so ingrained in our religious consciousness to bring into our perception notions of "authentic" and "inauthentic". Given the historical dichotomy between seriousness and play, especially in the West, where the latter is often associated with fantasy, it stands to reason that associating the seriousness of Krishnamurti's discourses with educational drama and theatre is tantamount to equating it with the frivolous. But this is certainly not a distinction that exists within the nondual teaching traditions where religious scholar Georg Feuerstein[35] has identified a

pedagogical device called "crazy wisdom"; where teachers use a whole armoury of teaching strategies—from teaching stories to physical blows to shocking personal tactics to silence—to break the illusion of conceptualization and the sense of a separate self. What Feuerstein reveals is the search for different pedagogical devices appropriate to the teaching situations of the teachers. This may not necessarily be a conscious search, but one that is determined by context.

Krishnamurti's method was essentially that of Socratic inquiry and public talks, and most of his books are simply transcriptions of these. Compared to the crazy wisdom traditions, Krishnamurti's approach was conservative but in keeping with his teaching function to bring the nondual perspective to the western intellect.

However, if we understand the processes inherent in educational drama and theatre, we can see that his two preferred modes of teaching, those of dialogical inquiry and public talks, show elements of educational drama and educational theatre, respectively, although much more subdued than in the following account of the teaching practice of teacher Nisargadatta Maharaj:

> Maharaj's narration was alive with actions and sound effects appropriate to the various stages of life he described. It was sheer drama! We heard him in dumb admiration and the professional actor was flabbergasted ... "I am a good actor. Am I not?" He added: Do you really understand what I am driving at, though?[36]

Role-play, philosophically, is not an alien process to nondualism, because it avers that all aspects of self are fundamentally role-play. This comes across strongly in the attitude to play, where life is seen as play, and in the Hindu tradition, life is "God's Play". Here Maharaj is using conscious role-play, but in Krishnamurti's case we can postulate that his role-playing was determined by context. However,

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before this is explored in greater detail, we need to understand the kinds of processes and learning that take place respectively in educational drama and educational theatre in order that a meaningful comparison with Krishnamurti's discourses can be made.

In educational drama, the physical context is one of a small group of participants using role-play, simulation, and improvisation—the creative process—to gain embodied information and understanding about a particular subject. The term "embodied" is used to designate learning through the body, the emotions and the intellect. This process narrows the information range but deepens the possibility for felt understanding. Experiencing is direct and active because the process is learning through doing. Another important aspect is the attitude of discovering new possibilities in thought, action and feeling that is grounded simultaneously in temporarily setting aside past knowledge but interrogating the new through critical reflection. The call for improvisation and other such techniques as imaging naturally slows down the thinking mode, allowing for the possibility of the unconscious shift to the silent, observing mode—the seeing mode. The essential mode then is that of active inquiry and discovery through direct experience and critical reflection.

In educational theatre, the physical context is one of a large group of participants in the form of an audience encountering theatre—the creative process—with a specific educational objective. The information range can be very broad, and while there is direct experiencing of the theatre performance, there is indirect, passive experiencing of the actual dramatic situations. Information is traded for the depth of embodied, felt understanding. The state of observing is natural to this process, and the more engaging the theatre work, the greater the possibility of shifting temporarily to the seeing mode. The essential mode is that of passive inquiry through indirect experience and critical reflection.

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Krishnamurti's discourses show similar features. He repeatedly states that he and the participants are learning together. However, he is more radical in his attitude towards creativity, pointing out that the creativity that he is talking about is not mediated by a creative work of art (theatre), or through simple self-expression (drama):

> Creativeness comes into being when there is constant awareness of the ways of the mind, and of the hindrances it has built for itself.

> The freedom to create comes with self-knowledge ... Creativeness is a state of being in which the conflicts and sorrows of the self are absent ... [37]

Nevertheless, beyond what Krishnamurti is saying about creative being, he is also heuristically engaging in certain processes that overlap with educational drama and theatre in order that discoveries can be made by the participants with regard to the truth or falseness of his statements or the subject of inquiry.

Krishnamurti's small-group inquiries show the participants engaging directly with the topic; Krishnamurti never gives answers but stretches the intellect so that there is the possibility of an insight arising. In educational drama terms, this is akin to the improvisatory process where participants are directed away from using the familiar in order to uncover the unfamiliar. This can be both exasperating and ultimately rewarding for those who allow themselves to see the limitations of the intellect.

In an inquiry about awakening the intelligence of the learner, we find that Krishnamurti uses role-play as a device:

> K: ... Now, shall we reverse the tables? You are the students, I am the teacher. [38]

The role-play is not dramatic action, but nevertheless for the purpose of inquiry and discovery, Krishnamurti employs role-play in its accepted use to create distance and to allow the participants to see from another perspective which is not normally their own. Role-play was not common to all Krishnamurti's small-group inquiries, but was employed subtly on occasion. In educational drama, role-play and improvisation also lead to similar outcomes, that is, new understandings arise.

Krishnamurti's public talks can be likened to educational theatre. These talks were attended by huge audiences, where Krishnamurti sat austerely on an undecorated podium. There were no overt theatrical signs present like those at hi-tech American evangelical meetings with music, lighting, stage décor, and costumes, which make these meetings available to analysis as theatre. Nor were Krishnamurti's talks outwardly like the minimalist forms of educational theatre, but yet certain processes are evident, albeit very subtly, that make these talks a kind of educational theatre.

Firstly, one cannot deny that the vast audiences came with a sense of expectation. This is like any audience expecting something from an educational theatre piece. The talks all had a specific beginning, middle, and end, and like a story, were journeys that the audiences were taking with Krishnamurti as he meticulously described aspects of the individual and society. He chose words that tangibly described the situation he was analyzing, giving the audience inner pictures that could connect to their own lives. He frequently asked rhetorical questions, and these seemed to keep the audiences' attentive by keeping alive the creative tension of discovering *in situ*. Like all good theatre, the element of mystery was present; and this was the mystery of the unknown, of the audiences interested to see where the journey will end. This interest was perhaps intensified by the possibility that the audiences were mainly composed of people who had psychological problems or spiritual yearnings, and were eager to be healed or gain a new perspective of life. This has the same quality as wanting to listen

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to a good story. Another important element was Krishnamurti's presence, which seemed to reflect pure stillness, unhindered by inward conflict. Nondually he was a living embodiment of being in the present. This is how Julie Desnick, a former student at Krishnamurti's Brockwood Park Educational Centre, observed Krishnamurti:

> Besides the logic of his teachings which I feel are very rational, I also find that they have tremendous beauty, a kind of poetic beauty ... he had a special presence that was like an intense silence and compassion.[39]

Actors may not live nondual lives all the time, but the process of acting requires a displacement of the normal self so that a role can be adopted. Bates observes:

> Actors live in the moment. Fully. But in everyday life we rarely risk complete contact with the present ... The past, in memory, and the future in expectation, can both be controlled by our consciousness, but the present can be met only on its own terms.[40]

It is not being suggested that Krishnamurti was acting in the normal sense, but that the nondual presence, which by definition is the absence of the self sense, is similar to the presence that good actors achieve when they temporarily put aside their self concepts, and which Heathcote[41] regards as "authentic"— "a kind of aura". However, we cannot ignore that a kind of role-playing would also have been taking place in a public talk; the role is not the obvious dramatic role, but the role created by context—here the context would have created the role of public speaker with its attendant change of discourse.

CONCLUSION

Whereas the major part of this article establishes the links that exist between Krishnamurti's teachings and educational drama and theatre,

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the last section shows the processes of educational drama and theatre that existed in Krishnamurti's ways of teaching. Krishnamurti's discourses are particularly important for this analysis, because the seriousness of his teaching persona would appear to mitigate against this kind of analysis, in comparison to the more theatrical displays of nondual teachings already mentioned. Also, educational drama and theatre, as experiential practice, has identifiable links with nondual perception and action, and simply needs a more grounded critical theory to engage with nondual thinking, the experiential heart of Krishnamurti's nondual teachings.

NOTES

[1] Robinson, Ken. "Drama, Theatre and Social Responsibility". In Robinson, Ken (ed.) *Exploring Theatre and Education*. London: Heinemann, p. 173.

[2] *Intrinsic Learning:* improvement of perception, awareness, concentration, creativity, motivation, problem identification and problem solving etc.; *Extrinsic Learning:* improvement of understanding of subjects, such as history, literature and so on; *Aesthetic Learning:* improvement of the quality of feeling, (that is, response to outside stimulus) and thus the tacit level of insight and intuition; *Artistic Learning:* improvement of older students' skills in creating theatre. (in Richard, 1995, p. 265).

[3] Wilber, Ken. *The Spectrum of Consciousness.* Wheaton, III: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1977, p. 291.

[4] Almaas, A.H. *The Elixir of Enlightenment.* York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser Inc., 1984, p. 16.

[5] Krishnamurti, J. *Education and the Significance of Life.* Bombay: B. I. Publications, 1973, p. 17.

[6] Khare, Brij B. *J. Krishnamurti: Things of the Mind.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1988, p. 46.

[7] Wilber, *op.cit.*, 1977, p. 317.

[8] Loy, David. *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy.* New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997, p. 39.

[9] Krishnamurti, J. *Questions and Answers*. Kent: Krishnamurti Foundation Trust Ltd., 1982, p. 17.

[10] *ibid.*, p. 43.

[11] Deikman, Arthur J. *The Observing Self: Mysticism and Psychotherapy*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1982, p. 11.

[12] Khare, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

[13] Krishnamurti, 1982, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

[14] Krishnamurti, J. *Krishnamurti's Notebook*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1976, pp. 80-81.

[15] Nachmanovitch, Stephan. *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 1990, pp. 53-54.

[16] Wilber, Ken. *Eye to Eye: The Quest for the New Paradigm*. Boston & Shaftesbury: Shambhala, 1990, pp. 212-213.

[17] Nachmanovitch, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

[18] *ibid.* p. 135.

[19] Krishnamurti, J. *The First and Last Freedom*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1986, p. 244.

[20] Loy, *op. cit.*

[21] Krishnamurti, J. *Meeting Life*. London: Arkana, 1991, p. 18-19.

[22] Krishnamurti, J. *Krishnamurti on Education*. Madras: Krishnamurti Foundation India, 1987.
p. 82.

[23] *ibid.* p. 149.

[24] in Loy, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

[25] Krishnamurti, 1987, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-173.

[26] Loy, *op. cit.*

[27] in Loy, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

[28] Brook, Peter. *There are No Secrets: Thoughts on Acting and Theatre*. London: Metheun, 1995, p. 53.

[29] Krishnamurti, 1982, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.

[30] Krishnamurti, *op. cit.*, 1987, p. 99.

[31] *ibid.* p. 148.

[32] Yon, Keith. "Risinghill Revisited: Reflections on Returning to Classroom Drama". In Warren, Bernie (ed.) *Creating a Theatre in Your Classroom*. Ontario: Captus Press, p. 345.

[33] in Muir, Alistair. *New Beginnings: Knowledge and form in the drama of Bertolt Brecht and Dorothy Heathcote*. Staffordshire: Trentham Books, 1996, p. 18.

[34] Loy, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

[35] Feuerstein, Georg. *Holy Madness: The Shock Tactics and Radical Teachings of Crazy-Wise Adepts, Holy Fools, and Rascal Gurus*. New York: Paragon House, 1991.

[36] Balsekar, Ramesh. *Pointers from Nisargadatta Maharaj*. Durham, NC: The Acorn Press, 1982, pp. 27-28.

[37] Krishnamurti, 1973, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-128.

[38] *ibid*. p. 161.

[39] in Blau, Evelyne. *Krishnamurti: 100 Years*. New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1995, p. 198.

[40] Bates, Brian. *The Way of the Actor: A Path to Knowledge and Power*. Boston & Shaftsbury: Shambhala, 1987, p. 167.

[41] Heathcote, Dorothy. *Collected writings on Education and drama*. Johnson, Liz, O' Neil, Cecily. 1984, p. 172.

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THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY IN THE IMPHAL OFFENSIVE

P R Pillay

ABSTRACT

Subhas Chandra Bose, a radical Indian nationalist,
escaped from British India in January 1941 to seek the
co-operation of the Axis powers for the liberation of
India. The climax of the Imphal Offensive. The article,
based on India Office records in the main, focuses on the
Indian National Army in the Battle of Imphal (1944).
Given the fact that Subhas Chandra Bose led the Indian
National Army, the article also salutes Bose's birth
centennial.

Bose who was a prominent figure amongst the nationalist leaders of
India in the pre-independence era was a man of more than national
stature. Abroad he was ranked after Gandhi as an Indian politician.
Gandhi's attempt to combine the role of a political leader of the
freedom movement and a religious cum moral man conflicted with
Bose's philosophy of activism and pragmatism. When Bose attempted
to accelerate the pace of the liberation movement with the outbreak of
World War II, he was driven into the political wilderness by the right
wing[1] of the Indian National Congress[2] and Gandhi who were not
prepared to launch a civil disobedience campaign when Britain was
engaged in a life and death struggle against Germany.[3]

Bose escaped from India in January 1941 and went to Germany in
March 1941[4] where he established a "Free India Centre" (the nucleus
of a provisional government) in Berlin and raised an Indian Legion

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from British Indian prisoners of war.[5] The German reverses on the Soviet Fronts in 1942, the presence of a large Indian community in East Asia and Japanese support convinced Bose that the logical arena for the liberation movement was South East Asia.

