INDIAN PEOPLE IN NATAL

by

HILDA KUPER

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Lighting a lamp at the Festival of Lights
Photo by Mickey Padayachee

DEDICATED TO THE INDIAN PEOPLE

who over a period of one hundred years have settled in South Africa, helped to build it, and regard it as their home.

Freedom from activity is never achieved by abstaining from action. Nobody can become perfect by merely ceasing to act.

—From the BHAGAVAD-GITA.

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The Indians first migrated to Natal in 1860 and it is fitting that this book, published one hundred years later, be dedicated to them and their descendants. My work among the Indians has been an enriching personal experience and I deeply appreciate the kindness, tolerance and friendship shown me.

DURBAN, 1959.

INTRODUCTION

THE FIELD MATERIAL on which this book is written, was collected in Durban, in the Province of Natal, the smallest of the four provinces of the Union of South Africa. Bound on the north, south and west by the three other provinces—the Transvaal, Cape and Orange Free State—Natal opens its eastern gateway on the Indian Ocean through the port of Durban.

The city grew round its fine natural harbour and magnificent open bay, and drew strength from the surrounding countryside. The wide coastal belt, with its sub-tropical climate, constant humidity and rich soil proved ideal for the cultivation of sugar cane, exotic fruits and other crops; and from the midlands came maize, dairy products and coal. Moreover, Durban is the port nearest the Witwatersrand, the main industrial area of South Africa, and over the past forty years has handled more cargo than all the other Union ports taken together.[1]

Durban has become the third largest city of South Africa, with a total population of nearly half a million. Characteristic of Natal as a whole, and of Durban in particular, is the relatively large number of Indians. Of the total Indian population of the Union (366,664 according to the 1951 Census), approximately 80% are in Natal, and 40% in Durban.[2] This concentration in one province is not the Indians' choice, but the result of legislation restricting their movement from one province to another. Their domicile in Durban is more voluntary; urbanisation was accelerated by new economic opportunities over the past thirty years, so that in 1951 almost half the Natal Indian population was living in Durban, the major city of the Province.

[1] Kuper, Watts and Davies, *Durban: a study in racial ecology*, 1958, p. 43. This study provides a wealth of background material for any sociological study of Durban.

[2] In 1956, the Bureau of Census and Statistics estimated that the total number of Indians in the Union of South Africa had increased to 421,000 of whom 205,700 were in Durban.

In Durban, the population consists of roughly equal numbers of Europeans (Whites, Africans (natives of Africa) and Asians (mainly Indians), and a much smaller group of Coloureds, (descendants of white and non-white miscegenation). The Indian population is young, the birth rate is high, and there is a trend for Indians to increase more rapidly than Europeans and Africans. This is used as the basis of much anti-Indian propaganda by Whites who constantly express a fear of being 'swamped'.

Indian influences are more marked in Mombasa, Beira and other towns up the east coast of Africa than in Durban. This may be partly because most South African Indians were indentured labourers who severed the cord with India and followed leaders who deliberately emphasised the value of being "South Africans" rather than "Indians". It may also be partly because the large white settler population of South Africa, determined to retain a Western tradition and stand as a bulwark against the East, steadily monopolised political power.

Yet much of Indian culture is evident in Natal, giving the Province a unique colour and variety. In Durban itself Indian women are distinctive in vivid saris; mosques and temples break the line of colonial architecture with minarets and domes adorned with statues of the Hindu pantheon; shops are stocked with silks, brassware and spices; in the "Indian markets", which are among Durban's main tourist attractions, stalls are crammed with oriental jewelry and trinketry, with a variety of lentils, rice, beans and oils, with betel leaf and areca nut, lime, camphor, incense sticks, with currie powders, *masala*, all kinds of fruits and herbs, as well as with more familiar goods which themselves become unfamiliar in the excited atmosphere of oriental bargaining.

In Durban, as in most South African cities, the contact between the races is restricted primarily to business; on the personal side there is relatively little contact and this is deliberately avoided by residential separation on a partly voluntary, partly compulsory basis. The majority of Africans are housed in segregated "locations" or in barracks or shacks; Indians have had their rights of occupation and ownership of houses limited to certain areas; Coloureds live among the Indians or on the

periphery of European settlements; Europeans try to live with themselves.

The present residential distribution is strongly influenced by the topography of the city and the fact that the Europeans are the politically and economically privileged group: most homes situated on the seaward facing hills and ridges belong to Europeans, and most non-Europeans live in the humid alluvial flats or inland areas cut off from the fresh sea breeze.[1]

This ecological pattern was complicated by the fact that many non-Europeans moving from rural areas bought land and built shacks on the outskirts of the city in which they had come to make a living; and these peri-urban areas were incorporated in 1932 when the Old Borough of Durban extended its boundaries, trebling the size of the city and increasing its population from 126,020 to 219,830, of whom more than 50,000 of the newcomers were Indian. Later, needing more land, for residential or industrial development, wealthier white city dwellers encircled and penetrated the non-European settlements. These settlements remained relatively distinct.

Though, after being incorporated into the Borough, the occupants paid rates on the same scale as Whites, the roads, lights, water and sanitary services in their areas were generally left conspicuously inferior, reflecting the exclusion of non-Europeans from the municipal voters roll. Non-European residential areas can also be distinguished from European suburbs by the juxtaposition of rich and poor. Not free to choose where to build, Indians of widely different standards often live side by side, and while some Indian areas boast a large number of solid bungalows, in others rows of wood and iron shacks inflict the impression of unalleviated poverty. But in virtually every so-called Indian area disparate standards are to be found, and wealthy Indians cannot by-pass the hovels as effectively as Europeans secluded in middle class suburbia.

Shortage of houses, a chronic disease of many urban centres, is suffered in Durban primarily by the non-European working class. In 1920, responsibility for housing the poorer section of the people was placed on the local authority but, especially with the increase of the peri-urban shack-dwellers of 1932, the

[1] *Ibid.*, Chapter IV.

number of people needing houses piled up. Officials of the Durban Corporation estimate the present housing needs of the Indian as 23,000 dwelling units. Roughly 15,000 Indians live in officially provided segregated dwellings of varying quality; the majority are squeezed in eight predominantly Indian occupied areas and small numbers are scattered in European suburbs.

Probably among all sections in South Africa, and definitely among the Indians, a house is the foremost symbol of security and prestige. It is for a house of his own that an Indian saves, works and plans. With large families, legal restrictions on movement and generally with little money for outside pleasures, the house becomes the main economic and emotional investment. An Englishman's home is his castle, an Indian's home is his shrine. In Hindu homes, and Hinduism is the dominant idiom of South African Indian life, the hearth is sacred, ritual plants are grown in the yard, a special room or part of a room is used for regular family prayers. Homes have remained in the same families for two and three generations and most families are not willing to be uprooted.

A house in an Indian area is never an isolated dwelling; it is integrated into the street, neighbourhood and community. Kinsmen often live near each other, affairs of neighbours arouse the gossip that controls the moral standards of the whole area; temples and schools are subscribed by local donations and become local and public meeting places; shops give credit to the families in the area; the local community develops an in-group awareness expressed in a number of local associations.

The existing pattern of Indian areas may be radically changed by the Group Areas Act of 1950, one of the main *apartheid* laws of the Nationalist Government. Under the Act, by a proclamation gazetted for Durban in June, 1958, many of the long established Indian communities are threatened with wholesale removal. Most of the built-up area of Durban is proclaimed for European ownership and occupation. The Indians, the only non-European group owning a considerable amount of landed property, will lose homes, schools, and places of public worship. No provision is made in the Act for alternative accommodation or amenities, and the new areas to be allotted to the Indians are outside the city and barren of development. If the plan first put forward by

the City Council is implemented, it is estimated that between 54,000 and 62,900 Indian men, women and children will be uprooted. However, the Council itself confronted by the economic burden of its own proposals, has since suggested various amendments and the final decision, which rests with the Nationalist Government, is uncertain.

The Indians' foothold in South Africa is precarious and their outlook reflects this insecurity. Indians interpret the Group Areas Act as an attempt to ruin them economically and thus drive them out of South Africa. They are organising against the implementation of the Act through Indian Ratepayers Associations, Vigilance Committees and political organisations, and have held protest meetings throughout the country. These meetings have a strong Gandhi quality: protest opens with prayers, expressions of hatred against the Whites are rare, violence is condemned. Acutely sensitive to rejection by White South Africa, yet unwilling to move from the country in which most of them were born (i.e. South Africa) to start their struggles for homes elsewhere, some refrain from any positive action by resigning themselves to "fate" or "the will of god". Some professing Hindus believe suffering is the result of sins individually committed in a past as well as in the present life, and the greater their troubles the heavier their burden of guilt.

My field work was slanted towards the family, its structure and values, by my association with the Family Research unit of the Institute of Family and Community Health whose Director, Professor Sidney Kark, was carrying out a series of studies in growth and development in different racial groups in South Africa. He and his team of colleagues realised the necessity of anthropological knowledge in dealing with people of varied culture, and while material was already available on Africans and Europeans, there was little on the South African Indian apart from economic or historical studies and political reports. "The Indian" was "a problem", not a person.

The findings of the Family Research Unit had revealed significant differences between the races by medically standardised indices: weight, height, maturation, incidence of diseases, mortality rates. Thus the crude mortality rates, neo-natal mor-

tality rates and infant mortality rates were lower for Indians than for Africans or Coloureds with the same basic environmental handicaps of poor housing and low income.[1] This "Indian anomaly" posed the problem: was there a genetic factor involved, perhaps an adaptation through centuries of malnutrition, or could it be related to certain compensatory cultural factors, such as better care of the child, a wider selection of foods, a greater control of the body through religion, or other social techniques of conditioning. At this stage of research they could give no definite answer, but thought that a knowledge of the Indian way of life might yield certain useful leads.

Fieldwork was carried out largely in three different Indian areas—Merebank, Springfield and Newlands. Merebank was officially condemned as an urban slum in 1943[2]; Springfield includes the best Corporation Housing Schemes; Newlands is a peri-urban area falling just outside the Durban municipal boundary and under a local Health Commission. These three areas were chosen because each was served by personnel trained at the Institute of Family and Community Health who, as part of their programme of social medicine, collected data of sociological relevance. The original plan was for me to concentrate on Merebank, but the first question raised was "How far is Merebank representative of other Indian settlements?" With virtually nothing known of the social organisation and culture of South African Indians, I decided that it was necessary to get a more general picture than Merebank could provide.

The Indians, though only 3% of the total population of the Union of South Africa, are probably more diversified in religion, language, place of origin and culture than any other section of South Africa's multi-racial population. 'The Indians' include Hindus, Moslems, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, Zoroastrians and agnostics; speakers of at least five Indian vernacular languages (Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Hindi and Urdu), each with South

[1] Kark, S. L., and Chesler J.. "Survival in Infancy. A comparative study of Stillbirths and Infant Mortality in certain Zulu and Hindu communities in Natal", *South African Journal of Laboratory and Clinical Medicine*, 1956, No. 2.

[2] In 1959, after long and complicated negotiations with Indians in the area and from outside, the Durban City Council started the building of new houses.

African variations, as well as English, Afrikaans and one or two Bantu languages. They encompass a small intellectual elite and several thousand illiterates; there is a politically sophisticated leadership and a politically untutored mass engulfed in the struggle of daily existence; they range from business men, professionals, market gardeners and skilled workers to semi-skilled and unskilled labourers.

My first informants stated that the major cultural division ran on religious lines, and I decided to concentrate on the Hindu since they constituted 74% of the Durban population (according to the 1951 Census), and over 90% of the population in the three selected areas. The Hindus themselves are culturally diversified, with differences particularly marked between Tamil and Telugu speakers originally from the south of India, and Hindi and Gujarati speakers who came from north and central India. Being limited by time and personnel, I worked mainly among the Tamil and Hindi speaking Hindu only.

An anthropological study of Durban Indians raised two fundamental methodological problems: firstly the adequacy of traditional anthropological concepts and tools developed for the study of small scale homogeneous societies; secondly, the relevance of a knowledge of the traditional customs and ideologies of the people selected for study in the urban context. The way I tried to deal with these problems will emerge from the presentation of the material. Previous field experience of an African nation,[1] already part of a wider political, economic and religious system, had made me aware that to isolate any part, and then treat it as if isolated, would produce a sociological distortion, and this was even more obvious in studying Indians in the modern urban society of Durban. Neither Merebank, nor Springfield nor Newlands were comparable to an isolated tribe or to a village in India which could be studied as "a little whole" or "a world in itself".[2]

[1] Kuper, H. *An African Aristocracy*, 1947; *The Uniform of Colour*, 1947.

[2] Vide Srinivas, M. N. 'The Social Structure of a Mysore Village', *Economic Weekly*, 1951, 3, pp. 1051-56; 'Village Studies', *Economic Weekly*, 1954, 6, pp. 605-9. Gough, K. 'The Social Structure of a Tanjore Village, *Economic Weekly*, 1952, 4, pp. 531-36. Marriott, McKim 'Social Structure and Change in a U.P. Village', *Economic Weekly*, 1952, 4, pp. 869-74. *Village India*, ed. McKim Marriott, Chicago, 1955.

There was also the question of the relationship of South African Indians with India culturally as well as historically. I began my field work with little knowledge of traditional Indian culture; I was not interested in the culture of India, but of South African Indians, and only in so far as their background positively affected their present activities and outlook was that background relevant for my study. I assumed that, since 95% of South African Indians were born in the province of Natal (1951 Census), their ancestral way of life would be of little importance, but I was soon made aware that much of the cultural content in urban and rural areas was consciously and deliberately derived and selected from traditional Indian sources. The social system of India, particularly caste and village organisation, had been replaced by the social system of their immediate South African milieu with its class structure and competitive individual economy, but many of the more personal values were extraneous and distinct from the values of the dominant white group.

While I strongly support the viewpoint that an anthropologist should speak the language of the people studied, it was impossible for me to master the many languages of South African Indians. For a time I studied Hindi, but the language taught by my *guru*, a South African *Brahmin* well versed in Sanskrit literature, was "too high" for the man in the street and I never became fluent in it or in the South African patois usually called Hindustani and not Hindi. Fortunately the majority of my informants had a working knowledge of English and a small number spoke no other language. It was mainly with old people, particularly women, that I needed interpreters. Readers may wonder why then so many vernacular words appear in the book. The reason is that they were usually used by informants when it was difficult to find an English equivalent. Orthography has been a further problem—to use Indian scripts would have increased confusion, and frequently the same words are spelt differently by equally educated informants who write 'in English'.

The material in this book is organised into three sections: Part I deals with the back-ground of South African Indians, the rise of a non-caste elite and the associations that have developed; Part 2 discusses kinship among Durban Hindu from the angle

of structure, behaviour and ritual; Part III is limited to public cults and health.

I am very conscious that, in attempting to cover so wide a field in a short space, the book falls between the interests of the layman and the specialised interests of anthropologists. My hope, however, is that, being the first work of its kind among South African Indians, it will be of some value to both sets of readers and of use to future students in this fascinating, and difficult, field.

It is not easy for me to write an anthropological book on South African Indians. Their position in the country is so insecure that some of them expressed anxiety at a book which discussed their way of life as being in any way different from that of white South Africans. Others were eager that the material be presented in such a way as to show the richness of *traditional* Indian culture as a contribution to the culture of all South Africans. There were however, some who considered that it was useful to know how their people were living not in an unreal present or an idealised past, but in a constantly changing society described at a particular period of time. Even during the period of my research the situation was changing—politically and economically the position of the Indian deteriorated between 1953 and 1957, and with growing insecurity there emerged on the one hand a compensatory resurgence of pride in traditional culture, and on the other a more positive claim than ever before to assert their rights as South Africans. I have tried to be an impartial recorder of trends and customs. All names used in case-illustrations are fictitious.