The "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" concept of Japanese imperialism did not include India within its limits.[6] This basic stand was modified to unleash the Japanese-Indian National Army invasion in 1944. The unsuccessful British-Indian Offensive on the Arakan Front in the winter of 1942 reminded Japan of the threat that British India, as an imperial base posed to Burma.[7] The possibility of a Japanese campaign into north eastern India could not be ruled out. Japan therefore secured from Hitler, Bose's release to lead the Indian Independence League[8] and its military wing, the Indian National Army[9] in South East Asia.[10] As a result of the meetings (10-14 June 1943) between Bose and Tojo, the Prime Minister of Japan, the latter declared in the Japanese Diet (Parliament) that Japan was firmly resolved to extend all means which would enable India to achieve its independence. For the first time Tojo indicated the possibility of a Japanese campaign into British India.[11]

On 4 July 1943 at a general assembly of Indians in Singapore, Bose formally assumed the leadership of the Indian Independence League.[12] Almost immediately he began the re-organisation of the League [13] preparatory to setting up a provisional government which would mobilize the resources of the Indians living in East Asia and co-ordinate all activities of the Indian Independence League.[14]

The question of the employment of Indian National Army in the projected Japanese campaign into northeastern India was a sensitive issue. Marshall Terauchi, the Japanese commander in chief for South East Asia, believed that Indian troops who had been demoralized by their defeat in the Malaya campaign would be unable to stand up to the rigours of a Japanese offensive. He therefore proposed that in the event of an invasion, the fighting in northeastern India should be

undertaken by the Japanese. He "recommended" that whilst the main body of the Indian National Army remain in Singapore, only espionage and propaganda groups should be used in military operations.[15] Bose who believed that Indian participation was a question of national honour insisted that the maximum sacrifice should be made by Indian troops. As a compromise it was agreed that one Indian National Army regiment would be employed in the projected north eastern Indian (Imphal) campaign as a test case and if the regiment came up to Japanese standards the rest of the Indian National Army would be sent into action.[16]

Having secured a fighting role for the Indian National Army in the impending campaign, he began the re-organisation of the Indian National Army. As a first step he took over the command of the Indian National Army on 25 August 1943.[17]

The maximum strength of the Indian National Army according to the Japanese government was not to exceed thirty thousand including civilian recruits as the Japanese were able to provide arms for that number only. There were only twelve thousand troops in the Indian National Army in March 1943.[18] About ten thousand were recruited in 1943-45 mostly through the "demagogic" oratory of Bose.[19] During 1943-45 about eighteen thousand civilians were recruited into the Indian National Army thus bringing its strength to about forty thousand.[20] In the No. 1 Division there were five percent civilians; in the Second Division there were forty percent civilians; and in the Third Division there were seventy percent civilians.[21] An unusual development was the formation of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment under Lt. Colonel Laxmi Swaminathan.[22] This development was a tribute to the role of Indian women in the freedom movement.

Apart from the mobilization of resources and co-ordination of the activities of the Indian Independence League, Bose believed that a provisional government would capture the imagination of the Indian people and that it would give the liberation struggle being waged in

East Asia an international status.[23] The formation of the provisional government of free India was proclaimed on 21 October 1943 in Singapore.[24] The provisional government was recognized by the axis powers and their allies almost immediately.[25] On 23 October the provisional government declared war on Britain and the United States as its first sovereign act.[26]

At the Conference of the Greater East Asia nations held on 5-6 November 1943 in Tokyo, Bose secured from the Japanese Government an agreement that enhanced the status of the Indian National Army. In the coming offensive it would rank as an allied army under Japanese operational control.[27] Whilst the preparatory stage for the invasion of India by the provisional government reached its completion the Allied South East Asia Command finalised its plans for an Allied offensive for the recovery of Burma.[28]

The fear of an Allied counter-offensive into Burma which was considered vital for the defence of the Co-Prosperity Sphere was the decisive military factor which convinced the Japanese Government to plan an offensive campaign into north east India.[29] When the plan of the Imphal Offensive as it was known reached its final stage the fundamental objectives of Japan were to secure the defence of Burma and to exercise political influence over India.[30] The official records of the Allied powers confirmed the view that had the Japanese - Indian National Army force succeeded in occupying Imphal[31] provisional government of Free India would have been installed there.[32] Such a step would have given the provisional government the opportunity to organise the Indians for an anti-British uprising, which was essential for achieving both the political and military objectives of the Imphal Offensive.

In the beginning of January 1944 the provisional government was ready for the biggest step of all "the march on Delhi". On 7 January 1944 the provisional government moved to Rangoon from Singapore. Early in January 1944 the No. 1 Division began to move to Burma;

the Third Guerrilla ("Azad") Regiment moved to Taiping; the Second ("Gandhi") Regiment moved to Burma in February 1944.[33]

The creation of revolutionary conditions in India was a pre-condition for the success of the Indian National Army. One of the main reasons for transferring the provisional government to Burma was to maximise in India the political repercussions of the establishment of the provisional government. It was intended that revolutionary conditions created would synchronise with the planned offensive. This two-front strategy was reinforced by a vigorous propaganda campaign by the provisional government and the Indian National Army calling upon the people of India to hamper the British war effort by planned sabotage and appeals to British-Indian troops to throw off their loyalty to the British.[34]

Discussing the probable result of the Indian National Army propaganda campaign the "New York Times" observed that it might have a serious influence on the situation in India.[35] The propaganda campaign was effective. How did Britain respond to this alarming situation? "Josh" was the strongest and most effective counter-propaganda method evolved to combat the Japanese-Indian Offensive against the morale and loyalty of the British Indian troops. "Josh" meant "Pep" and it was the morale counter-offensive weapon against the provisional government's propaganda. One of the main weapons of the Japanese-Indian offensive were the rumours spread by radio, leaflet and agents. In India the population being largely illiterate tended to believe "startling" and plausible stories. The Japanese-Indian Offensive sought to make the maximum use of this type of offensive weapon of psychological warfare. "Josh" groups were intended to build in every British-Indian soldier the knowledge and the firm faith that the Japanese and everyone who represented the Japanese were his own personal enemies; why the Japanese were India's enemies and why they would be defeated. "Josh" groups also had to introduce stories of Indian troops in action and his comradeship-in-arms with his Allies. The responsibility of "Josh"

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work within a unit was entrusted to the commanding officer.[36] Britain had to devote time, men and money to contain the psychological offensive.

The method of employment of the Indian National Army troops developed into a sensitive issue between Bose and the commander in chief of the Japanese forces in Burma, General Kawabe. Kawabe suggested that the untried troops of the Subhash Regiment should be split into small parties attached to the Japanese forces taking part in the offensive. Bose was firm. The performance of the Regiment was to be a test of the battle worthiness of the whole Indian National Army. It must therefore retain its identity. As a compromise it was agreed that the main body of troops, the Subhash Regiment (No. 1 Guerrilla Regiment) in the Imphal Campaign would not be split up into units less than a battalion would and that it would go into action under Indian officers.[37]

As a result of the insistence on an independent role for the Indian National Army in the Imphal campaign it was decided that the first regiment of the Indian National Army would be given an independent sector, the Haka-Falam area which was to the extreme left flank of the invading Japanese Fifteenth Army.[38] On 24 January 1944 Bose accepted two trial roles for the regiment: the first battalion was to form part of the force opposing the British West African Division in the Kaladan Valley, while the other two would relieve Japanese forces which were guarding the routes over the Chin Hills.[39] Bose believed that the Indian National Army troops should make the maximum sacrifice for the liberation of India. On 3 February 1944 the First Guerrilla Regiment moved to the Front to participate in the final offensive of the East Asian War. On this occasion Bose declared:

Take up your arms ... The road to Delhi is the road to freedom.[40]

The Japanese offensive in 1944 involved a two-pronged thrust; a limited operation in the Arakan Hills[41] launched in the expectation of

denying reinforcements in this sector while the main offensive went in at Imphal and Kohima.[42]

The Arakan offensive was allocated to the 55th Japanese Division to which was attached a unit of the Bahadur Group about two hundred strong under Captain Misra. The No. 1 Battalion of the No. 1 Indian National Army Regiment under Major Rathore was ordered to screen the operations of the main force of the Division by moving into the Kaladan Valley down which the 81st West African Division was advancing.[43]

On 4 February the Tanabashi Force of the Japanese 55th Division took Taung Bazaar and cut the Nyakaedank Pass trapping the 7th British Indian Division in the Mayu Ridge and isolating it from the 5th British-Indian Division. The rapid advance cut the line of communications of the 15th Corps of the British-Indian Army thereby encircling two Indian Divisions. Among the reasons for the success and rapid advance of the Japanese force was the infiltration and subversion of an Indian outpost by Major Misra the Indian National Army commander in Arakan.[44]

From 1943-1945 large numbers of Indian National Army troops were trained in fifth column activities in Rangoon and were sent to the Japanese forward positions in the Chindwin area. Many pamphlet-dropping incursions were made in the thinly held frontlines. However, real Indian National Army efforts began during the final offensive in 1944 when large groups of the Singapore-trained Bahadur and Intelligence Groups went to the Front with Japanese formations with the intention of subverting British-Indian troops.

The Arakan contingent of the "propagandists" was led by Major Misra, a former Captain of the 5/17 Dogra Regiment of the Indian Army. In March 1944 one of the hill features south of Buthidaung was held by a troop of 3rd Gwalior Lancers under Jamadar G. Singh. Contact was made with G. Singh and Major Misra persuaded him to

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surrender his entire force. They were sent to Rangoon and incorporated into Bahadur Force. During the subsequent fighting at Bawli-Ngakyaedank over one hundred British-Indian troops were made prisoner of war and after being "lectured" to by Misra's force, most of them volunteered to join the Indian National Army.[45]

From New Delhi and London come veiled admissions of severe British reverses on the Arakan Front. After the disaster that overtook the 7th British-Indian Division Bose broadcast to India warning those who co-operated with the British. "The total annihilation of the 7th Division is an unmistakable warning of the tragic fate of those who fight for Britain."[46]

At this stage of the offensive Japan had achieved its immediate objective, namely, committing the British-Indian reserves at Arakan. The main objective, Imphal, could now be assaulted.

The task allotted to the No. 1 Indian National Army Regiment involved one battalion, which would help the Japanese in checking the advance of the 81st West African Division in the Kaladan Valley. The two other Battalions of the Regiment were to be employed in the Haka-Falam sector.[47] The advance of the West African Division posed a threat to the Japanese position in Arakan.[48] The No. 1 Battalion operating from its base at Kyauktaw on the Kaladan River, with Japanese reinforcements from Arakan advanced northwards and took Kaladan, Paletwa and Daletma. The nearest British post on the Indian side was Mowdok, which was captured by a surprise attack in May 1944 by Major Rathuri.[49] The liberation of a part of Indian territory had the desired psychological impact on the Indian National Army troops and the Indian independence movement. At a later stage when the British counter-offensive began the Japanese decided to withdraw from Mowdok. However, when the Indian National Army officers refused to withdraw, the Japanese admiring their spirit left one company of their own troops to share the fate of the Indian National Army company which remained in Mowdok.[50] The Arakan

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offensive demonstrated to the Japanese that the Indian National Army could and would fight. The Japanese C. in C. in Burma said to Bose:

> We misjudged the soldiers of the Indian National Army. We now know that they are no mercenaries but real patriots.[51]

In March 1944 the 15th Japanese Army supported by strong units of the Indian National Army crossed the Chindwin to invade India. The Army Commander, General Mutaguichi hoped to pull off a "coup" which, had it been successful, might have led to the collapse of Chinese resistance and a revolution in India. The main objective of the offensive was the capture of Imphal, which was the main Allied base near the Burmese border. All available Allied resources were pressed into service. The battle for the Plains of Imphal - "The Bloody Plain" as it came to be known was one of the decisive battles of the war. [52]

The Japanese offensive involved the seizure of Kohima[53] and the encirclement of Imphal by three Japanese divisions. The Indian National Army's contribution was two battalions of the No. 1 Guerrilla Regiment and two Bahadur Intelligence Units. Two more Regiments from the No. 1 Division reinforced them in April and May. The fourth Guerrilla Regiment ("Nehru") arrived too late to be committed. The Bahadur Units were attached to each Japanese division. They were to act as guides, spies and interpreters. They were also required to accompany Japanese attacks in order to shout confusing orders and to undertake propaganda work to subvert Indian troops on the British side.[54]

On 7 March the offensive began when the 33rd Japanese Division crossed the Chindwin and began to encircle the 17th Indian Division. The march to Delhi and begun. The initial success of the offensive resulted in British-Indian forces retreating towards the Imphal Valley. In these operations the Indian National Army units distinguished themselves.[55] In February Lt. colonel S.N. Khan who commanded the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 1st Brigade had prevented the Lushai

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Ajal Brigades of the British from threatening the main supply lines of the Japanese and carried out offensive operations in the Haka-Falam sector. In May Major Ahmed with a small force from the 2nd Battalion captured the British stronghold of Klaung-Klaung which was about twenty miles of Haka.[56] This sector was held by Indian National Army troops and was only abandoned after the failure of the Imphal campaign.

Whilst the Japanese offensive was progressing against the 17th Indian Division the real thrust of the Japanese attack was made further north at Kohima to gain another access into Imphal. The Japanese advance towards Kohima forced the British to abandon Ukhrul and Sangshak.[57] Indian National Army Intelligence units of the Bahadur group distinguished themselves during the Japanese advance on Kohima, which fell on 6 April.[58] These units indulged in "jitter raids" which terrified and lowered morale of British and Indian troops. Indian National Army Intelligence units crept up close to the defenders in the dark and set up an "awe-inspiring din". This was done to draw fire from the excited defenders and thus reveal their positions. Misleading commands in English and Urdu added to the confusion and in this way a number of strong points were taken on the advance to Imphal. During the advance into Kohima many Indian troops of the 152/153 Paratroop unit were captured at Sangshak and were propagandised by Indian National Army. Intelligence units operating under Captain M. Singh and Lt. A. Singh. Some of the captives volunteered at once and operated with the Japanese against the British forces in Kohima. These units operated widely, actively and effectively on the Kohima sector. Regular loudspeaker exhortations were made to Indian troops to desert. The introduction of captured Indian troops on this front was the responsibility of a non-commissioned officer, D. Thapa.[59]

Subsequently, in the Kohima sector in June 1944 the 2nd and 3rd Indian National Army battalions under Lt. Colonel S.N. Khan were withdrawn from the Haka-Falam sector to reinforce the Japanese at

Kohima. Though their ranks were decimated by malaria, lack of supplies, medicine and transport, these troops marched on foot the several hundred miles to Kohima where the Japanese garrison itself had not received rations for two months. In the face of the well-equipped and mechanised British forces and as the Monsoons had set in, the Japanese and Indian National Army forces abandoned Kohima and retreated into Burma.[60] However, in the middle of April 1944 Japanese and Indian National Army forces were pressing in on Imphal on three sides. Although they were subject to a tenuous line of communications, had suffered heavy casualties and had not succeeded in destroying any of the British-Indian Divisions, they had forced them back into Imphal. On the surface the fall of Imphal seemed to be a foregone conclusion. At this critical stage the decisive role of Allied Air power prevented a British disaster at Imphal. The Japanese on the other hand, had to withdraw their planes for the Pacific Theatre in the face of the American counter offensive.[61]

Before reference is made to the Japanese Indian National Army retreat, it would be relevant here to briefly discuss the arrangements undertaken for the administration of the liberated Indian areas. The fall of Tiddim, which was an important route to Imphal on 18 March to Indian National Army and Japanese forces was a sensational event. For the first time in the history of British India she was invaded from the East. Bose used this historic occasion to issue a Proclamation, which declared:

> We call upon all patriotic Indians to throw themselves wholeheartedly into this last fight for India's independence.[62]

Bose's Proclamation was followed by Tojo's declaration in the Diet, which stated that liberated Indian territory would be placed under the administration of the provisional government.[63] According to H. Toye, the biographer of Bose, General Mutaguichi himself informed Bose that the Administration of the areas about to be liberated would be the responsibility of the provisional government.[64] The prospect of

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success made it necessary to prepare for the occupation and civil administration of the liberated areas.