It is clear from publications and discussions with colleagues overseas[1] that there are many parallels between the position of Indians in South Africa and other countries outside India, more particularly Fiji, Mauritius, Ceylon, and, to some extent, East Africa. It is hoped to draw these parallels in a future volume; in this book the material is limited, and no comparisons are made.

[1] Drs Adrian Mayer, Burton Benedict, Stephen Morris and David Pocock.

PART I

CHAPTER I

Selective Migration

INDIAN IMMIGRATION to South Africa was a selective process in which certain individuals and categories of people, reacting to specific pressures in their homeland, were induced to migrate by the promise of future rewards. Their migration had the appearance of voluntary choice; in fact, the opportunity to migrate was legally and socially restricted and controlled.

Migration from India has a long history. From the time of Gautama Buddha (circa 500 B.C.) till the end of the 10th Century A.D., India had been the centre of a great cultural and trade expansion towards the South East of Asia, and also along the East Coast of Africa as far as Zanzibar. While the higher caste Hindus were forbidden by the Institutes of Manu[1] from residing outside the land of their birth on penalty of excommunication, the prohibition appears to have been ritually circumvented in the interests of commerce for several centuries. Nor did it apply to Moslems and lower caste Hindus.

Migration of all Hindus came to a temporary standstill in the 11th Century when the rapid and forceful advance of Islam threatened to overwhelm Hindu India, but it became intensified under British rule in the 19th Century when slavery was abolished and other labour was sought to take the place of slaves in French, British and Dutch territories. The 'indentured system' served as an alternative to slavery, and provided the workers with certain

[1] Dated by Macdonnell between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D., but founded on material of an earlier date (Hutton, J. H., p. 64, quoting Macdonell, A. A., *India's Past*, 1927).

limited safeguards. Large numbers of indentured Indians were sent to the sugar producing colonies of Mauritius, British Guiana and the West Indies, and when the European sugar planters of Natal pressed their claim for labourers, the British government (in England and India) after lengthy negotiations with the Natal authorities assented, in 1859, to their request. Natal was populated by the Zulu, but these proud military people were not yet prepared to sell their labour for long stretches of time to white men whose economy and whose values were alien to their own.

The first batch of indentured Indians arrived in 1860 on contracts of service for a period of three (later five) years, after which they became automatically "free". As "free" Indians, they could remain in Natal or receive a free return to India; or they might indenture for a further period of five years service, after which they had the option of a free passage back to India or a piece of Crown land in lieu of the fare.

Thus the Indians first came to Natal as a result of persistent demands for cheap and reliable labour by a group of Europeans who had preceded them by less than 40 years. While the recruiting was initially for the sugar plantations, it was seen to be sufficiently profitable to be extended to railways, dockyards, coal mines, municipal service and domestic employment.

So great was the early desire of white employers for a steady flow of indentured Indian labour that for close on 25 years (1874-1897) the Natal Government contributed £10,000 per annum from public funds towards the cost of 'importing' its human 'consignment'.[1] Apart from a period of eight years (1866-1874), indenturing continued until 1911, when the British-Indian government stopped further indenture owing to a divergence in viewpoint with the South African Colonial government on the rights of 'free Indians' and especially the absence of a guarantee that Indians would be accepted as permanent citizens after the expiration of their indentures.[2] Though the promise of Crown land to those freed indentured who had served their ten years in South Africa had been withdrawn in 1891 while the

[1] The words in quotation marks appear (without quotation marks) in official reports of the Protector of Indian Immigrants.

[2] Report of the Protector of Indian Immigrants, 1912, p. XI. For a full historical analysis, see M. Palmer, *The History of the Indians in Natal*, 1957.

offer of a free passage back to India remained open, the majority, for reasons that will become apparent later in this study, chose to settle in South Africa.

Distinct from the indentured, was a second, smaller stream of immigrants, generally described as 'passenger Indians', who entered the country under the ordinary immigration laws, and at their own expense. The majority came specifically to trade or serve in commerce, and they opened up shops in backward rural towns, coal mine towns, African tribal areas and a few developed European centres in Natal. They supplied goods desired not only by the Indian masses but also by Africans and Europeans.

European colonists steadily opposed the immigration of passenger Indians. Initially their entry was limited indirectly by a Natal Government Act of 1897 which provided that persons not already domiciled in the Colony, who were unable to write out and sign an application in a European language, would be regarded as Prohibited Immigrants. In 1913 restrictive immigration was directed explicitly against Indians. In that year the Immigrants Regulation Act passed by the Government of the Union of South Africa, gave the Minister of the Interior power to prohibit the entry of any persons, either as a class or individually, deemed as undesirable on economic grounds. Deeming orders, declaring all Asiatics undesirable in terms of the requirements of the Union as a whole and of each of the Provinces, have subsequently been issued by each Minister on assuming office. The final step was taken in 1953, when the South African government prohibited the entry of wives, married outside the Union, and children born to them, with effect from the 10th February, 1956, except in cases where special permission is obtained from the Minister.

An official distinction continues to be drawn between 'free' and 'passenger' Indians. The 'free', like their indentured forbears, are registered under a separate law in the Office of the Protector of Indian Immigrants, and are subject to separate registration of marriages, births and deaths. The passengers register with the same Civil Authorities as the European population in the Province. Of the total Indian population of Natal

the passengers constitute not more than ten per cent.[1]

The indentured Indians were desired as long as they fitted into the role of labourers and menials; once they were 'free', they were identified with the passengers as potentially dangerous economic competitors. This fear is expressed in the numerous laws that restrict their entry into the country and limit their economic and political opportunities. For over fifty years South African governments have been trying by every means short of direct compulsion to "repatriate" the Indians. Under various "assisted emigration schemes" dating from 1914, bonuses have been offered,[2] but even these failed to draw off more than a limited number.[3] To the majority repatriation spelt expatriation.

The work required from the indentured was strenuous and exacting, and the recruiters sought people who were young and physically fit.[4] The indentured were very rarely more than thirty years old, and the vast majority were between twenty and twenty-five years. Before being allowed to embark each volunteer was medically examined, the unfit were rejected and a detailed report was submitted on those who were accepted. Where possible the 'Coolies' were 'fed-up' before embarking. While on board, a Medical Superintendent was in charge, and on landing, the immigrants had again to pass through a health inspection. Those who were 'unfit for labour' were detailed to special hospitals, or sent back to India. The reports on each boatload

[1] Statistical Report of the Protector of Indian Immigrants, 31st March, 1953. In the Transvaal, the population is largely of 'passenger' origin, but there are also many 'time expired' indentured Indians who migrated from Natal.

[2] Under Act 22, 1914, any Indian could receive a passage to India at the expense of the Union Government, and in cases of indigency a grant from £1 to £5. In 1921 (following the Asiatic Enquiry Commission) this inducement was increased to a bonus of £5 per adult with a maximum of £20 per family. In 1924 the bonus was raised to £10 with a maximum of £50, in 1927 (following a Round Table Conference in Cape Town) to £20 per adult and £10 for each child under 16, and in 1949 to £40 per adult and £20 per child under 16. Since the monetary inducement had obviously failed, the bonus was reduced in 1955 to £20 per adult and £10 per child under the age of 16.

[3] Between 1914 and 1953, 39,511 Indians went back to India and of these 966 returned to South Africa.

[4] In answer to the Medical Officer's unfavourable report on immigrants aboard the Umlazi, the Emigration Agent in Calcutta wrote: 'No surgeon would look at emigrants recruited in a famine district. They are little better than walking skeletons, while these people, on arrival at the depot, were of exceptionally fine physique'. (1900, p. 5.)

contain such stereotyped statements as: 'The men, with a few exceptions, should prove a serviceable lot of labourers', or 'The Indians were a very mixed lot in size and physical development'.

Women and children as well as men were among the immigrants. In 1860, it was stipulated that women in the proportion of thirty-five per cent of the total number of men should be brought to Natal. Later the proportion was raised to fifty per cent.[1] In most years this quota was not attained, at other times it was exceeded. Indian women were kept in close domestic seclusion, and it is not surprising to find in a report by the Immigration Agent that it was 'only with great difficulty' that they 'could be induced to emigrate'.[2] Table I, Appendix I, indicates the sex and age of various shipments during the years 1883-1890. The overall proportion of females to males, landed in South Africa during the period May, 1883, to December, 1890, was forty-four per cent from Madras, and forty-seven per cent from Calcutta.