The Azad Hind Dal was the name given to a group of men selected to form the administrative organisation of the provisional government of India immediately following the capture of Indian territory and its cessation from military to civilian control. Many of the men selected had been specially trained at the Azad School in Singapore and Rangoon. Most of the members were technicians, experts or specialists in the various aspects of public administration.[65]

During its stay in Maymyo in central Burma, its members were given training in administration, in drill, physical training and firearms.[66] It was emphasized that the people of the liberated areas should be informed that the provisional government had accepted the principle that the government of a country was responsible for food, education, health, employment, etc.[67] Official British sources claimed that the Azad Hind Dal posed as the vanguard of a swarm of administering "angels" sent by the provisional government.[68]

On 13 April 1944 the Azad Hind Dal established itself on liberated Indian territory at Moreh.[69] On the Imphal Front, in the liberated areas, villagers had approached the Indian National Army offices for settlement of land disputes. Units of the Secret Service Azad Hind Dal did excellent propaganda work for Indian National Army and counter-propaganda work against the British at the front of the Imphal theatre of operations.[70] The Azad Hind Dal, a party of civilian administrators, trained also in military discipline was to play a special role in the political reconstruction of India.

Before the Japanese - Indian National Army withdrawal began, Bose did everything that was possible to maintain the Indian National Army in the field. To remedy the shortage of supplies and transport a special Board of Supply and a Ministry of Supply was created.[71] Organisational changes were made in the provisional government to step up total mobilization. Bose appointed S.A. Ayer (the Minister of

Publicity and Propaganda) as senior Vice-President in charge of the League Organisation in Burma and Thailand,[72] and N. Raghavan (influential member of the Indian Independence League) as Finance Minister.[73] In addition a Ministry of Revenue and Manpower was created to co-ordinate revenue collection, recruitment and training. These measures yielded better results in mobilizing the Indian resources of East Asia. The 2nd Indian National Army Division that was raised in North Malaya was ready for movement into Burma. The No. 3 Indian National Army Division was being formed at Johore.[74] However, whilst the provisional government was not without means to remedy the shortage of supplies the lack of communications, difficult terrain, shortage of transport and the Monsoons made it difficult for provisions to reach the Front.

On the Imphal Front where the "Battle of India" was being fought the saga of the Indian National Army is long, intricate and closely interwoven with the Japanese Divisions with which its soldiers campaigned in the 1944 offensive. Reference has already been made to the first and second phases of the campaign namely, the Arakan and Kaladan and the Kohima Fronts respectively. The third phase of the campaign, the attack on the Imphal Front was set in motion. The British had not realized that Imphal was the real objective of the offensive until Moray and Tamu were attacked in force in the east and Bishenpur which was ten miles west of Imphal was occupied. These places formed a vital junction for the defence of Imphal.[75] Units of the Bahadur Group under Colonel S.A. Malik, formerly a Captain of the Bahawalpur Infantry of the Indian Army, distinguished themselves on the Tiddum-Bishenpur sector. Such units operated in three or four separate columns all starting from Kalewa, Kalemyo, Yesagyo and converged on Imphal.[76] Many contacts were made with the British-Indian 17th Division retreating from the Chin Hills. A British Indian picket on Peacock Hill was captured and suborned. Gurkha positions at Tangzang and other Gurkha positions on this sector were penetrated and in many instances suborned. Two Gurkha intelligence agents were sent by Malik to mingle with the crowd of refugees and

make their way into India. These men reached Imphal and from there went to Calcutta. Malik also sent four long range infiltration parties through the Silchar Hills into India. The objective of such parties was to carry out fifth column activities.[77]

The rapid Japanese advance into Bishenpur and the encircling of the 17th Division at Tiddim brought hundreds of Indian prisoners of war within the orbit of Malik's Bahadur Group. Many of them were propagandized and deliberately sent back to the British lines as "Quick Release Agents". Many of them returned to their units to begin propaganda work. Near Bisehnpur in April 1944 a platoon of "D" Company 5/6 Raj Rifles led by Lieutenant K. Ram surrendered to the Japanese without firing a shot and were "worked over" by Malik. The platoon "escaped" back to British lines and K. Ram was sent to do fifth column work in his unit. Malik's Groups worked with tenacity and success. A local spy ring of Manipuris was also organised by Malik. The prisoners of war captured on this front were not sent back to Rangoon because of the difficulties inherent in the long lines of communications. They were all propagandised and were allowed to "escape" to their lines.[78]

On the Imphal Front the "Battle of India" was reaching its final stage when on 16 April 1944 British-Indian forces in Imphal were cut off.[79] Bose had urged Mutaguichi in an earlier discussion of the offensive not to cut the Imphal Kohima road. If the escape rout remained open the British would withdraw as they had always done. To Mutaguichi, Imphal was a "lake" in which there lay "a big fish". Mutaguichi stated:

I intend to net it.[80]

The Japanese aim was to capture the vast stock of British war material to replenish their fast diminishing supplies.

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However, the diversion of Allied aircraft from the Italian Theatre of War and the air corridor strategy enabled the besieged Imphal garrison to maintain itself during the eighty day siege.[81] To make matters worse for the besieging forces the Monsoons broke on 1 June. It was vitally important to hold out at Imphal to prevent a Japanese Indian National Army advance into Assam and north east India that would have precipitated a revolt. The importance of Imphal was illustrated by Churchill's signal to Mountbatten, the Commander of South East Asia Allied Operations:

> Let nothing go from the battle that you need for victory. I will not accept denial of this from any quarter.[82]

The Americans were pressing for the return of fighter and transport aircraft for the air ferry from India to China. Bose was aware that the superior resources and the production capacity of the United States would strengthen Britain's war effort in India and force a decision against Japan. Bose stated:

> I do not under-rate their productive capacity.[83]

The superior resources of the United States averted the hand of disaster for the British. While the initiative was gradually slipping from the Japanese and the offensive reached a stalemate it was not difficult for Bose to persuade General Kwabe to allow the 2nd and 3rd Guerrilla Regiments of the No. 1 Division to participate in the Japanese attack on Tamu and Palel[84] airfield. The Indian National Army units had proved their battle worthiness in the Arakan campaign and the Japanese had been impressed.[85] On 2nd May 1944 an Indian National Army force composed of ex-Indian Army soldiers and civilians recruited in South East Asia attacked the Palel area. Battles were to rage in this area for the next two months. In the words of A.J. Barker, the author of "The March on Delhi", the Indian National Army as an Indian fighting force had been in action and despite lack of food, medicines, wireless equipment and heavy weapons,

distinguished itself in the battles around Palel.[86] Though the 3rd Guerrilla Regiment under Lt. Colonel G. Singh arrived late at the Palel sector because of transport difficulties, those who fought against it have said that in its few weeks at the front it showed zeal and a will to fight.[87]

After the reconquest of Kohima in June 1944 British-Indian forces were in a position to relieve Imphal. The inability of the Japanese to seize the British supply dumps in the Imphal Plains had upset their military and political calculations. The Monsoons, which had set in much earlier than usual flooded the communications and supply routes which, made the supply of rations and munitions to the troops almost impossible. During the five months of fighting most of the Indian National Army troops had given ample proof of their fighting qualities, courage and devotion. The troops were now tired and starved. Many of them had fallen victims to dysentery and malaria.[88] On account of the critical supply situation the Japanese-Burma Army announced the order to abandon the campaign on 5 July 1944.[89]

The "Springing Tiger" had taken its leap into India but was severely mauled in the attempt. Of the six thousand troops who had taken part in the offensive only two thousand returned. Approximately two thousand were sent to Indian National Army hospitals and rest camps in North Burma.[90] With the failure of the Imphal campaign and the Japanese withdrawal from Burma the military career of the Indian National Army was over. The high point of Bose's co-operation with Japan during World War II was the Imphal Offensive. It would be relevant to assess the political value of the offensive. As a military operation the 'March on Delhi' was a daring offensive defeated only by the overwhelming resources the Allies were able to throw into the Battle of Imphal. The failure of the April-July 1944 campaign removed the chances of success for Bose's plan of liberating India through armed invasion. Bose believed that an anti-British revolt in India would have materialized with the appearance of the Indian National Army on India's north eastern border. In order to create the

revolutionary conditions in India, a military victory for the Japanese Indian National Army forces at Imphal was a pre-condition. Bose was aware that the tide of war had turned against Japan in the Pacific Theatre. However a victory at Imphal would have been an ideal springboard for a march into India. Japanese and Indian National Army forces would have crossed the Brahmaputra. This advance would have brought the Indian National Army very close to Bengal, Bose's home province where his political influence and following was supreme. There is evidence to show that the agents sent from the Spy Schools were in India. However it is difficult to gauge their actual strength and potential to create anti-British disturbances.[91]

In a press interview Bose stated:

> The fall of Kohima is bound to have a far-reaching effect on all India, to say nothing of the success of the Indian National Army on the Brahmaputra Plain.[92]

The Japanese-Indian National Army did have a demoralizing effect on India, which resulted in strict censorship. The cause of this suppression lay in political motives. The confidence of the Indian people in the Raj was already shaken and the propaganda campaign waged by Bose was not only being listened to but acts of sabotage were quite common. An official dispatch of the India Command records that enemy propaganda and wireless broadcasts inciting Indians to revolt or commit sabotage were timed to coincide with the Japanese-Indian National Army Offensive. British counter-measures included strict secrecy on the Indian National Army's participation in the Imphal campaign.[93] Allied counter propaganda machinery created the impression that the provisional government was a Japanese sponsored puppet government and its chief a "Quisling".[94] The propaganda machinery of both India Command and South East Asia Command portrayed Bose as a puppet in Japanese hands and the Indian National Army as the Japanese Indian Force.[95]

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The outbreak of a revolution in India was a basic assumption of Bose's strategy. The fall of Imphal would have enabled the Japanese and Indian National Army forces to penetrate to points where they could attack British road and river communications or the air fields in Assam. That is what they were striving for, namely, Assam, the gateway into north eastern India. Then Bose would have had his rebellion. The provisional government could have fermented anti-British revolt in India. If Imphal had fallen one of the consequences would have been a revolt in Bengal and Bihar against British rule in India, which might well have been on a far larger scale than the riots of 1942.[96]

During the Imphal offensive "Time" magazine had published an article suggesting that there was friction between India command and South East Asia Command. It alleged that the British effort was confined to defeats in the Arakan and vast numbers of the best troops were employed holding down the Indian "empah" (empire).[97]

The failure of the Japanese to take Imphal ruled out the possibility of success for the Indian National Army for their fortunes were linked to those of the Japanese. It never bargained for fighting two campaigns with its out-of-date and inadequate weapons. Bose hoped and believed that one short campaign would be sufficient to create the conditions for revolution. In the siege of Imphal the stem of the British flower was the air link which more than anything else, contributed to the failure of the Japanese-Indian National Army offensive. In the beginning of 1944 the appearance of long range fighters of the United States Air Force established Allied air supremacy and when Imphal was surrounded air supply and air transport really came into their own.[98] Gifford, British Army Group Commander, stated:

> Had we not had air supply we should have lost the Imphal Plain, and the position on the eastern frontier of India, would be very grave.[99]

It may also be mentioned that the Japanese lost the battle on the north east of India largely through their inadequate "Q" (supply) arrangements. The 1944 campaign produced circumstances in which Indian National Army-Japanese forces had to march long distances without any rations at all and no army had ever been trained to fight successfully under such conditions. This proved to be one of the main factors in the defeat of the attempted invasion of India in 1944.[100]

British official records admit:

> A measure of courage cannot be denied to the leaders of the Indian National Army front line units in the Imphal Offensive when they faced up to British equipment, tanks, guns and aircraft with rifles, bullock carts and empty stomachs.[101]

NOTES

[1] The right wing approach to independence did not visualize the overthrow of the British, but a gradual transfer of power.

[2] The Indian National Congress, founded in 1885, was the premier political party to fight for the independence of India from British rule.

[3] Majumdar R.C. *History of the Indian Freedom Movement*. Vol. III, Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Ltd., 1977, p.497.

[4] Toye, H. *Subhas Chandra Bose*. Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1959, pp. 65-66.

[5] Jog, N.G. *In Freedoms Quest*. New Delhi: Orient Longman's Ltd., 1969, p. 204.

[6] Ghosh, K.K. *The Indian National Army*. Meerut: Menakkshi Prakashan, 1969, pp. 13-16.

[7] India Office Records (I.O.R.), L/WS/2/46: Monograph 2 and 3.

[8] The League, representing the three million East Asia Indians, supported Japan with the aim of liberating India.

[9] I.O.R., L/WS/2/45: Chronology of main I.N.A. events, 1941-45. On 15 February 1942, eighty five thousand British, Indian and Australian troops surrendered to the Japanese at Singapore. Forty-five thousand of them were British Indian troops. From the Indian prisoners of war, sixteen thousand were recruited to form the Indian National Army.

[10] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Chronology of main Indian National Army events, 1941-45.

[11] *Selected Speeches of S.C. Bose*. Broadcast from Tokyo, 15 June 1943, New Delhi: New Delhi Publications Division, Government of India, 1965.

[12] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 2.

[13] I.O.R., L/WS/2/45: Monograph 2.

[14] *Selected Speeches of S.C. Bose*: Speech at a mass gathering at Singapore, 9 July 1943.

[15] Khan, S.N. *My Memories of the Indian National Army and its Netaji*. Delhi: Netaji Research Bureau, 1945, p. 99.

[16] Dhillon, G.S. *The Indian National Army and its Netaji*. Delhi: Amrita Bazar Patrika, 1945. p. 345.

[17] Motiram (ed.). *Special Order of the Day*. New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1946, p. 386.

[18] Government of Japan, Subhas Chandra Bose and Japan. Tokyo: 1955, p. 124.

[19] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 3.

[20] *ibid.*

[21] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 6.

[22] Chatterji, A.C. *India's Struggle for Freedom*. Calcutta: Chuckeraverity and Chatterji, 1947, p. 128.

[23] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 7.

[24] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 1.

[25] Chatterji, *op. cit.*,pp.139-140.

[26] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 1.

[27] Hayashida, T. *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose*. Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1970, pp. 70-72.

[28] Slim, W. *Defeat into Victory*. London: Cassell, 1958, p. 124.

[29] The Combined Inter-Service Historical Section, India, No. 601/7775/4: Army Directive No. 1236, Japanese Southern Army.

[30] Government of Japan: Subhas Chandra Bose and Japan, 1955, Tokyo Government of Japan, p. 198.

[31] Imphal which is the capital of Manipur state in north eastern India was also an important Allied base of operations.

[32] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 1.

[33] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 1.

[34] Arun (ed.). Testament of S.C. Bose, A complete and authentic record of Netaji's broadcast speeches and press statements (1942-45), New Delhi: Radio broadcasts by Lt. Colonel Loganadan, 2 January 1944 and Major B. Singh, 23 January 1944, 1946.

[35] I.O.R., Durant Press Cutting, "New York Times". 16 April 1944, p. 23.

[36] I.O.R., L/WS/1/1711: Letter No. 28299/24 May 1944.

[37] Khan, op. cit., p. 108.

[38] Government of Japan, op. cit., p. 175.

[39] Toye. op. cit., p.113.

[40] Arun (ed.). Testament of S.C. Bose: Speeches of S.C. Bose in East Asia: On to Delhi. New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1946.

[41] The Arakan Hills are on the Burma border. It is now a part of Bangladesh.

[42] Barker, A.J. The March on Delhi. London: Faber, 1963, p. 82.

[43] South East Asia Command Report, p. 40.

[44] ibid., pp. 40-41.

[45] ibid.

[46] Sivaram, M. The Road to Delhi. London: Charles and Tuttle, 1966, p. 187.

[47] Khan, op. cit., pp.111-112.

[48] Slim, W. op. cit., p. 241.

[49] Khan, op. cit., pp. 114-12, Chatterji, op cit., pp. 177-178.

[50] I.O.R., L/WS/2/45: Chronology of Main Indian National Army events, 1941-45.

[51] Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

[52] Barker, *op. cit.*, Introduction.

[53] Kohima was an important supply centre midway between Imphal and Dimapur in Assam.

[54] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 1.

[55] Barker, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96; T. Hayashida, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

[56] Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

[57] Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 106. Ukhrul was located at a conference of roads that led to Kohima and Imphal. Sangshak was situated on a road that ran between the Chindwin-Imphal-Kohima Road.

[58] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 1.

[59] *ibid.*, Monograph 1. D. Thapa was court-martialled and hanged in 1945.

[60] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 1.

[61] Barker, *op. cit.*,pp. 113-118, Hayshida, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

[62] Giani, *Indian Independence Movement in East Asia,* Lahore: Singh Publishers, 1947, pp.117-119.

[63] I.O.R., Durrant Press Cutting: "New York Times". 23 March 1944.

[64] Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

[65] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 8.

[66] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 8.

[67] Chatterji, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-162.

[68] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 8.

[69] *ibid.*

[70] *ibid.*

[71] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 8.

[72] Sivaram, *op. cit.*

[73] Ghosh, K.K. *The Indian National Army.* Meerut, Meenakshi Prakashan, 1969, p.179.

[74] Toye, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-127.

[75] Chatterji, , *op. cit.*,p. 188.

[76] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 5.

[77] *ibid.*

[78] *ibid.*

[79] Giani, K.S. *Indian Independence Movement in East Asia.* Lahore: Singh Publishers, 1947, p. 120.

[80] Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

[81] Barker, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-126.

[82] *ibid.*, p.127.

[83] *Selected Speeches of S.C. Bose:* Press Statement, 12 December 1943.

[84] Palel's importance lay in the fact that it was situated on the rim of the Imphal Plain and had an airfield from where Allied bombers operated against Japanese forces.

[85] Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

[86] Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

[87] Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

[88] Chatterji, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

[89] Government of Japan, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-194.

[90] Chatterji, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

[91] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 1.

[92] Arun (ed.). *Testament of S. C. Bose: Speeches of S. C. in east India: On to Delhi.* New Delhi: Government of India Publications Division, 1940. Broadcast over Rangoon Radio, 28 April 1944.

[93] Combined Inter-Service Historical Section, 601/7533/H: Report by Auchinleck, C. in C., India, 16 November 1943 - 31 May 1944.

[94] I.O.R., Durrant Press Cutting: New York Times, 16 April 1944.

[95] All India Indian National Army Relief and Inquiry Committee.

[96] General Kirby. *India's Most Dangerous Hour*, London: Routledge and Kegan, 1952, p. 446.

[97] Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

[98] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 7.

[99] Barker, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-237.

[100] I.O.R., L/WS/2/46: Monograph 7.

[101] *ibid.*

Arun (ed.). *Testament of S. C. Bose: Speeches of S. C. in East India: On to Delhi. New Delhi:* Government of India Publications Division, 1940.

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India Office Records (I.O.R.), L/WS/2/46, Monograph 6.

India Office Records (I.O.R.), L/WS/2/46, Monograph 7.

India Office Records (I.O.R.), L/WS/2/46, Monograph 1.

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MARRIAGE AS REAFFIRMING SACRED SPACE

Maheshvari Naidu

ABSTRACT

This article seeks to examine the Madurai marriage myth
in terms of what marriage does to the goddess
Meenakshi. I do not offer a description of the annual
ritual marriage as such and the reader is directed to the
studies of Dennis Hudson and William Harman for
excellent ethnographic accounts of the Divine marriage.
I will instead attempt to show that in the context of
Madurai, Siva's marriage alliance with Meenakshi
serves to bring the god to Madurai, and more
importantly, keep the god there. The tala puranic text
constructs Siva's marriage to a local bride, and into the
local community thereby forging an alliance between
Siva and the Pandyan kingdom, who come to be
represented by the local devotees. I attempt to show that
the marriage serves to domicile Siva to Madurai, where,
as the son-in-law, he is made out to be (perpetually)
spatially present. The marriage myth in turn functions to
domesticate Meenakshi from her previous position as
warrior-queen to submissive bride and chaste mother,
effectively subordinating the goddess to the (male) god
Siva. The annual ritual enactment of the marriage myth
is seen as playing a vital role in reclaiming and
perpetuating Madurai as sacred space. Marriage then is
the means by which the future of these gods is shaped
and the sacrality of the space perpetuated.

THE GODDESS

Meenakshi's birth can be traced to the myth informing us that queen Kanchanamala and king Malayadvaja Pandyan, find that they are unable to have a child and undertake the performance of the Vedic injunctive sacrifices prescribed for a male child.

At the end of the sacrifice, the girl Tatatakai is born from the sacrificial fire as a three-year-old child. Much to the consternation of the king, not only is the child not a male child, but as a female she is born with three breasts. However, the goddess Meenakshi, whose divine sight the devotee seeks, out is not the three-breasted child grown into adulthood. All iconographic and pictorial representations of the goddess unless illustrating the miraculous birth from the sacrificial fire, show her in the form of a goddess from the Sanskritic tradition. The explanation to what may appear to us as an anomaly lies, however, in another Madurai myth. The action in this mythic narrative is geographically removed from Madurai and is located in the northern extreme of the Himalayas. As the main protagonists in this myth are Siva and Meenakshi, it is very much a local myth. According to this myth told in the fifth chapter of the *Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam*, Tatatakai sets off on *digvijaya* (to conquer the four corners of the world), which she successfully does. Tatatakai does not, however, conquer the god Siva, nor does she by this time wish to. A male informant who narrated his understanding of this encounter explained that upon seeing Siva, Tatatakai's whole demeanour changes. According to the informant, Tatatakai realises that, as prophesied, she had met her husband, for now, at the sight of Siva, the third breast disappears. Judging by the informant's animation, it was almost as if he was retelling what he felt to be an archetypal 'love' story between the gods.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MARRIAGE

The high premium set by the state of being married is certainly not merely endemic to the city of Madurai and is rather a pan Indian phenomenon. What is unique is the ideal wedded couple residing here in the form of Meenakshi and Sundareshvara. The motif of the ideal wedded couple is highly popular in both literary as well as visual texts. The married Brahmin women that I spoke to would also frequently reveal a particular design of gold pendant strung from their sacred *tali* (symbolic yellow marriage string). This pendant appeared to be particularly popular as it carried an image of Meenakshi and Sundareshvara as a bridal couple.

For the anthropologist Malinowski, marriage was viewed in functional terms as necessary in society as it provided an orderly means for the procreation and raising of children. Malinowski stated that although marriage was primarily a cultural response to a biological fact, religions created a kind of supernaturally sanctioned bond between the husband and wife. In other words, according to Malinowski, marriage is considered sacred or religious in that it is seen as being sanctioned by the deities. [1]

THE (INEVITABLE) MARRIAGE

Between the events, that is, the miraculous birth of Tatatakai with three breasts and the loss of the third breast, however, lie important issues that come to shape the understanding of the local goddess at Madurai. As the young child with three breasts, Meenakshi is brought up by the king as a male, as a young prince. She assumes all the responsibilities of her station and by all accounts, until the point that she meets the god Siva, is completely successful in her conquests. The loss of her third breast upon seeing the god appears to be intimately connected to Meenakshi's transformation into the goddess that we behold in the inner sanctum. And the device by which this transformation is executed is the process of marriage. Consider a

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commonly retold version of the myth telling of the meeting of the god and goddess:

> According to the legend recorded in the Madurai-stala-purana, Minakshi succeeded her father on the throne of Madura. When she attained maturity, she was asked to choose a husband. She said that she would wage war upon the neighbouring kings, and would take as husband whosoever should vanquish her. She conquered all earthly kings, and proceeded to Kailash to conquer Siva. When, however, she met the god, she found by means of a sign that he was her husband. The god asked her to return to Madura where she dwelt.[2]

Meenakshi sets out to accept as her husband 'whosoever should vanquish her'. The military encounter proves quite superfluous as the warrior queen turns shy maiden. After Meenakshi meets her 'husband-to-be', the next stage, as far as the text is concerned anyway, is invariably the marriage. The goddess who previously possessed three breasts loses one when she meets Siva. The loss of the breast is employed in the service of identifying the groom to Meenakshi.

While possessing the normal attributes may be desirable, especially for a future bride, the loss of the breast is much more complex. For in some Tamil traditions it is believed that the woman's violent power is concentrated in her breasts.[3] Meenakshi losing a breast translates to a loss of power. It is a loss of power that the text itself preordains by pronouncing a resolution of what the king considers a problem, that of a deformed child. If the local myth is so constructed that Meenakshi is meant to lose the symbol of aggressive power, and to be rendered domestic by the marriage to the god, then the marriage can be construed as a form of control.

WHAT MARRIAGE DOES

The power of the goddess is sought to be transferred to the male

god and the process of marriage facilitates this.[4] Meenakshi 'loses' the crown to the male god Siva; or rather the text would have us see this as a voluntary handing over of power from the goddess to·the god. While in the case of the goddess Kanyakumari marriage is (perpetually) postponed to preserve her power, the Madurai myth works to transfer Meenakshi's power to the god Siva and renders her subservient to him. For Meenakshi is described in the introductory praise section to the *Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam* as graciously giving up her crown to Siva.

Deconstructing the myth of Meenakshi's encounter with Siva, we see that the loss of the third breast of the goddess is significant as it is allied to complex notions of power. Within the discipline of history of religions writers like Shulman and Doniger O' Flaherty have worked extensively with Sanskritic primary sources. As their work reveals, it is fallacious to assume that ancient Hindu texts like the *brahmanas* and the *puranas* deal only in religious themes of god, devotion, and worship. Both these scholars have dealt with textual motifs of violence, fear, sex and so on, all of which emerge from the ancient texts. Consider the following myth:

> In Madupura on the northern trade route, there was born to a king a daughter with three breasts. The Brahmins warned the king never to look at the child, lest he die an early death. The king avoided the sight of his daughter, and he offered one hundred thousand gold coins to anyone who would marry her and take her out of the country.[5]

In this narrative the daughter with the three breasts is perceived as being dangerous and a threat to the father. The only way around this permanent threat for the king was for the daughter to marry. She has to be married off, quite literally to anyone who would have her, so that the father would be able to remain safe from her. The threat is later transferred to the blind husband when he discovers the wife's infidelity with a hunchback. The myth resolves itself in a way, which

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by now ought to be familiar to us. The husband throws the hunchback against his wife and the force of the weight pushes in her third breast.[6] The loss of the third breast robs the woman of her power, construed as dangerous by both (males), the father and husband.

The question that confronts us is why Meenakshi has to marry? As the woman-king she was powerful and invincible. However, notwithstanding the military prowess of Tatatakai, Kanchanamala, artfully fulfilling the role of the typical Indian mother is said to lament the unmarried state of her daughter. The text, it seems, ingenuously presents Siva as the saviour, as the groom.