It is impossible to tell how many of the immigrants were married. The records only indicated this in the case of a woman married to one of the passengers, and there is nothing to show whether an unaccompanied female passenger was single, widowed or separated from her husband. A small proportion of women, who were accompanying their husbands, had children with them; 'single women with children' were on occasion refused permission to embark. Since the women were also indentured for labour, recruiters discouraged couples with more than one young child from joining. There is no separate information as to how many of the indentured men were married, but it is clear from case histories that many of them left their wives behind, and that on the expiry of their indentures, very few brought across their wives to South Africa: they took women already in the country whether Indian or Colonial born.

The indentured were of different religions, localities and cultures. The majority were Hindus who spoke at least one of

[1] Ferguson-Davie, C. J., *The Early History of Indians in Natal*, p. 13. For a detailed discussion of this see M. Palmer, *ibid.* pp. 6-7, p. 36.

[2] Report of Protector of Indian Immigrants (Natal), 1891, p. 15.

three main Dravidian languages—Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam—or an Indo-Aryan language. The Tamil and Telugu were from villages and towns in Madras Presidency which, until 1954, included the Telugu state of Andhra,[1] The few score Malaylees came from Malabar.

The Indo-Aryan language speakers were from the Northern and North Eastern districts of Bihar, the United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh), Central Provinces (Madhya Pradesh), Orissa and Western Bengal. Included among the indentured from both South and North India were a few hundred Moslems and Christians who spoke the language of the locality. The Southern Moslems were mainly from Hyderabad and are known among South African Indians as 'Hyderabadees' and a few came from Malabar, and are known as Moplahs.[2] The Southern recruiting agents brought their "catch" to Madras, and the Northern to Calcutta; and the term 'Madrassis' is applied locally to all immigrants from the South, and 'Calcuttias' to immigrants from the North, thereby adding to other ethnic distinctions the port of embarkation as a new identity.

From records preserved in the office of the Protector, it is clear that the indentured were drawn from a wide variety of castes and tribes, and belonged to different religions. Analysis of Records of passengers on two ships chosen at random indicate the diversity of the indentured immigrants (Tables II and III, Appendix II), most of whom were strangers to each other. 'Some were higher, some lower, and we tried to sort ourselves out.' Even Hindus with the same functionary caste names—e.g. *Chamar* (tanner); *Lohar* (blacksmith); *Barhai* (carpenter); *Soni* (goldsmith); *Nao* (barber)—were faced with this problem, since the same occupation did not necessarily carry the same position in the hierarchy of a different locality. Religious or tribal affiliation e.g. Parsee, Mohammedan, Malavetan were also listed under 'caste'.

[1] The main Madras districts for recruitment were Trichinopoly, Tanjore, North and South Arcot, Salem and Chingleput. The main Andhra Districts for recruitment were the Eastern districts of Vizagapatam, East and West Godavari, Kistna, Guntur, Nellore, Chittoor.

[2] 'Moplahs', according to my informants, are descendants of Arabs who settled in the South and married into the Malayan community. See also Hutton, pp. 14-15 and p. 286.

The occupations for which the indentured were required led to an emphasis on certain castes and also a deliberate exclusion of others. From various sources[1] it appears that less than twenty per cent were non-Hindu, and of the Hindu, roughly sixty per cent were of the Sudra and Scheduled castes, about twenty-five per cent to thirty per cent were Vaishya, and the remaining ten to fifteen percent mainly Kshatriya with a small percentage of Brahmins. Occasional reference is made in the Reports of the Indian Immigration Agent to rejection of men of certain occupations and castes, including 'Poojaries', toddy drawers, shopkeepers, beggars, policemen and palanquin bearers.[2]

Among 3,200 indentured, coming on eight boatloads selected at random, approximately two per cent were Brahmin, nine per cent Kshatriya, twenty-one per cent Vaishya, thirty-one per cent Sudra, twenty-seven per cent Scheduled Castes; of the remaining ten per cent, three per cent were Christian, four per cent Moslem and the remainder we were unable to classify.

The passenger Indians are also culturally heterogeneous. They are mainly Gujarati speaking Moslems and Hindus from

[1] See Naidoo V., Sirkari. "Religion among Indians in South Africa", in *Handbook on Race Relations in South Africa*, ed. Ellen Hellman, 1949, p. 576. No mention is made of 'Scheduled Castes'.
Ferguson-Davie writes 'Of the first group from Madras, twelve percent were Moslems, five percent Christian, one percent Rajputs, and some were Pillais (traders), but the majority were of the lower and more numerous castes who would do labourers' work in India. Of those who came from Calcutta, five and a half percent were Brahmins, five percent Rajputs, others were Lohars (blacksmiths), Koris (weavers) and so on . . . The Natal Mercury, describing the first shipload, says that the first arrivals were not so much field labourers as mechanics, household servants, domestics, gardeners and trades people, and adds that there were barbers, carpenters, accountants, and grooms amongst them' (*op. cit.*, p. 13).
The castes of Indians leaving from Calcutta in 1875-6 were:

		Persons	*Percentage*
High Caste Brahmins, etc.	.. .. ..	1,628	21
Middle Castes:	Agriculture..	2,518	32
	Artisans	746	9
Lower Castes:	Labourers, etc.	3,055	38
		7,947	100

Report No. 1 *of* 1877, *Emigration*. Department of Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce.

[2] E.g. Report 1891-92, p. 23. 'Poojaries' are temple priests.

Kathiawar, Surat and Porbandar, and Urdu speaking Moslems[1] and Marathis[2] also from the northern provinces. The Moslems who stayed in Durban are predominantly Meman and Bohra, and belong to the Sunni sect.[3] Natal Moslems appear to have been drawn from early converts to Hinduism and do not trace back their ancestry to any particular invasion, Turkish, Persian or Afghan. A particularly close cultural relationship existed between Gujarati speaking Moslems and Hindus but this has been disturbed by the recent partition of India. While family background and even economic interest of the Moslems remain in India, religious and political allegiance is directed to Pakistan. In somewhat comparable predicament are the Pathans;[4] a small contingent came to South Africa as soldiers with Lord Roberts in the Anglo-Boer War, and some were orthodox Moslems, others Hindus. They remained in South Africa and many married Hindustani speaking Hindu women who, of necessity, were converted to the religion of their husbands, but retain ties with their Hindu kinsmen.

Other passengers from the North included a few Parsees from Bombay, Zoroastrians by religion, who developed insurance and travel agencies, and a few Jains who came from Gujarat and went into small businesses. All these passenger Indians embarked at Bombay and are labelled 'Bombayees'.

A much smaller trickle of 'passengers', both Hindu and Moslem, entered from Madras and Calcutta. Most of these were men who had returned to India at the expiry of their contracts, and then, for various reasons, had come back at their own expense and with the improved new status of 'passenger'.

In addition to Indians from the various parts of India, a small number (estimated at less than 50 families) came from Mauritius, Ceylon and East Africa. The Indian Mauritians

[1] Urdu Moslems from Bombay Presidency are known locally as Miabhais. There are only a few in Natal, many are in the Transvaal.

[2] The Marathi are known as Kokni, probably a corruption of Kanikani,, and are mainly in the Cape Province.

[3] There are very few Shia in Durban, and as far as I know, there are no Ismaili (Shias and followers of the Aga Khan) in Natal. A devout group of Ismaili lives in the Transvaal.

[4] The term Pathan is popularly applied to all tribes whose present or original homes are on or near the North West frontier (Blunt, p. 178, Hutton, p. 42); informants state that between 30 and 50 Pathans originally came to South Africa.

were Moslems and Tamil-speaking Hindus. The handful of Sinhalese speakers from Ceylon came as Christian missionaries to South Africa and learnt Tamil from their flock. The East Africans came as traders.