The marriage effectively renders the goddess subservient to the (male) god and hands over the territory, that is the city of Madurai, and power to the god. Unlike the above Madupura story, in the Meenakshi story, Meenakshi is not perceived as a threat to her father, nor to the husband-to be. Rather, she was seen as a possible threat to all other local kings and hence, a possible threat to the patriarchal state. By having her married to Siva, an establishment of matriarchy comes to be averted. As such the story of Meenakshi reaffirms male domination as a social reality. The marriage is a public statement of this political transaction between Siva and the Pandyas in order to perpetuate a patriarchal state. William Harman asserts that:

> The marriage is a ritualised statement that an alliance is being formed. ... The ceremony is a public declaration - to mortals, divinities, and demons alike - that Siva has entered into an alliance with the Madurai Pandyas. He becomes and is explicitly declared, a 'son-in-law' (*marukan)* of the king of the Pandya domain.[7]

SPATIAL CLAIM

It would be apparent to even the casual tourist in Madurai that Siva is by no means the only god in this city and that there are many

gods (and goddesses) in Madurai to whom worship and rituals are offered. Most notable among the many male gods here is Vishnu. However, Vishnu, at Kudal Alagar temple situated on the outer arm of the (ancient) city, is spatially removed from the city centre, itself spatially defined by the main Meenakshi temple complex, which exists at the very centre of the city. Not so easily to be dispensed with as Vishnu was, is the figure of the goddess Meenakshi. My explanation up until this point has not admitted of the possibility of rival spatial claim if only because I myself have rendered the narrative of the king's discovery of the *lingam* (phallic symbol) has a prior spatial claim to Madurai. As the queen, Meenakshi is the one who wielded political control. However, the text is quick to point out that this was prior to her marriage, and this was as a queen and *not* as a divinity. In terms of the Madurai *tala puranam*, Meenakshi comes to be revered as a goddess after her marriage to Siva. Thus, while it is true that Siva, according to the traditional and classical versions of the text, comes (from elsewhere) to Madurai in order to marry the queen Meenakshi, it is the same text that maintains that Siva is present in the form of the *lingam* long before he, i.e., Siva as Sundareshvara arrives from the north for his wedding in Madurai.

There is, thus, an inherent contradiction in terms of prior spatial claim. Callewaert ignores the dominant thrust of the literature which, despite the contradictions, seeks to assign the site to the god as opposed to the goddess.

DOMICILING SIVA

Shulman, however, tells us that the Tamil shrine is, more often than not, the home of the goddess. He states that Meenakshi is born in Madurai and rules there, while her husband Sundareshvara-Siva has to be imported from the north. He goes on to say that even those myths that assert that a sacred spot was marked by a self manifest *lingam,* as in the case of Madurai, insist that the goddess arrives there *before* Siva can be persuaded to turn up for the wedding.[8] But not

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only does the god Siva turns up at Madurai for the nuptials, he stays on in the home of his spouse.

The expression *veetodu mappilai* loosely translated is stay-at-home groom, the home in this instance referring to the 'birth' home of the bride. In usual parlance the expression that is used to denote a matrilocal arrangement, is used by the Tamil south Indian community in India in somewhat derogatory terms. For, according to the custom of the Tamil-speaking people, it is commonly understood that the bride, upon marriage leaves her home to take up residence in the home of her husband. She moves into the lineage of her husband leaving not only her residence but also her own lineage. Yet, in the context of the divine marriage, the god as groom and son-in-law remains in Madurai. We must remember here that Siva, although infamous for his penchant for roaming the desolate slopes of the Himalayas, has no proper home to speak of. The fact that Sundareshvara stays on in the home of his bride thus holds a cluster of implications for the theology of these local gods. Sundareshvara marries into the Pandyan dynasty and the classical text describes him as assuming the kingship from his bride Meenakshi. He also ostensibly assumes the patronage of Meenakshi's devotees. Harman writes:

> Even though there are no longer Pandya monarchs, the dynasty lost most of it's power in the fourteenth century and ended by the beginning of the seventeenth century. Meenakshi and her husband Siva still reign from within their palace-temple in the city. The alliance that once was between Siva and a royal dynasty has now become the alliance between a deity and the devotees of the goddess he marries.[9]

My informant Gnana Sastringal in his narration of the marriage myth pointed out that this alliance is important. For Kanchanamala like any mother-in-law expected an obligatory entourage to accompany the groom, (usually the other members of the groom's lineage) in anticipation of which she had had large quantities of wedding feast

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prepared. Of course, Siva disappoints the would be mother-in law as he has no *gotra* (lineage) to speak of. The marriage to Meenakshi brings with it, though, a *gotra* for the god to enter into.

> [Through the marriage] he allies himself with a woman, a kingdom, a city, and a people. This god who, in the Sanskrit tradition, 'has neither father nor mother.... He has no *gotra* [lineage], family, or name' (2.27.43 and 2.48.18-20), Siva becomes, in the Tamil tradition, the son-in-law of the Pandyas. He assumes a wife, a new name, [Sundareshvara] and a kingdom full of devotees.[10]

The marriage of Siva to the local Tatatakai is crucial in perpetuating Madurai as sacred space. The religious specialists in the form of the temple priests realise that Siva is needed here. The marriage domiciles Siva, as the groom Sundareshvara, to the city of Madurai. *The tala puranic* text construes to keep the god as the local groom, as the *veetodu mappilai,* and in this way Siva is made to be always spatially present to take care of the subjects and the kingdom. The ascetic is domesticated into the householder in the Tamil Shaiva tradition. Also in south India, marriage involves certain responsibilities on the part of the son-in-law. The text itself shows Siva in various guises rescuing the city from many threats of disaster.

The annual elaborate enactment of the original marriage between the gods is another way of reaffirming and reclaiming the sacrality of the space by the temple priests. It is not merely a renewal of the vows between the gods, but more importantly, it reminds the Madurai Shaiva community by making a periodic and public affirmation of the god's promise to remain perpetually in Madurai. As the son-in-law, the god promises to stay on forever to fulfil his obligations towards the devotees.

In the Kash Khanda, it is said the Siva establishes his *lingam* in Kashi so that by abiding in this *lingam* he could depart from Kashi (to give

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way for Divodasa's reign) and yet still remain in sacred Kashi.[11] Before we dismiss this as part and parcel of the makeup of Hindu thinking as a perennial paradox of the god's departure and constant presence in this city, it would be fruitful to compare this against the textual narrative of Siva as Sundersvara at Madurai. Here Siva promises never to leave Madurai, and his *lingam* here is not construed to mean that he may at the same time depart from as well as never leave Madurai. The *tala purana's* narrative of the wedding is a reminder that Siva will never surrender his residence here. The bond that cements this vow is his marriage to Meenakshi.

THE GROOM

Siva in the Sanskritic tradition is both the ascetic as well as the erotic god. As the ascetic he reigns over his meditative landscape, the mountains of the majestic Himalayas, while in the role of the latter, he exercises his sexuality both within as well as outside[12] the ritual context of marriage. It is the latter relationship, Siva as spouse to Meenakshi of Madurai that we are concerned with. While in the context of Siva's marriage to Parvati he is won over by severe heat generating *tapas* (austerities), on the part of the goddess wishing to induce (seduce?) the god into marriage, the future bride Meenakshi confronts the god in the context of battle. She does not however, as far as the text is concerned, defeat the god in battle. Having defeated all of Siva's emissaries, she proceeds to confront the god as a military opponent. It is at this crucial juncture that the mythical narrative reveals its true allegiance, squarely placing its weight behind the (male) god. Upon seeing Siva, Meenakshi does not even attempt to put up the proverbial good fight.

Shulman concludes that even while the myths of many Tamil shrines work to prevent the nuptials of the local goddess, the erotic component of the goddess' nature is still very much present.[13] However it is in the brahmanical tradition that there exists the implicit belief that the power of the lone goddess needs to be controlled, or as

in the instance of the Madurai myth, transferred to the male god.[14] In terms of the varieties of popular worship in the villages, the goddess' power, while being suitably feared by the villagers, was also comprehended as the very traits of aggression that were essential for the goddess to be able to protect the village and its inhabitants. Here the goddess is seen as being married to the village as a whole, as the ritual marriage to the headman of the village shows. Thus, while the goddesses from the Sanskritic tradition are often assumed to be dangerous and wild if single and unwed or independent from male deities, it is quite the opposite in the village-goddess cults. Here the independent female deity is associated with the permanence and order of the village.[15] In Tamil villages, almost all of the goddesses have male attendants who act the role of guardians and gatekeepers to the shrines and who work to carry out the commands of the goddesses. These attendants are distinctly subordinate and their status almost borders on the servile.

Eyes have a powerful as well as an erotic force in Indian symbolism. Like the *lingam,* the eye also has the power to impregnate and the erotic third eye is especially linked with the south Indian motif of the third breast. Also erotic in connotation is the woman's violent power thought to be concentrated in her breasts.[16] Thus, the loss of the third breast in the process of Meenakshi's marriage serves not merely to delimit her political power; it is also a device to safely channel her sexuality into normatively acceptable terms. That is to say, the goddess's sexuality is now meant to be controlled within her relations with her spouse.

Dennis Hudson[17] mentions that the number three is a masculine symbol. Hudson states that in all things except her sex, the three-breasted Tatatakai is male until she meets the god Siva. She then assumes the so-called female role of playing the conquered, and significantly her third breast (and power) disappears. Ramanayya narrates a myth of the goddess Adi-Shakti (literally First Goddess) with similar overtones. He states that:

> The Adi-Shakti was in the beginning; once she fell in love with Vishnu. When she proposed to Vishnu to marry her, he asked her to give him her discus and the third eye. She gave them to him; consequently she lost half her power.... .[18]

Here too the goddess is all-powerful and invincible until the marriage to the god where it would appear that her power poses a threat to the male god.

The imperative, a religious injunction almost, for a woman in Tamil society to marry, is closely allied to why the woman ought not to remain unmarried. The Tamils believe that the virgin [in other words unmarried women as far as the Tamils are concerned] is invested with *ananku* (innate power) which, if properly controlled, (by the male, one presumes), can be used to great effect. It is for this reason that in several Tamil folk stories a woman's brothers are at pains to keep her unmarried in order that they, as opposed to her husband, may benefit from her sacred power.[19] Shulman explains that while virginity is commonly translated by Westerners to mean 'not yet having expressed ones sexuality', in the Indian context it would be more correct to read it as denoting 'not yet married'[20] as a woman is only supposed to lose her virginity after her marriage.

FROM WIFE TO MOTHER

Sexual union[21] between the gods is strictly controlled and ceremonial. All through the day when Meenakshi receives her devotees, she is housed within the restricted confines of her shrine, which is separate from that of the god's. The devotees, although fully aware that she is the betrothed of Siva, take their blessing from her as she stands alone and chaste in her inner sanctum.

Perhaps, it is telling that "when a Dravidian goddess married an Aryan, they came to live together in a temple dwelling place"[22] but each of the deities had his or her own house before their marriage.

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Neither seemed willing to surrender their abode in favour of the other. In a footnote to this remark, Ramanayya adds that this can still be seen in the Shaiva temples where the god and goddess have their own dwelling spaces. This is of course precisely the situation in the Meenakshi Temple where the god from the north or Sanskrit tradition lives in his shrine and the goddess in her own. This version of the myth that has Siva coming from the north appears to be the more muscular of the two myths. I say more muscular because it would seem that the other myth that refers to Siva always having dwelt in Madurai loses strength in light of the fact that these gods do occupy two separate shrines. Ramanayya states that these are in fact "two separate temples, [the one for the god and the other for the goddess] although they are situated in the same compound."[23]

And here in her private cell, Meenakshi's role is clearly circumscribed, she is the virginal goddess, who is also the devotees' divine mother. The gods in the Meenakshi Temple are thus kept apart, except when they are allowed to consummate their conjugal relations late at night. The *paliyarai puja* (nightly public ritual where the gods are put to the conjugal bed) which I witnessed was an elaborate ceremonial sanction for the sexual union of the gods. It is significant that at night, just before the Meenakshi in the bedchamber is ritually prepared for the god's nocturnal visit, the diamond nose ring from the main Meenakshi image in the inner sanctum is removed. The removal of the ornament signifies a removal of power so that the god Siva can unite sexually (and safely?).[24] "The goddess of the shrine still embodies the ideal of *karpu*, 'chastity', but *karpu* now seems to refer not to virginity but to a wife's devotion and faithfulness to her husband."[25] Again it is only from ceremonially controlled union between the gods that the son Ugra Pandyan (Murugan) is born.[26] O' Flaherty informs us that in the post Vedic period it is considered "good for milk to flow out but bad for semen to do so." That is to say " maternal flow is good, while sexual flow is bad."[27]

Consider, in addition, how sexual relations are contrastingly defined for the male and female in the Upanishadic texts. These ideas of northern origin have in turn become assimilated into the later south Indian conceptualisation of the (legitimate) flow of sexual fluids. By reducing power to male sexual fluid, the texts decree the flow of fluid, in sex, as eroding into the *Shakti* (power) of the man while feeding into that of the woman. The way out of this impasse is recourse to the common theme in Hindu thinking, that of abstinence. For the male then it prescribed that the fluids are held back, while for the female the prescription is the inverse except it is not exactly sexual fluid that is meant to flow *freely* but mother's milk.

> The Upanishads state that a man's soul is transmuted from food into semen; in contemporary Tamilnadu, it is said that a man's power, *Shakti*, enters him in food and is stored in semen: to increase and retain this *Shakti*, males must retain their semen and hence lead an ascetic life. Females, while having greater *Shakti* of their own, also acquire, in intercourse, the *Shakti* stored in the semen, thus further increasing their supply. Men are encouraged to perform asceticism; females, however, can increase their Shakti at a faster rate merely by being chaste wives. The chaste wife is a mother full of milk, the source of a woman's power in Tamilnadu. ... Thus she increases her power by letting her fluids flow freely.[28]

HINDU TEXTS PERPETUATE THE SANCTITY OF MOTHERHOOD

While the goddess Kamakshi has the name that signifies "eyes of desire",[29] the local goddess at Madurai is Meenakshi, the fish-eyed goddess. By linking the motif of the third breast and third eye we see that both have an element of power and eroticism. Meenakshi, aside from being subdued, as the loss of the third breast would indicate, is also cast in the role of the mother. Both her powerful aggression as the woman-king and warrior, as well as her sexual potential have become diverted into asexual energies and functions, as mother to the

male god Muruga. The kingship in turn passes to this male god. The myth appears to vindicate the (female) gender of Meenakshi, earlier bemoaned by her father, by having her bring forth a (male) child. And, as Meenakshi in the text proclaims, Siva has saved the Pandya royal line from extinction.[30] Meenakshi, although herself not the male heir that her father desired, as divine mother begets the male heir to the throne of the Pandyan dynasty.

Shulman refutes the metaphysical interpretation of Meenakshi's eyes as being the support of the world, as being a late exegete of the epithet Meena-*akshi*. However, I found that as far as the devotees at Madurai are concerned, the name Meenakshi refers to the analogy of the mother fish that takes care[31] of her babies. Several informants told me that "just as the mother fish causes the eggs that she has laid to hatch merely by looking at them, so too Meenakshi can grant us her grace and self realisation if she merely looks at us." I found that it is this particular exegesis of the name of the goddess that further helps to unpack just who the queen Tatatakai has become transformed into. Meenakshi's eyes are not the erotic eyes of the goddess Kamakshi and her eyes are not directed sexually towards her spouse Siva. The gods themselves are said to possess unblinking eyes, which in Meenakshi's case come to epitomise the unblinking eyes of the fish, ever watchful of her children. Sri-Lakshmi's sidelong glances in Vaishnava theology is said to take in her husband as well as her devotees while it is these very sidelong glances that sustain the universal order. Meenakshi, however, has more immediate concerns and is seen as concerning herself with the welfare of her local devotees. Her eyes are not spoken of with regard to the sustenance of the universe. Her eyes are instead meant for her children, who come to be epitomised by her devotees in the city of Madurai. This is how the goddess has become traditionalised in the popular religious consciousness of lay and Brahmin devotee alike. As my informants would often say, "*Amman's* (mother's) mere gaze on us can grant us realisation." Tatatakai has become transformed into a mother and the theological import of the loss of the third breast is in a sense duplicated in the way the devotees

understand the meaning of the goddess's name. Marriage has served to turn the goddess into a mother. As a mother the connotation of her breasts and eyes are now functional in a maternal sense rather than in any sexual sense.

THE GODDESS MUST MARRY

Let us go back to the very starting point of the mythical narrative where king Malaydvaja Pandyan bemoans that the sacrifices have borne him a female child. In this drama, Indra, playing the Shaivite equivalent of the troublemaking Narada, out of jealousy contrives to prevent the king's performance of the hundredth sacrifice and instead advises the child bearing sacrifice (which produces a daughter instead of the desired son). By strongly articulating the king's wish for a male heir, the text weakens the position of Meenakshi. It is only when the celestial voice intervenes to inform the king that Tatatakai should be brought up as a male that Malaydvaja Pandyan is consoled. Even then Tatatakai as far as the *puranic* myth is concerned, is merely the temporary heir, until she marries. The paradox of female power in the context of goddesses is conveniently resolved in post Vedic Hindu theological texts by explaining that to be given female authority, "the goddess must have sons (the legitimating factor for a woman)..."[32]
Hindu sacred texts, like the marriage myth in the Madurai *tala purana*, can be viewed as having sacralised the act of marriage and the state of motherhood. The texts proclaim marriage to be a religious act and the process comes to be divinised. Notice the religiously loaded diction used in reference to marriage. *Velvi*, the Tamil word for 'sacrifice' is used as a synonym for marriage. The seat on which the married couple are to be seated is referred to as 'the sacrificial altar' (*veti*), and the covering over the area, is a 'temple'.[33] The bride is also made out to be entering into marriage with a god as the groom on the day of the wedding is treated with full rituals usually reserved for a deity.[34]

Deification comes to be connected to motherhood and the divine marriage in Madurai is used as paradigmatic for all earthly marriages. But rather than the gods ordaining it thus, that the woman must be married, it seems that the gods are made to speak the lines and play the characters that we have scripted for them, with us using them in turn as ideal types for humankind to emulate. One informant, referring to something else put it well when she said, "This is the way we want it to be, but the people will not listen unless we say that it is the god that wants it so."

Since most religious establishments, texts, rituals and in the context of Indian society, values even are sponsored and managed by males, it becomes easier to understand why it is that in religious texts the power structure between male and female throughout the corpus of brahmanic as opposed to folk mythology (which is for the most part an oral tradition) is almost always unequally balanced in the favour of the male.[35] The *tala puranic* text of Madurai is a good example of an androcentric bias seeking to offer the male god greater power over that of the goddess.

CONCLUSION

Marriage thus becomes the device by which Siva is domiciled to the spatial limits of the city of Madurai as it serves to keep the god Sundareshvara-Siva here. The goddess Meenakshi is said to attract the god to Madurai and in marrying her, Siva, who is traditionally understood to be without a lineage, is made to enter the lineage of Meenakshi. For in marrying her he also enters into an alliance with the royal family and her kingdom. This kingdom of subjects in turn come to be epitomised by the Madurai devotees. In this manner an alliance is formed between Siva and the local devotees who are now meant to see him as intimately related to them as he has taken his bride from their kingdom. Thus the divine marriage to the local goddess Meenakshi can be construed as a means by which the brahmanic tradition attempts to increase the power and hegemony[36] of

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the Sanskritic god Siva over the geographic and socio-religious space of Madurai while subordinating the powers of the goddess to that of the god.

Thus, divine marriage in the Madurai myth, firstly subordinates the goddess Meenakshi in order to perpetuate the male dominant patriarchal rule. Secondly, it serves to domicile Siva in the South thereby expanding his spiritual hegemony and kingdom beyond the northern regions. Thirdly, the marriage of Meenakshi and Sundareshvara is construed as elevating her status to goddess and Siva, in the form of Sundareshvara emerges as the local god. By the mere fact that this divine marriage takes place in the city of Madurai, it transforms the city into the realm of the gods and as such as being sacred. This way, the devotees of Madurai are able to claim Madurai as sacred space. The annual (very) public re-enactment of the divine wedding can be seen as a periodic reaffirming of the sacrality of the place where Siva has taken up his abode.

NOTES

[1] Robert Baird's discussion of Malinowski and his functionalistic view of religion in *Category Formation in the History of Religions.* Netherlands: Mouton & Co. N.V. 1971, p. 66.
[2] Ramanayya, N. V. 1992. *An Essay on the Origin of the South Indian Temple.* New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1981, p. 70.
[3] Shulman, David. D. *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Shaiva Tradition.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 140.
      Also in the *Lingapurana* it is said, "Siva takes the form of a baby to suck the anger from the breasts of the goddess after she has slain the demon Daruka" (*ibid.*, p. 235).
[4] This idea also finds its expression in the priests who, according to *agamic* prescription, have to be married. The priests interviewed all echoed that marriage was essential, as then they would have access to the woman's *Shakti* or her power.

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See also Shulman who states that the power which is located in the goddess or female, is contained within strict limits, just as the sacred forces residing in the shrine are bounded by the four walls (*ibid.*).

[5] Shulman, David D. "The Murderous Bride: Tamil Versions of the Myth of Devi and the Buffalo-Demon". *History of Religions: An International Journal For Comparative Historical Studies.* Vol. 16, No. 2, 1976, p. 203.

I believe that it is significant that the groom who eventually comes forward is blind, in other words is unable to see the three-breasted princess. Also blindness, the loss of vision, can be regarded as castration in some of the early Indian folk tales. See Shulman's discussion of the myth of Andhaka (*ibid.* p. 188).

[6] *ibid.* p. 204.

[7] Harman, William P. *The Sacred Marriage of a Hindu Goddess.* Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 51.

[8] Shulman, 1980, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-9. I did not pursue the question of Siva coming from the (Sanskritic) north with my informants as to most of the informants, lay and specialist alike, this 'fact' that Siva came from the north and married a southern 'woman' meant little, if anything.

I must add that for some of my informants' south India seemed to have a vastly different meaning in philosophical as well as in geographical terms. Everything geographically below the Himalayas, in other words to the south of these mountains, was south India or *Dakshina desham* (literally South country).

[9] Harman, *op. cit.* ,p. 51.

[10] ibid., p. 50. Also see Doniger O'Flaherty, Wendy, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Siva.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1973. She describes that when Siva approaches Himavant for Parvati he does so with words, perhaps not very well chosen to win over a prospective father-in-law; "I have no mother or father, nor any relatives or friends."

[11] Eck, Diana L. *Banaras: City of Light*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983, p. 148.

[12] Doniger O' Flaherty has done extensive work in this area. See Doniger O'Flaherty, 1973 *op. cit.*, Also for themes of seduction and rape on the part of Siva see Elmore, W. T. *Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism*. Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1984,

[13] Shulman, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

[14] As an inversion of this transfer of power exists the figure of the buffalo who is the epitome of power. Shulman claims that the buffalo figure fits in with the Mahisasura myth. This myth describes a transfer of power from the male to the goddess. Shulman notes that the male god in some parts of the Tamilnadu and Andhra, is Potu Raja, the Buffalo-King, who appears sometimes as the husband of the goddess. Note however, that in this instance, where power is transferred from the male to female, Potu Raja and the goddess are deities in the non brahmanical complex of divinities (*ibid.*, p. 187).

[15] Kinsley, David. *Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986, pp. 203-4.

[16] Shulman, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

[17] Hudson, Dennis D. "Two Citra Festivals In Madurai". In G. R. Welbon and G. E. Yocum (eds.) *Religious Festivals in South India and Sri Lanka : Studies on Religion in South India and Sri Lanka*. Delhi: Munshilal Manohar, 1982, p. 146. (endnote no 28)

[18] Ramanayya, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

[19] Shulman, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

[20] *ibid.*

[21] Meenakshi is accepted by the Shaiva religious community in Madurai as the sister of Vishnu. As such she brings together two rival sects. She begets Murugan, who in this context belongs to both the Shaiva as well as Vaishnava lineages. She does all this of course within the socially acceptable role of wife.

Dennis Hudson however, suggests a parallel for Meenakshi in the figure of the seductress Mohini (but a guise of Vishnu). Mohini

begets a child of Siva's from sexual relations outside marriage. The child is the deity Aiyanar who, in a strange way also unites Vishnu and Siva.

Another intriguing parallel is provided by Shulman where he talks about a multiform of the Meenakshi myth with that of the three breasted goddess at Nagapattam. Here the goddess loses her third breast upon seeing her husband, who in this myth is Vishnu(!) as opposed to Siva (Shulman, *op. cit.*, p. 205-6). For our purposes however the vital point of contrast between Meenakshi and Mohini is the manner in which they exercise their sexual relations.

[22] Ramanayya, *op. cit.*, p. 67. It should also be noted that Siva is not all Aryan, and is a god of mixed beginnings, part Aryan, part Dravidian.

[23] *ibid.*, p. 68

[24] See Shulman, who describes that the god's mating with the powerful virgin goddess leaves him vulnerable to her violent energy (Shulman, 1980, Op. cit.) and also (Kinsley, 1986, *op. cit.*).

[25] Shulman, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

[26] See also Doniger O' Flaherty who states that the "[T]he sacred Tamil woman is *procreative rather than erotic.*" Doniger O'Flaherty, Wendy. *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 246. (emphasis mine)

[27] *ibid.* p. 44

[28] *ibid.* p. 45

[29] Shulman, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

[30] Harman, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

[31] Shulman dismisses the version offered by Jouveau-Dubreuil that the mother fish offers comfort to the little fish merely by looking at them. Shulman acknowledges though, that this exegesis is meaningful to the worshippers. He nevertheless points us to the Pandyan kingdom's association with the "fish and sea" complex of symbols for the origins to the goddess's name (Shulman, 1980, p. 207).

While I accept this, I feel that the exegete put forward by Jouveau-Dubreuil is crucial to the local understanding of Meenakshi.

Certainly it was the very assured answer given to me by all my informants, religious specialist and lay person alike. This was the way that the devotees at Madurai perceived their goddess. Interestingly, none of them was able to explain the goddess's association to the fisher-king myth.

[32] Doniger O'Flaherty, Wendy. *Sexual Metaphors and Animal Symbols in Indian Mythology*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980a, p. 118.

[33] Harman, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

[34] *ibid.*

[35] Sharma, P. *Woman in Hindu Literature*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1995,

p. 56. See also O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger. *Tales of Sex and Violence*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981, p. 79. Flaherty states that "... the Vedic poet remarks of a sexually aggressive wife, ... The foolish woman sucks dry the panting wise man."

Another expression of this contrast suggests a distinction between high-ranking goddesses who are sexually controlled (and whose power lies in their husbands), and low-ranking goddesses or witches, who are sexually free and attack men (*ibid.*, p. 91).

[36] Harman, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

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TAXONOMY OF THE HINDU DIASPORA IN SOUTH AFRICA: PROBLEMS AND ISSUES IN DEFINING THEIR IDENTITY

Pratap Kumar

ABSTRACT

The present paper attempts to look at various criteria to develop taxonomy of the Indians in South Africa. Various classificatory categories have become part of this taxonomy, viz., indentured Indians vs. passenger Indians; South Indian vs. North Indians; Tamils, Telugus, Hindis, and Gujaratis; Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees, and so on. One could multiply this classification in many different ways. And the criteria used are dependent on what one would want to achieve. The criteria include colonial distinctions, culture, language, religion, politics and so on. While all these different classifications are possible, and the criteria being so variant, is it possible to talk about a monistic identity or a pluralistic identity? I shall outline some of the problems and issues involved in both the approaches, viz., the monistic and the pluralistic. The criteria for developing the categories are partly political and partly economical, and therefore it is imperative to understand the politics of the taxonomy of the Indian community in South Africa.

The first batch of Indians arrived in South Africa in 1860 mainly coming from South Indian origin. The second batch was brought from the Calcutta port mainly drawn from the North Indian locations. By

the 1870s the passenger Indians began to arrive. For the purposes of colonial documentation it mattered very little to identify the various groups in terms of their language, religion, caste etc. The fact that the first four ships that came from Madras did not contain any significant details about their caste and other backgrounds[1] demonstrates that the colonial record keepers were mainly concerned with the more pragmatic distinction between those who belonged to the indenture contract system and those who belonged to the commercial category. This categorization is aimed at safeguarding the economic concerns of the European community. This classification of indenture vs. passenger Indians is simply part of the larger colonial distinctions based on race and colour. Thus the Chinese, Malay and Indian labourers were part of the indenture system, and there were some Indians who were listed as passenger or commercial groups. All of these groups were distinguished from the Europeans and Africans on the basis of race and colour.