Individual Indians, including some of the leading merchants, entered without permits, after 1913, when immigration was rigidly restricted. In 1927 Srinivasa Sastri, then 'Agent General for Indians in South Africa', persuaded the South African Government to condone their unlawful entry and hence they are described as 'Condonees'. They were permitted to remain, but were not allowed to bring their wives and children if in India, and their permits can be withdrawn at any time.

Most passenger Indians brought across their wives and children as soon as they could afford their passage and had found them a home, and, if unmarried, they returned to India to look for wives. They did not sever their ties with India, and it became a recognised practice to have their children married in India. Sons then brought their wives to South Africa, while the daughters took the domicile of their husbands and remained in India. The legislation restricting the entry of wives resulted in a rush to 'beat the ban' and several hundred young wives, many with children, arrived from India between 1954 and February, 1956.

Indians did not emigrate to South Africa to escape any specific brand of persecution, political or religious, nor did they come in organised bands interested in creating any particular type of society, any new Utopia. The indentured came as individuals, occasionally with kinsmen or friends, frequently with complete strangers.[1] They were driven to leave India by a variety of incentives—poverty, ambition, domestic tensions, restlessness of spirit, the urge to escape an epidemic or other misfortune. Some hoped to return after acquiring a certain amount of wealth, others realised they would never go back. Indentured Hindus from orthodox, caste conscious families knew that the work for which they were indentured, and the life they would of necessity lead during identure, were prohibited

[1] In bad seasons a large number appear to have been recruited from a small area and were better able to establish local communities in South Africa.

by their caste status, and by breaking through the prohibition, they would become outcasts among their own kin.

The Asiatic Inquiry Commission of 1921, relying on the views, among others, of Sir Benjamin Robertson, who represented the Government of India, observed—'It should be emphasised that there has been very little spontaneous emigration of the labouring classes from India to South Africa. They were recruited with difficulty, and not infrequently by methods which were commonly known in India as 'coolie catching'.[1] But, except in cases of 'coolie catching', the Indians, like other emigrants, did not leave their homes, families and country of birth without the promise of a better life ahead, without hope of a greater security and even of happiness in the distant land.

Stories of the first ancestors in South Africa are often told by informants and form part of the current mythology of South African Indian life. Though each case is in some way unique, and the final factor remains the secret of each particular personality, emphasis is given in nearly every instance to one of three general reasons—economic opportunity; family dissension; the desire for adventure. Promise of wealth, the currency easily forged by recruiters, was the most obvious inducement to indenture.

Recruiting was in the hands of government-appointed agents who received a capitation fee of about £3 and later £6 for each individual recruit. Some recruiters told villagers of a country where 'chilli trees bore gold', 'money was easy'; 'food was plentiful'; 'fowls laid diamonds'; 'gold was picked up in the streets'; and 'fruit hung uneaten from the trees'. One old man was told he would 'see the land of the *devas* (gods)'.

In the 19th Century village life in parts of India was harsh and hard; the country was underdeveloped, stricken periodically by famine, ravaged by disease. Home industries had decayed with the importation of British goods and cloth, peasants were in need of land, a few wealthy landowners battened on the misery of many tenants. Several informants described this in simple language: 'We left at a time of drought and sickness'; 'We had nothing to eat'; 'We had no land, nothing'; 'Our villages changed'. In India about twenty per cent of the Hindu population belongs to the 'depressed' castes, and this submerged fifth suffered most bitterly in the struggle to eke a living in the poverty ridden countryside, and the slums of the city.

[1] Report of the Asiatic Inquiry Commission, U.G. 4—1921, p. 2.

The economic motive alone however is seldom sufficient. It was generally related to other experiences, more especially the nature and strength of family ties, which explain why from among several brothers only one would immigrate, or why in a small community an entire family broke away, and why, having migrated, some remained and others returned.

From case histories obtained from surviving immigrants, ranging in age from sixty-seven to roughly ninety years of age, I have selected a few as illustrations and summarised them as briefly as possible.[1] The following is an example of a man who came from economic necessity and through all the vicissitudes of transition, retained his traditional caste occupation.

> Maistry is a Telugu of the Dhobi (washerman) caste, born 'about 1870' in a small village near Cuddapah in Andhra (then Madras). His parents had six sons, of which he was the 'one before the last'. He was employed as a Dhobi by 'The Royal Battery' (he produced a reference to this effect), till the Battery moved off. 'Then there was nothing.' He had a wife and a baby daughter, and he decided that it was necessary to 'make a life' for them. So he discussed it with his parents and they agreed that he should recruit for five years. He was under twenty. With him were friends from the district—'eight waiters and three cooks'. On his arrival he was sent to a hotel in Durban where he 'took over the washing'. After a few years his friends introduced him to a woman and she 'became his second wife'. This marriage was registered. At the end of his five years indenture, he was asked to continue at the hotel and worked there for another six years. Then came the First World War, and he joined the stretcher bearers. After the war, he served as Dhobi at a hospital, and after a while he was employed at a larger hospital in Durban, where he later became head laundryman. After

[1] We also put a questionnaire to 35 ex-indentured Indians to elicit their background and conscious reasons for having migrated. In 22 cases the economic motive was dominant; in 9 cases family dissension; in 3 the desire for adventure; in one the urge to escape an epidemic.

28 years service, he was put on pension as his 'health was declining'. He has re-visited India in 1947 'with half a mind to settle' but he found all his friends were dead and of his relatives, his first wife was dead, his daughter married, and only a few distant kin remained. So he came back to Durban where he has two surviving children—a married daughter and a son who is a clerk.

Very different is the case of Nansook Kahar, a Hindi speaking man from near Sandila, in Uttar Pradesh, who left India through an unusual personal misfortune.

Nansook had been married when he was six years old to a girl in a distant village of his own Kahar caste. At fourteen years, when the period of *gaawana* (childhood marriage) had expired, he, together with his paternal uncle and aunt, went to fetch the young bride to his home. On arrival at her parents' home, they were informed that the girl had died about three months before in the cholera epidemic. His uncle was very angry and asked why they had not been informed, for this was a gross neglect of in-law relationship. They left 'in disgust' and on their way back home met some thugs who asked if they wanted work. When they said 'yes' they were taken to the depot where they were locked up for about eight days and then put on a sailing boat. Nansook didn't care whom he married after that or where he went. He, together with his uncle and aunt, worked in a cane field and it was they who arranged his marriage with a girl of the Teli caste. After indenture, he worked as a gardener and later as a hawker. He never returned to India. He has four boys and four girls; one son is a hawker, one a transport driver and two are cabinet makers. His children are all married in South Africa.

K. Naicker tells his story. 'My parents farmed in a village near Tiruvannamalai and I and my wife lived with them. My sister and her husband came with their two children to my parents' home. It was a bad year. My only child of eight months died. My sister and her husband went to Tiruvannamalai. They left their two children with me to bring to them. When I came, they said they had recruited and were taking the children. The Recruiting Agent said only one child should accompany them. They would not leave the other behind. The Agent made me join as well. We came to work in a brickyard and then I was taken to the sugar estate. My brother-in-law returned to India after five years indenture and two as free. I had taken a woman on the estates, a Padyachee. She had one child and had come by herself. I did not marry her by Hindu rites, but registered the marriage. Twice I wrote to my brother and got a reply. My wife In India was then living with her parents. I do not write them any more, nor do I get letters'. As he talked his face became intensely sad. 'I don't know why I left' he concluded.

Ideally, the traditional Indian joint family is a close knit unit giving each member economic and social security. In fact, the ideal had already broken down in parts of the country, and in particular instances immigrants were orphans, with no relatives who could afford (or were prepared) to support them.

S. Govender (Tamil), a pensioner on one of the sugar estates, said: 'I was an orphan. After my parents died, I and my two sisters went to a relation, but he was also poor. His wife was not like a mother. Then came drought and we were all hungry. I and another boy (a friend) went one day to Velapurum, where we met the recruiter who promised us a lot of money. I persuaded my friend to recruit as well. Ours was 'the boat before the last' (lot of indenture), I don't remember its name. There was a sickness on the boat, so it was not allowed to land and we stayed on the boat in the sea water, till the people to whom we were assigned came and fetched us in little boats. Forty of us went to work for Mr. H . . . After five years I reindentured. There was no-one to go back to. I had no reply to letters I had sent home. (Yes, I can read and write Tamil. I was taught writing in soft sand and on palm leaves.) For 13 years I worked for Mr H . . . Then I moved to another estate (Chakas Kraal) and worked there for 13 years. Then I came here, and have been here ever since. I have been retired for nearly ten.'

N. Chetty (Telugu), another pensioner, said: 'My parents died when I was small and my sister came and fetched

me to her husband's home and brought me up. When I was a youth her husband died. She had no children. We had no-one but each other. So we recruited in the town near which we were living, Vizagapatam. She took a husband in South Africa, where she died. I married a woman from the next estate. I have no contact with anyone in India. On board I made a good friend, he is my *Kapal Karay* (boat friend) and we worked together till he retired. Now he lives at Chakas Kraal, and we keep in touch through his daughter-in-law who comes to fetch his pension here, at Tongaat.'

In addition to people who left home when they had no parents or adequate parent substitutes, there were men and women unhappy enough to run away from those who were in recognised control. Within the structure of the joint family there is (as shall be shown) potential tension between different relations, and immigration was one way out if the particular situation appeared unbearable.

P. Chetty worked as a supervisor (*sirdar*) on the rice plantation of his father's younger brother. When the floods came, the fields were spoilt and his uncle gave him a labourer's job. He quarrelled about this with his uncle, who said that if he wanted to continue as *sirdar*, his parents should contribute a fairly large sum to make good the losses. His parents refused and he was very angry. His older brother moreover insisted that he work as a labourer. His relationship with his closest kin being thus disturbed, he decided to leave them and come to South Africa as 'indenture'. In South Africa he lived with a girl of the Pillay caste; he never married her, but had 4 children by her. His people wrote to him in the beginning asking him to return, and in the second letter (received soon after he had met his 'wife') they said that Sanibagwan, God of Adversity (poverty, domestic troubles, etc.) had 'caught him', and that was why he had been so embittered as to leave home. He did not reply.

The spirit of adventure and independence is firmly discouraged by conservative Indians, but there is evidence that a number of youths were prepared to break from the family in a

desire to 'see the world' and 'to do what they wanted'. They usually left without informing their parents, knowing that consent would be withheld.

Of the indentured women immigrants, many were young widows, unwilling to remain in singleness and subjection to their in-laws; others were girls escaping from unhappy marriage and a few were women with illegitimate children or women deserted by their husbands.

Informants, mainly from the passenger group, have said that many of the indentured women were 'loose' or 'low caste'. The records show that they were drawn from the same range, and in much the same proportion, as the male immigrants. They were, however, because of their scarcity, in great demand, and there is little doubt that in the early years on the estates, morals were, according to Indian standards, lax.

It was clearly impossible for the indentured women to return to India unless they had come together with their husbands. They had 'lowered the family turban', and hence had lost their place as Hindus in India. Yet many of them appear, from the pride and affection with which they are described by their descendants, to have been women of remarkable courage and ability, who though living in poverty, and exiled from kin, managed to retain religious practices and to build up a new family solidarity.

The passenger Indians realised the economic potentialities of a young and developing country, and families either sent out one of their members to open a branch of an established business, or individuals came to try their luck. If successful they sometimes brought out additional relatives. Among the first passengers was Sheth Abubakir Amed, a Meman, whose father was a merchant in Porbandar, Saurashtra. Abubakir had already an established business in Mauritius, where there was a large Asian community. He started a branch in Durban, and the story of his success reached his kin and countrymen, and there are today a number of his relatives and several hundred other people from Porbandar living in Natal.

The passengers were more directly motivated by the desire and opportunity for economic prosperity, and were better able

to afford an in-group exclusiveness. The Moslems did not run the hazards of pollution and excommunication, and the Gujarati Hindus, who retained their identity and family contacts, had greater economic and social freedom in the choice of domicile.

> Mr I. V. Patel (a Gujarati speaking Hindu) was born in 1871 in Kathur in Surat, where his father had a farm and his sisters did spinning. The area went through a year of famine, and the family agreed that he, as the younger son (thirty years of age), should seek his fortune in South Africa. He came on his own with a 'few rupees'. He hawked around Durban, did well, and gradually earned sufficient to stock a small store. Four years later he brought out his wife and two children. He has been back to India three times, and keeps in touch with his relatives by letter. Five of his sons are now in business, and one is a lawyer. 'So why should I go back to live in India?'

The passenger women came to make their homes with their husbands; once the men had decided to settle in South Africa, their wives had no option but to follow when requested. "A girl's family always cries when she gets married, but if her husband lives far away then tears are more real for they know they may never see her again. A wife becomes part of her husband and must go where he goes."

> Mrs. N. J. Narain, an orthodox Gujarati Hindu woman of the Lohana caste whose home is in Bombay Province, gives her story: Her parents arranged her marriage to N. J. when she was still a child. His older brother was already in South Africa where he had a jeweller shop, and, when she had her first child, he wrote to her husband to come and join him. Mrs. N. J. was reluctant to go, but could not refuse and her husband promised that he would send her back on visits.
>
> After she had borne two more children, her husband said she could take them to show her parents, but he himself could not leave the business. Loth though she was to travel without him, she agreed. A few days before reaching Bombay the baby died. She removed her jewelry and her parents, who had come to meet her with joyful anticipation, saw without her speaking that she had suffered a death. They took her home and did what they could for her, but after she had been with them for three months, the oldest child took seriously ill. Her mother said that she should speed up her return to her husband for clearly this climate did not agree with her children. She returned to South Africa and never visited India again, though her husband has been there on two business trips. She is now seeking a suitable wife in South Africa for her son who has turned twenty-one years.

The South African Indians are a small proportion of the immigrant population that developed the country in the last hundred years. The South African Whites, who emigrated from an all embracing 'Europe', and the South African 'Natives' who came from further north in Africa, are also of varied stock and cultural background: immigration is a world wide phenomenon, always selective and set in motion by a standard series of human interests. Indian immigration was specific, but not unique.

The Indian immigrants came from plains and valleys, forests and highlands, and from cities and scattered villages. The majority of indentured were from the South of India, where caste restrictions were most vigorous and elaborate, and where the Sudra and Scheduled Castes were most numerous. The majority of passengers were from the Northern and Central provinces, and included the most conservative and the most privileged. The majority of both groups of immigrants chose to live out the rest of their lives in South Africa and their descendants are second, third, fourth and fifth generation born South Africans. They form a society very different from that of their forbears in India, a society in which caste operates to a limited extent and in which new elite structures are developing based on Western criteria.

CHAPTER II

Changes in Caste

CASTE is generally considered the most important traditional social characteristic of India,[1] and it was an essential part of the background of Indian immigrants to South Africa. While caste is difficult to define, it can, for our purpose, be crudely described by six criteria:

Firstly, a caste is a distinct and exclusive social unit, membership of which is acquired by birth and retained for life unless members are out-caste through breach of caste laws; secondly, castes are endogamous, and each endogamous caste is generally subdivided into exogamous groups; thirdly, caste laws impose restrictions on social contact through eating, touching or association; fourthly, caste members claim a common origin and/or common traditional occupation(s); fifthly, in any locality castes have positions of relative prestige, of 'higher' or 'lower'; sixthly, and finally, the caste system has a religious sanction expressed through the dogmas of *karma* (moral causation) and *dharma* (righteous conduct), which are reflected in the social position of the individual in his different incarnations. The mystical criterion, which underlies the entire structure and delineates each part, is expressed in the concept of ritual pollution. Caste, as I have described it here, is thus a system both of relationships and ideas. The word caste, with its wide sociological implications and covering people distinguished by endogamy, occupation and ritual, has apparently no exact equivalent in the languages of India. In the literature, the word *jat* or *jati*, is generally

[1] See particularly Thurston, E., *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, 1909.
Risley, R. H., *The People of India*, 1915.
Rose, H. A., 'Caste' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th ed., Vol. IV, 1929.
Blunt, E. A. H., *The Caste System of Northern India*, 1931.
Cox, O. C., *Caste, Class or Race*, 1948.
Davis, Kingsley, *Human Society*, 1950.
Hutton, J. H., *Caste in India*, 1951.
Ghurye, G. S., *Caste and Class in India*, 1952.

translated as both caste and sub-caste, and these castes are estimated at some 3,000.[1]

Forming a framework for caste and sub-caste classification throughout the vast area of India, are four hierarchically graded *varna*, caste-groups. The *varna* structure is symbolically represented by the Brahmins (priests) as the head, the Kshatriya (warriors and rulers) as the arms, the Vaishya (traders) as the body, the Sudras (menials) as the lower limbs; falling outside the *varna* are the Exterior or Scheduled Castes.