The distinction between the indenture Indians and the passenger Indians acquired special significance in the context of the economic programme of the European community during the colonial period. While the European community was interested in allowing the indenture Indians to come to South Africa to work for them in the sugar cane and other agricultural sectors, they saw the arrival of the passenger Indians with suspicion and as a possible threat to their economic progress.[2] In no uncertain terms the Natal farmers made several representations to the Government of India to stop the passenger Indians from coming to South Africa and requested only the indenture Indians.[3] The seriousness with which the Europeans addressed the issue of passenger Indians is evidenced from the way they demanded the passenger Indians, who came with Gandhi when he returned from India, be sent back. Gandhi was particularly targeted for attack as they saw him bringing more passenger Indians. However, on the other hand the British Government of India was willing to consider all Indians as equal subjects of the crown although from time to time they conceded to the pressures of the Europeans in Natal.[4] In

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other words, the distinction between the indenture Indians and the passenger Indians, to begin with, is based on economic considerations but gradually acquired political ramifications. Thus the Government of India had to be content with an incoherent situation namely, on the basis of colonial policy all subjects were to be treated equally, that is both Europeans and Indians. But on the basis of economic and political factors Indians were generally considered inferior to the Europeans. And once an inferior status was attributed to the Indians, they were further subjected to a second level of classification which distinguished between the indenture and the passenger Indians in an attempt to thwart the economic progress of the Indians in the new colony (e.g., introduction of the Asiatic Trading Bill).[5]

The distinction between the indenture Indians and the passenger Indians really meant that not only enterprising Indians from India were unwelcome but also the intentions of the Europeans became more and more apparent when they began to demand strict laws to control the mobility of the indenture Indians after their term was over for fear of the indenture Indians becoming involved in independent agricultural and other entrepreneurial pursuits.[6] In other words, a common distinction between Europeans and Indians on the one hand, and a special distinction between the indenture and the passenger Indians on the other hand is to be seen primarily as part of the colonial discourse which vigorously sought to advance the European interest in the colonies.[7] Although politically speaking the distinction between the indenture and the passenger lasted as long as 1911 when finally the Government of India stopped further immigration of Indians to South Africa and perhaps a little longer,[8] on a pragmatic level, however, the distinction ceased to make much sense long before that time since all indenture Indians, once free, began to pursue economic goals despite many political constraints.[9] Which means, although not all indenture Indians managed to pursue trading and other commercial interests, a great many of them began to organise themselves as small-scale traders selling vegetables and other produce which they began to grow on their relatively smaller farms. A few of them began to enter the

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service industry as plumbers, mechanics, carpenters and so on. Thus long before 1911 the indenture and passenger Indians cumulatively began to threaten the economic interests of the Europeans in varied degrees. It is precisely for this reason that henceforth the colonial discourse described the problems related to Indians in such generic terms as "Indian problem" as opposed to those of either indenture or passenger Indians separately. The reasons for this colonial attitude of initially dividing the Indians as indenture and passenger and later lumping them together under one generic head of "Indian problem" has to be understood within the context of colonial politics of dominance.

Interesting as it may seem, while the colonial discourse on Indians moved from a polarised picture to a unified one, a completely different picture was emerging within the Indian community as far as social taxonomy is concerned. As mentioned earlier, the distinction between indenture and passenger did not matter so much to the Indian community as it did to the Europeans. But what mattered to the Indian community in South Africa from the start was as to where they came from. Thus the initial boundaries were more general and took into consideration the northern and southern cultural distinctions. But this seems only superficial and more important distinctions were made later on the basis of language, caste and religion. As the Indian community began to grow and take root in South Africa, the more important social formations became apparent.

On the basis of language a distinction was made at least between four major groupings: Tamils, Hindis, Telugus and Gujaratis. This does not mean that there were no other linguistic groups. There were some Bengalis, Oriyans, Punjabis and Parsees *inter alia* on the north Indian side.[10] While the Parsees seemed to have maintained a distinct identity even though they were in very small number, the other north Indian linguistic groups seem to have merged into what has come to be known as Hindi-speaking group. In other words, the present so-called Hindi-speaking community is a differentiated group. The same

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occurred in the case of the south Indian grouping as well. There were Kannadigas, Malayalis, Telugus and Tamils on the south Indian side. Whereas the Kannadigas and Malayalis seem to have merged with the Tamil group, the Telugus have maintained their distinct identity.[11] Nevertheless, it must be noted that the case of the Telugus is a bit more complex. There were Telugus who came from Tamilnadu regions, viz., some of the Reddy and Naidoo communities. Although some of the Reddys and Naidoos have maintained their Telugu identity for the purposes of religion and culture, they pretty much follow the customs of the Tamils and to a large extent they have preserved Tamil as their home language instead of Telugu.[12] It is interesting to note that in the case of the Naidoo community, the spelling "Naidoo" is preserved for those who came from Tamil regions of south India and the spelling "Naidu" is used for those who came from the coastal regions of Andhra Pradesh.

Although the two broad categories, viz., north Indian and south Indian, consist of many internal differentiations, on cultural terms there seems to be coherence and homogeneity within the two groups. In other words, while the north Indian group is distinguished from the south Indian group in terms of cultural factors such as local customs of marriage, food, music and so on, there is a general sense of the two groups being Indian. In a recent study, T.K. Oommen made an important distinction between ethnicity, nationality and citizenship.[13] Whereas ethnicity and nationality are more parochial categories that apply to culturally and linguistically homogenous groups, citizenship is a category that applies to people who belong to a country either by birth or by naturalization process. In that sense, an Indian is one who is a citizen of India, a Bengali is a category of nationality based on language and a Naidoo or Reddy and such caste categories belong to one's ethnicity. If one were to take the term "Indian" to mean "a citizen of India", it ceases to have relevance in its application to those who formerly come from India and now live outside India. But in spite of many internal differentiations, the category "Indian" seems to have acquired certain ethnic qualities so as to allow identification of groups

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of Indian origin as "Indian." It is in this sense, that the north and south Indians living in South Africa retain a certain common identity as Indians. Within India, the distinction between north and south along geographical lines is an arbitrary one because it is not clear as to where exactly north and south are culturally separated. So, the terms north and south have less of geographical reference than ideological, cultural and political significance. However, in applying these two categories to South African Indians one has to be aware of the fact that these are not so commonly used terms of identity. Although for the sake of analytical convenience one might use them in the context of South Africa, sociologically speaking they do not have much on-the-ground reference points. What is present in the social taxonomy of South African Indians is that there are four culturally and linguistically coherent and homogenous groups (Hindis, Gujaratis, Tamils and Telugus).

This broad four-fold categorization of South African Indians is only the outward appearance of it. But once we begin to investigate further, each group reveals a whole range of sub-identities. Subtle indicators rather than conspicuous traits often reveal these sub-identities. These are partly based on caste consciousness, partly the villages or regions from where they originated in India, and partly the local customs and practices. What is interesting is that although the Indian community in South Africa has gone through a process of melting by assimilation and integration, many idiosyncratic features of various sub-groups in a major category are still visible. However, these subtle indicators need to be seen as part of their more private consciousness than their public consciousness. In other words, in more private and closed circles these factors of subtle importance are manifested. But in the context of the bigger grouping these factors tend to be downplayed. For instance, in more private circles, it might be important to talk about differences in marriage customs and food habits within any of the four groups. The outsider may not see them, but for a Gujarati member it is obvious as to who is a member of the washerman caste and who belongs to the higher rank within that social structure.

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Similarly a Hindi-speaking person would know the distinction between a Maharaj, a Motchi, and a Singh; a Tamil would know among which cognate castes they could have matrimonial exchange; a Telugu would know who among them would be traditionally considered the so-called "pariah". Although a great many of these subtle distinctions are becoming obliterated and the younger generation is disinterested in these, often when it comes to matters of custom and tradition, such as whether they should bury their dead or cremate them, these factors acquire social significance. During the first and second generations of South African Indians, the caste and other social boundaries were stronger than they are today. Many of the early social and community organizations were based on caste and other considerations.[14] But today caste as a denominator is largely absent among the South African Hindus, perhaps with the exception of the Gujarati community. The four groups that are identified within South African Indian community maintain their group identities and at the same time internally differentiate on matters of custom and tradition. As such, there is a certain amount of tension that exists within each group. The social politics of how these internal differentiations are manifested within each group is important to understand the constantly shifting concerns and commitment of their members.

The picture begins to change when one looks at the group formation in terms of religion. This is probably more complex than the other classifications. It is here that the boundaries of north-south and language begin to blur and give rise to new group formations. Broadly speaking, there are at least three major religious groups: Hindus, Muslims and Christians. There were certainly others such as Parsees who came later in the passenger group but they are not considered significant for statistical purposes in the colonial discourse. In the first couple of decades of immigration of Indians, the nomenclature of the groups is rather unspecific. For example in the colonial discourse Hindu did not necessarily refer to the religion called Hinduism as we understand it today. The word that was used in the ship lists was

"Gentoo" which seems to be a corruption of the word "Hindu" and it was used in the first four ships that came from Madras port almost synonymous with the caste category.[15] Whereas the north Indian groups were clearly identified with their caste names during the same period, the south Indian groups were referred to by broad categories such as "Gentoo", "Malabari", which meant Christians, and "Arabs" which meant Muslims.[16] It is only around late 1880s that a somewhat clear use of religious categories began to be used to identify the various religious groupings. The colonial discourse often conflated a certain region with the religion of the group that originated from there. But as people began to settle down in various parts of South Africa after their initial period during which the immigration conditions were met, the various groups began to manifest many internal differentiations. For instance, within the Hindu fold, there were primarily two major sub-divisions that became clear: those who worshipped Vishnu and his entourage of deities and those who worshipped Shiva and his affiliated deities such as Murugan, Mariamman, Draupadiamman, and other deities which are usually part of the rural villages in south India became merged with the south Indian Shiva worship.[17] The early temples of Natal depict distinctly these early formations, but by the turn of the century there was a clear attempt both in the temple rituals and in the architectural designs to integrate the various sub-divisions within the Hindu fold. So, today one finds the Vaishnava, Shaiva and village Goddess shrines built within the same complex. From the middle of the 20th century onwards, the various neo-Hindu group formations became significant. By the turn of the century the Arya Samaj was already active and by the mid 20th century the other groups such as the Saiva Siddhanta, the Ramakrishna Centre, the Divine Life and Satya Sai group were making significant impact on the lives of the Hindus, so much so that many Hindus began to identify themselves with these groups and have fixed allegiance to one or another of these groups. All of this has significantly altered the social formations within the Hindu group in the sense that these new group formations cut across language and region. However, one cannot exaggerate these new social formations

for these tend to be more tenuous and change unlike the linguistic identities, such as Hindi, Gujarati, Telugu and Tamil. Just as there is a tension within each linguistic group as mentioned earlier, there is also a certain amount of tension between a group's desire to go beyond its linguistic identity to form religious bond and its desire to maintain its linguistic identity. As such religious identity and linguistic/ethnic identities are often in conflict.

Again religious identity and linguistic/ethnic/class identity are in conflict in the case of Muslims also. The Gujarati Muslims are distinguished from the Muslims who came from other parts of India or the present Pakistan who spoke Urdu. Whereas Gujarati Muslims spoke Gujarati and maintained a distinct identity, the Urdu speaking Muslims were often regarded as not being on par with their counterparts from Gujarat. This perhaps has to do with the remnance of caste consciousness among the Gujarati Muslims even though in Islam there is no caste system. This caste consciousness seems to have been aggravated by the difference of social status between those who came as passengers/traders and those who came as indenture labourer. The recent row between Gujarati speaking Muslims and Urdu speaking Muslims to control one of the most important and wealthiest mosques in Durban is an indication of how social and class factors define ones identity.[18] Thus ethnicity and class seem to be important factors in the social formation within the Muslim community.

In the case of Christians, they formed about 5% of the initial immigrant Indians.[19] There were certainly conversions both during the colonial period but also during the last few decades for various reasons. Most significant reasons were to be traced to either economic factors or deep dissatisfaction toward their original religious community. This dissatisfaction toward their original religious community may be attributed to various factors such as a sense of not receiving adequate attention from their community in times of financial crisis, a breakdown in the family relations, health crisis and so on. Whatever the reasons might be, today there is a strong

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following of Christianity among the South African Indians. Both Christians and Muslims continue to make inroads into the Hindu community. However, the orthodox Hindu response has never been more resistant than it is today to the phenomenon of conversion. Since the World Hindu conference in July 1995, the Vishva Hindu Parishat and the Rashtriya Svayam Sevak Samaj have been vigorously opposing both the Muslim and Christian missionary efforts. This is bound to have a significant impact on the relations among Indians in general. This means, from the standpoint of the social formation among Indians in South Africa, Hindu-Muslim-Christian tension will become an important factor in the internal politics of the Indian identity. The shifting internal politics of the Indian community in South Africa will depend on how best this three fold tension is held in balance.

Let me make some general comments on the analysis that I have presented so far. The above analysis points out that the identity of the Indian community in South Africa is clearly pluralistic and any attempt to provide coherence to the notion of an Indian identity in South Africa would have to take into account the various competing ethnic and religious values of each sub-group as well as issues of gender. While the colonial discourse made distinctions between Indians against a general background of race and colour, the subsequent social distinctions that became important for the Indians themselves depended on ethnicity, which is characterised by language and culture. Religious identity often brought people across the boundaries of ethnicity, but remains very tenuous. As is implicit in my analysis, a theory of monistic identity is clearly problematic for it does not exist in any meaningful sense. On the other hand, a pluralistic identity is wrought with various competing values, which can hinder the progress of a community. However, what is significant is to recognise the pluralistic nature of the Indian community and the variegated nature of issues, and develop some pragmatic identity by mutual negotiation of the various competing values. Looking at the past history of the South African Indians, we see that this is precisely

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how the Indian community has survived in the diaspora throughout its history. In other words, the Indians who came to South Africa came from various backgrounds: linguistic, religious, cultural and social. However, the nature of the ritual integration among Hindus, commercial co-operation between Hindus and Muslims -- all demonstrate that the Indian is capable of negotiating the competing values in an effort to forge unity. To what extent the past remains an important pointer to the future direction of the Indians in South Africa depends on how the emerging inter-relations between various religious groups take shape and how gender issues, especially the rights of women are dealt with.[20] The emerging inter-religious relations among Indians cannot be naively set aside because they provide a window into the power politics of various social and religious forces among Indians. These emerging inter-religious relations are about social dominance, ritual control and ideological autonomy. Nor can one underestimate the resilience of South African Indian women and the tenacity with which they are forcing the society to take their issues seriously. As social scientists we ignore these important social transformations to the detriment of losing sight of a profound segment of history as it unfolds.