The first three *varna* cover the 'twice born' castes which have special privileges, while the Sudra and 'scheduled castes' are greatly restricted in their interaction with other caste Hindus —e.g. they may not be served by 'clean Brahmins', or use the same barbers or water carriers that serve the higher castes, they may not enter Hindu temples as equals, nor use the same community facilities such as wells or schools. These taboos vary independently, in different localities, and the 'scheduled castes' are also stratified within their own ranks.

In theory, *jati* and *varna* gradings are rigid, but in fact some degree of flexibility is recognised as inevitable, and while the two extremes on the caste scale—Brahmin and Sudra—are fixed, there is, and apparently has always been, considerable competitive mobility in the middle ranges.[2] Complete rigidity would require a uniform rate of reproduction and replacement, and the exclusion of all outside personal contact. Sub-division of some castes and amalgamation of others has taken place through the centuries. Some castes admit new members and some permit marriage to outsiders. Mobility of individuals through the custom of hypergamy (marrying of girls into higher castes) is widely practised. Moreover, caste gradation is based on certain standards of behaviour related to cleanliness, purity, occupation and knowledge of sacred writings, and upward imitation of these standards has improved the status of some groups, while relaxation of standards has lowered the status of others.

Despite this flexibility, we can apply the six criteria of caste

[1] Hutton, *ibid*, p. 2.

[2] This traditional framework is being further modified as a result of legislation and industrialisation. Vide B. Cohn, "The Changing Status of a Depressed Caste" in *Village India* (ed. McKim Marriott, 1955, pp. 53-77). Also M. N. Srinivas, "The Social System of a Mysore Village", *ibid*, p. 24.

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as crude indices of change in social relationships in South Africa. In India, caste endured in principle for some twenty centuries, despite the Moslem invasions, the European occupation and sporadic anticaste movements by religious sects in the country. Legislation against caste discrimination is contained in the 1948 Constitution of Independent India, but Srinivas, writing in 1952, states that caste still governs the lives of 300 million Hindus in many important respects.[1]

The indentured Indians who came to South Africa could not recreate, even had they so desired, the variegated and yet interlocking social pattern which had been built through the ages on the Indian continent. Caste is a closed social system which could not be transported into the new society where a small number of Whites were establishing their rule over a vast population of tribal Africans. Coming as labourers, not lords nor even traders, the indentured Indians could not impose (or even maintain) their traditional values and social structure. Caste developed in a pre-industrial social system encircled by village boundaries and supported by a peasant agricultural economy; it inevitably declined when the boundaries were globally shifted by migration, and when home crafts were replaced by the technological developments of modern industry.[2]

But urbanisation is not sufficient to destroy caste, for, as we shall see, in Durban, the group that adheres most rigidly to caste, is the Gujarati speaking Hindu trading community concentrated in the centre of the city. Associations in addition to those of industrial living are required to cut through caste barriers. Urbanisation is in fact a blanket term covering a wide range of possible social relationships, and it is in the interplay of particular relationships that we must seek an answer to the uneven survival of caste, both structurally and ideologically.

In the complicated structure of modern South Africa, the traditional caste system can only operate indirectly, yet its existence in the Indian community cannot be ignored; it exercises an influence on inter-personal relations, even when its existence as a system is denied expression.

[1] Srinivas, M. N., *Religion and Society among the Coorgs*, 1952, p. 24.
[2] This appears to be the position in the cosmopolitan cities, as contrasted with the isolated villages, of contemporary India. See McKim Marriott, 1955.

This was brought home to me early in my field work when I was taken by my Indian assistant to meet four leading personalities in a working class district in Durban. The first was a shop keeper who lived in the most modern house in the whole district and was recognised as a public benefactor through his wealth and religious activities. The second was the representative of the largest Indian landholder in the area. The third was the manager of a business and an active member of Congress and the fourth was a Brahmin woman, Mrs N. E. Maharaj. At our first meeting, Mrs Maharaj expounded the importance of caste in dealing with people. She had lived in the area for twenty years and knew every one of her neighbours and had placed them all on a social scale. Her husband, a third generation South African, was a practising Brahmin over weekends and in his spare time, but he derived his main income from working as a tailor in the city. They had three children, two daughters Latchmi and Pulgari, aged 22 and 16, and a young son aged 10. Latchmi had been married for four years, but her marriage had proved most unsuccessful, for reasons which are by no means unique. At school she had fallen in love with a Tamil boy, and when this was discovered, her parents arranged her marriage to a Hindi speaking boy of the 'right' i.e. Brahmin caste. The choice was made with considerable care; full attention was paid to his education, stars, age and appearance as well as his caste. Despite all these efforts at 'correct matching' of the qualities of the young couple, the marriage proved so unhappy that Latchmi returned to her family. The boy followed and for nearly a year both lived under her parents' roof, but the young bride continued to detest him and finally he left her; since they had never registered the marriage, he was free to take another woman as legal wife.

Latchmi's behaviour had caused a deep rift between her and her mother, and even at my first visit they freely expressed two opposed points of view—the conservative and the modern. While Mrs Maharaj criticised all cross-caste marriages and lamented that her daughter would 'lower the family turban' by her behaviour, the daughter

retorted that caste was 'out of date nonsense'. She argued that the essential thing was 'love', but conceded that a couple should both also be of the same religion, whether Hindu or Moslem or Christian. Mrs Maharaj referred to the glories of ancient India as part of the flowering of a society built on caste, and described the present period as one of degradation and immorality through the breaking down of caste. Conservative in her attitude to caste, Mrs Maharaj had a strong sense of public responsibility. She was one of the few women who had joined a passive resistance campaign and served a period in gaol. She was also a member of three women's associations active in welfare work on a non-sectarian basis.

Though recognised as one of the leading women in the locality, she had never been popular because of her 'snobbish attitude'. She would not mix freely with the neighbours, and when she offered her house for meetings of different associations many of the women were reluctant to come. These women were not prepared to accept her patronage, though there were others who treated her with conspicuous deference. While she made a point of going to homes where there were misfortunes, she kept her distance from all but the few whom she regarded as equal in birth, and usually on these occasions she took the opportunity of delivering a short lecture on 'right' behaviour. Even those who disliked her did not contradict her openly. At the funeral of the mother of one of the leading men in the area, who, I later learned, was one of her strongest and most hostile critics, she was the only woman given a chair in the family kitchen. At such visits she would deign to take tea, but no other food. Similarly, if she participated in temple ceremonies, she kept aloof from other devotees.

Her husband, who was regarded as a singularly good natured and patient man, was active in several Hindu religious associations and also served on the Ratepayers' Association of the area and other local secular associations. He was a vegetarian, though, surprisingly, Mrs Maharaj was not, and of the children, only Latchmi followed her father in this respect.

Latchmi had her mother's independence of character, which did not endear her to people around. They criticised her for wearing Western dress after marriage, talking too loudly, sitting on the front veranda too much and speaking to men, even though she knew them, in the street. When her husband left her, he, not she, had the sympathy of the people. To add to her unpopularity, she decided to take a job and later to study shorthand-typing. Her father threatened at one stage, that if she did so, he would leave the house from shame, but in the end, Latchmi won.