NOTES

[1] P. Kumar, *Hinduism in South Africa*. Durban: University of Durban-Westville, 1995, p. 8. (monograph).

[2] C.G. Henning. *The Indentured Indian in Natal 1860-1917*. New Delhi: Promilla & Co., Publishers, 1993, p. 81-82.

[3] Jagat K. Motwani & Jyoti Barot-Motwani (eds.) *Global Migration of Indians*. New York: National Federation of Indian-American Associations, 1989, p. 15; also see Joy Brain. "Natal's Indians: From Co-operation through Competition to Conflict". In (eds.) Andrew Duminy & Bill Guest. *Natal and Zulul and: From Earliest Times to 1910: A New History*. Pietermartizburg: University of Natal Press & Shuter and Shuter 1989, p. 261.

[4] Motwani *et al.*, *op.cit.*, p.19.

[5] *ibid.*

[6] Kumar, *op.cit.*, p. 3. By the end of the 1860s already many indentured Indians began to enter the agricultural sector as independent growers of vegetables and fruits.

[7] To the extent that these distinctions were in no way beneficial to the Indians, Gandhi was perhaps justified in being blind to the distinction between the indenture and the passenger and sought to unite them for a common cause. During the time of Gandhi, there was substantial opposition to Gandhi's political opinions from mainly the Colonial Born Indians who mainly comprised the Indenture Indians. Often the African Chronicle represented their views in opposition to the views expressed by the Indian Opinion, which was run by Gandhi and his colleagues.

As a result of the opposition from some Indian communities, Gandhi, in 1913 formed Natal Indian Association and the Natal Indian Congress was effectively divided as such. From then on Gandhi left the Natal Indian Congress and used Natal Indian Association as his political instrument. See B. Pachai. *The History of the Indian Opinion, its Origin, Development and Contribution to South African History, 1903-1914.* (Doctoral Thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria) Found in the Archive Year Book of SA, Oct., 11, 1962, p. 64.

[8] Brain, *op.cit.*, p. 269; also see Kumar, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

[9] As noted in f.n.7 above the indenture Indians began to turn their attention to free trading from the very start of their indenture. This is largely due to the folly of the indenture system itself which in away turned against the makers of the system. In essence, the system could not stop the enterprising spirit of the Indian, whether he came as a passenger or an indentured labourer.

[10] Kumar, *op.cit.*, p. 9-10.

[11] Ranji S. Nowbath et al. (eds.) *The Hindu Heritage in South Africa.* Durban: The South African Hindu Mahasabha, 1960, p. 18.

[12] Kumar, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

[13] T.K.Oommen. "Ethnicity, Nationality and Citizenship".

Unpublished lecture at the Indian Consulate in Durban, 1996.

[14] Kumar, *op.cit.*, p. 82f.

[15] The word seems to have derived from the Portuguese word "gentio"' meaning gentile. C.P. Brown, a European Telugu scholar contended that the word is of unknown origin and seems to have referred to Hindus of south Indian origin. For an elaborate discussion on the word "Gentoo" see *Book Printing: Contribution of European Scholars*, Appendix 1, pp. 225-235.

[16] Kumar, op.cit., p.8; also see Y.S. Meer. *Documents of the Indentured Labor: Natal 1851-1917.* Durban: Institute of Black Research, 1980.

[17] *ibid.* p. 25; also see Paul Mikula et al. *Traditional Hindu Temples in South Africa.* Durban: Hindu Temple Publications, 1982.

[18] Durban's Grey Street Juma Masjid Mosque is currently facing serious conflict between Gujarati Muslims who mainly control the mosque's financial affairs by virtue of them being the majority in the Trust Board, and the Urdu speaking Muslims whose origins go back to their indenture history.

Although the Urdu speaking Muslims are in the majority (60%), because of their social status they have been sidelined by the more affluent and socially higher caste Gujarati Muslims. The trust deed provides for nine members along sectarian lines: 5 Memons, 2 Surtees, 1 Koknee and 1 colonial born Indian (i.e., those who came under the indenture system). See "Row over mosque's class distinction" in *Sunday Tribune*, 14 Feb., 1999, p. 11.

[19] Y.S. Meer, *op. cit.*, p. 4ff.

[20] I have not been able to include in this analysis the identity of women. However, it must be noted that while religious matters are important in the shaping of the Indian identity, the gender issues are becoming equally important in the emerging scenario of the Indian identity. One rather important concern among social scientists, especially in the wake of the emerging feminist agenda in all matters of social concern, is the identity of women. Where do they fit in this broader problem of the Indian identity? These and many other

searching questions need some clarification in order to understand the Indian identity in South Africa.

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Response:

HUMAN RIGHTS AND HINDUISM: A RESPONSE

T D Chetty

ABSTRACT

In considering Dewa's[1] assertion that structural (caste)
inequality characteristic of Hindu society is
"contradicted by the most central features of Hindu
thought and culture", this paper attempts to explain the
aberration in terms of why a "spurious and misguided"
interpretation came to be. This is done within the context
of an historical materialist approach to religion and
inequality, contending that the pure spiritual tradition of
Hinduism cannot be separated from popular practice, by
means of which religion is defined for ordinary people
who were historically led to believe that caste inequality
was divinely ordained, such a belief serving the interests
of the ruling and dominant classes.

The inherently discriminatory, iniquitous and morally repugnant
practices of caste stratification leading to centuries of domination and
gain by higher castes in relation to the subordination and loss suffered
by the lower castes was recognised by the government of India in its
new constitution formulated in 1951 after independence from British
rule. The constitution based on principles of equality and social
justice, called for equal treatment for all citizens but in an apparent
contradiction proclaimed also that special privileges be made

available to untouchables and tribes who had historically suffered from the worst excesses of the Indian ruling classes. Such a provision was aimed at developing these two groups, the most oppressed and exploited social strata in Indian society by ensuring their representation in all the institutions of society, thereby addressing the vast historical imbalances which were bound to perpetuate in the absence of policy initiatives. These policy initiatives of the Indian government were aimed mainly at the application of quotas to ensure the participation of previously underrepresented groups in the spheres of politics and parliament, education and medicine, in schools and universities, and in the civil service. Almost fifty years later, the extent to which government policy, aimed at affirming underrepresented groups, has been successful is debatable. In numerous instances the granting of concessions to the lower castes was met with violent resistance by the high castes whose privileges were being eroded and their mindsets contested. And more importantly, despite a progressive government the caste system of social inequality remains largely intact.

I contend that "stateways cannot change folkways" (not on their own anyway). And that caste inequality, and the concomitant human rights violations, has persisted mainly because it is inextricably linked to Hinduism, or to what Hinduism means to ordinary people. This unequal state of affairs is tantamount to a denial of basic human rights to certain groups on the basis of ascribed criteria viewed as being divinely ordained.

Dewa[2] has asserted that "the notion of hierarchical caste structures, with their absolute denial of vertical social mobility, and the consequent relegation of vast millions of individuals to second class citizenship, is a notion that is contradicted by the most central features of Hindu thought and culture. It is a further contention that the principle of Transcendent Spiritual Unity (TSU) is the source and foundation for the values of interpersonal love and fellowship which is in turn not inconsistent with the modern concept of human rights. It is

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concluded that "since all creatures have equally originated from one Godhead, social equality among all persons must be seen to be a fundamental religious proposition in Hinduism" and that the "conventional system of caste hierarchy... is a spurious and misguided version of the most fundamental spiritual tradition of Hinduism."

Whilst Dewa's contentions may be true from a purist and philosophical point of view, religion "is defined as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things"[3] Glock and Stark[4] have defined religion as "an institutionalised system of symbols, beliefs, values and practices focussed on questions of ultimate meaning." More recently, Tischler[5] defined religion "as a system of beliefs, practices and philosophical values shared by a group of people, it defines the sacred, helps explain life and offers salvation from the problems of human existence." Common to all these definitions and most others contained in social science texts are the notions of belief and practice. They are inextricably linked and both carry the weight of supernatural sanction as Nur Yalman[6] asserts... "caste is common to all Hindu India." Implicit in such an assertion is that caste is a feature of social life inextricably linked to Hinduism.

As is often stated, and is particularly relevant in the case of the caste system, the truth is less important than what people perceive to be the truth. It is this perception of what is true that has practical and real consequences for people's daily lives. In Hindu India, people were led to believe that the structural inequalities emanating from the caste system were as a result of Hindu divine injunction. As Dewa[7] concedes, "the Veda discloses nothing with regard to caste structures apart from the mere *naming of the castes* and their mysterious origin from the being of the Godhead" (emphasis mine). The significance here is that by naming the castes, holy scripts provide a legitimisation of its existence in an uncritical manner. And as Post[8] elaborates in his work "Spiritual Foundations of Caste," the principles of caste structures are evident in the *Dharmasutras* and the *Dharmasashtras*. The links between casteism and the divine are further accentuated in

the Rg Veda where as Dewa notes, the *Purusha Sukta* hymn states: "from the Universal Person issued *Brahmana* (from the mouth), the *Rajanya* (from the arms), the *Vaishya* (from the thighs), and the *Shudra* (from the feet), describes the source of societal divisions. The apparent dichotomy therefore between, spirituo-cosmic and socio-religious modes of life is only of academic, analytical value, meaning very little to lay people who understand religion as ritual, as prayer, and as inducing an appropriate emotional state. Together with these three elements, Tischler[9] adds belief and organisational structure as the fundamental elements of religion.

Probably the strongest link between the caste system and Hinduism is to be found in the theological notions like *karma* and *dharma* which have contributed significantly to the strengthening of the ideas of hierarchy and inequality which is inherent in the caste system. As Srinivas[10] explains, the idea of karma teaches a Hindu that he is born in a sub-caste because he deserves to be born there. The actions he performed in a previous incarnation deserved such a reward or punishment, as the case might be. If he had performed better actions in his previous incarnation he would have been born in a higher caste. Thus the caste hierarchy comes to be an index of the state of an individual's soul. It represents certain milestones on the soul's journey to God.

According to Srinivas[11] the concept of *dharma* may be defined as "that which is right or moral." The existing moral code is identified with *dharma*. Anyone accepting the caste system and its rules is living according to *dharma* whereas the person who questions them us violating *dharma*. Living according to dharma is rewarded, while violation of *dharma* is punished, both here and hereafter. Srinivas notes that "if he observes the rules of *dharma*, he will be born again in his next incarnation in a high caste, rich, whole and well endowed. If he does not observe them he will be born in a low caste, poor, deformed and ill endowed. Worldly position and success indicate the kind of life a man led in previous incarnation."

Belief in *karma* and *dharma* thus serve to stabilise and legitimise the caste hierarchy. But all societies are socially stratified and have always been throughout recorded history. In every society, it is also true, that institutionalised inequality is linked to religious beliefs and practices.

Slave owners in the Southern states of America often approved of the conversion of slaves to Christianity, believing it to be a controlling and gentling influence. Even Apartheid South Africa experienced attempts by white theologians to justify segregation biblically. As Nosipho Majeke[12] asserts, before formal apartheid, in order to understand the "vast network of missionary activity...we must view it as part of a great historical movement, the expansion of capitalism."

Religion from a historical materialist perspective, dulls pain and oppression in the following ways:

1. It promises paradise in life after death and compensation for injustice.

2. It makes a virtue of the suffering produced by oppression. Coping with the deprivation of poverty with dignity and humility will be rewarded in the life hereafter.

3. It justifies the social order and a person's place within it.

4. It offers the hope of supernatural intervention to solve the problems on earth.

Abstract conceptions of right and justice are represented as being independent of actual social relationships. This is clearly the case in Hindu social formations characterised by *varna* and *jati* whereby discriminatory and abhorrent practices were legitimised because of the Brahmanic obfuscation of the human rights practices so essential to Hindu philosophy. Such obfuscation, either a conscious or

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unconscious process, was facilitated by the separation of equality, fairness and social justice from the real world, with these concepts being mere abstractions.

Millions of people are still trapped within a system they believe they have no hope of changing. Government intervention and policy initiatives to overcome it may actually strengthen the system. The caste system has effectively neutralised all attempts to change it, with Christians and Muslims, for example being treated as castes themselves. For as long as ordinary people view it as part and parcel of Hinduism it will continue to do so. Therein lies the challenge to Hindus.

NOTES

[1] Dewa, HG. "Human Rights and Hinduism". In *Nidan*, Vol. 8, 1996, pp. 69-102.
[2] *ibid.*, p. 69.
[3] Durkheim, E. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press. (First published in 1915), 1954.
[4] Glock, C.Y. & R Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension.* Chicago: Rand Mcnally, 1965.
[5] Tischler, H.L. *Sociology* (Fifth Edition). Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1996.
[6] Yalman, N. On the Purity of Women in the Castes of Ceylon and Malabar. The Curl Bequest Prize Essay, 1961, p. 25.
[7] Dewa, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
[8] Post, K.W. *Spiritual Foundations of Caste.* Sivaram, K. (ed.) *Hindu Spirituality*. London: SCM Press, 1989.
[9] Tischler, *op. cit.*
[10] Srinivas, M.N. *The Caste System in India.* In Beteille. A (ed.) *Social Inequality*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974, (pp. 265-272), p. 266.
[11] *ibid.* p. 267.

[12] Majeke, N. *The Role of Missionaries in Conquest.* Cumberwood: Apdusa, 1986, p. 1.

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Articles should relate to the study of any aspect of Hinduism. As such, the study of Hinduism is broadly conceived to include, not merely the traditionally recognised areas within the discipline, but includes contributions from scholars in other fields who seek to bring their particular worldviews and theories into dialogue with Hindu Studies. Articles that explore issues of history, ecology, economics, politics, sociology, culture, education and psychology are welcomed.

Papers will be subject to evaluation by referees drawn from a source of local and international scholars.

Papers should be prefaced by an abstract of approximately 100 words, setting out the gist of the paper. The article itself should not exceed 6000 words.

Gender discrimination should be avoided, unless it is necessary for the sense intended.

Notes should be rendered at the end of the paper and *not* as footnotes.

The author's full name, address, qualifications and present position must be supplied on a separate page.

Each paper must be accompanied by a signed declaration to the effect that the article is the original work of the author.

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