I have given these facts fairly fully to indicate that even when caste is a major interest in a South African Indian family and is recognised as giving it status in a community, it regulates only a limited range of social life. In this Brahmin family, where it was a bitterly controversial issue between mother and daughter, Mrs Maharaj, the main upholder of caste, was drawn by her political and welfare activities into alignments with people not only of different castes but opposed to all that caste stands for. Mr Maharaj was partly associated with caste through his role as (part-time) priest, but his main activities were in non-religious commercial associations. The daughter Latchmi was the product of a Western school system, and had no patience with, and limited knowledge of, traditional values, identifying herself as far as possible with the Western intellectual. Her husband was not sure where he stood. Until his trouble with his wife, he had supported education for women and greater equality between the sexes. Later he began to assert the rights claimed by the most conservative of Hindu husbands, while he himself led a life of relative independence associated with the young men of the West—attending sports meetings, races and other amusements.

From the time of embarkation the traditional caste relationships of the indentured Indians were affected. Conditions under which they travelled to South Africa made it virtually impossible for them to maintain social distance, and ritual 'pollution', especially of the higher castes, was inevitable.[1]

[1] Information obtained from records in the office of the Protector of Indian Immigrants, Durban.

Members of all *varna* and of as many as seventy different castes were sometimes crammed together in the same boat in the 'tween decks and the poop'. The number of passengers (ranging from 200 to 700) was calculated on the basis of 'at least twelve superficial feet and seventy-two cubic feet' per adult with half that amount for a child under 10 years.[1] The journeys lasted from three weeks to three months (depending on whether the vessel was a steamer or a sailing boat) and epidemics and deaths were frequent. Food was provided from a common kitchen, though the cooking was in the hands of the immigrants themselves, and efforts were made in selecting any special cook, to avoid offending caste scruples.

On arrival at their destination, the indentured were housed in barracks 10′ x 12′ in size, with no special accommodation for unmarried women, no privacy for the married, and no consideration for caste. The local basis of caste—the traditional division of villages according to caste—was irrelevant.

The high ratio of men to women (roughly one hundred to forty), and the remoteness from the restraining influence of the caste elders were additional influences undermining the caste foundations. Endogamy was retained as the ideal, but the absence of women of the 'right' caste, and the scarcity of women of any caste, made it frequently impossible in practice. Had all the indentured come in family units, with sufficient members of their own castes (as among some Telugu indentured) and had they retained active contact with kin in India, sub-caste endogamy may well have persisted (as it did among the Gujarati passenger Hindu), but apart from a few exceptions the indentured came mainly as isolated individuals from scattered villages, and if they could not marry into their own castes, the alternatives were celibacy, marriage across caste barriers, or a return to India. The majority remained in the country and chose to marry across the caste line; of those who returned to India many found themselves aliens and were regarded, in Gandhi's words, as 'social lepers'.[2]

[1] Indian Immigration Act No. 21 of 1883, controlling all indentured Indian Immigrants to the various colonies.

[2] Mahatma Gandhi in 'Young India', June, 1931. He based his remarks on an investigation carried out by Swami Bhawani Dayal and Pandit Benarsidas Chaturvedi in 1931.

The ex-indentured who decided to settle in South Africa were faced with the problem of finding homes in which to live and of building up new associations. A few hundred were fortunate enough to receive free plots of land, and among these people, the founders of various small Indian settlements along the coast, there is evidence that attempts were sometimes made to re-create a village caste-structure. Thus one village, on the North Coast, was built entirely by Hindi speaking Hindu, from different parts of Bihar; they included a nucleus of Singhs (Kshatriya varna) who built close to each other. They established a local *panchayat* (council), with a *chowdree* (headman) and *padhan* (vice-head) and the *panchayat* controlled the village activities. A special Brahmin was used as village *purohita* (priest), a Nao family acted as barbers, a Kohar made the clay pots and lamps required for the festivals, a Dhobi family did all the laundry, Barhai built the homes and made the furniture and Sonars made the jewelry, and they all cultivated cane and other crops. But inevitably the system broke down. Traditionally those members of any caste who could not operate their specific caste occupations were able to enter agricultural services, and in this way excess persons from non-agricultural castes were absorbed while occupational caste specialisation was stabilised. With difficulties in the acquisition of land and limited opportunities for developing the land inside the village boundaries, the younger people sought new avenues of employment in outside areas. Furthermore, the caste basis or organisation was subordinate to the Local Health Board, and the *Panchayat* had no legal power to enforce or counter the laws enacted by the new bureaucratic government.

The majority of the ex-indentured became peri-urban dwellers, or, more recently, drifted into urban barracks or sub-economic housing schemes. 'Indian areas' could be analysed on the basis of particular caste names, but such analysis would bear little relationship to social interaction at the present time—

a century after the arrival of the first indentured labourers.[1] However, there is a recognised tendency for people of the same linguistic cultural group to live together in the same area. Thus Puntans Hill and Stella Hill are two suburbs in Durban described as 'nearly 100% Telugu', and non-Telugu living among them are distinguished as 'the Tamil family' or 'the Hindustani family'. Again Newlands is predominantly Hindi speaking, and Springfield mainly Tamil. Hindustani have the reputation of being better at intensive cultivation than the Tamil and to excel as market gardeners and sugar planters, while the Tamil are the main banana cultivators along the South Coast. But inevitably there are many mixed areas—particularly in the town—where predominance of any particular linguistic group is largely accidental, and even in the linguistically homogeneous pockets caste has no local basis.

Apart from conditions of indenture, and subsequent residence which contributed to weaken caste ties, there were deliberate acts by a few individuals to improve their caste status, by changing their caste name or dropping a caste name altogether. It would be misleading, and virtually impossible, to trace caste affiliations of many South African Indians from the present confusion of names. On arrival each recruit was issued with a 'pass', containing as a rule a 'calling name', but not the caste of the holder.[2] The names of children were later entered on the 'pass' of the mother, and when they grew up and required separate 'passes', their names, usually without the caste names of either parent, were recorded. Later, some returned to their caste names, a few adopted new names, and others kept their own names as surnames.

Children of the same parent frequently hold different surnames, some taking the father's calling name and some the

[1] Thus of the 25 heads of Hindi speaking households in three streets of Merebank, we listed 10 Sudra, 4 Kshatriya, 1 Vaishya, 2 Brahmin and 8 "don't know" or who refused to answer the question of caste. Scattered among the Hindi were 16 Tamil speaking family heads, of whom one was a Padayachee (Kshatriya) 6 possibly Vaishya (2 Koli, 2 Chetty, 2 Reddi), 9 possibly Sudra or Scheduled (3 Pillay, 1 Moonsamy, 2 Naidoo and 3 unknown). The associations in these areas, sports clubs, orchestras, debating societies, ratepayers' associations and religious societies have no direct reference to caste.

[2] 'Pass' is the common term for papers of identification carried by Africans and by indentured Indians.

'caste' name. Thus the name of 'Maharaj' which in North India is usually a title of address, has been generally adopted in South Africa as a family and caste name by any Hindi speaking family which claims to be of the Brahmin varna.

Individuals who climb the economic ladder of South African industrialisation find it possible to take on names, not necessarily caste names, in different environments; if registered with caste names they are able—at a small cost—to change to another and non-caste registered name. To have no caste name gives an anonymity; a low caste name is a perpetual stigma; a high caste name is a potential advantage. People born into the higher castes may, and sometimes do, resent the 'upstarts', but can do nothing about them.[1]

One might ask why more, if not all, South African Hindu of the lower castes did not promote themselves by way of name. The answer lies in the nature of effective social relationships. The status of the individual was frequently known at the time of embarkation, or ferreted out on arrival. It then became fixed vis-a-vis South African associations which were not easy to avoid in a society dominated by inter-personal relationships, and in which the opportunities to break away were restricted. It would seem that deliberate changes in caste identification were made by people who were both low in caste and upwardly mobile in other situations, more especially economic.

There are also a few leading intellectuals, some of high caste, who have deliberately dropped caste names to mark their individuality, or exclusiveness, and in some cases to indicate their disapproval of the caste system as such. For caste, by the illogic of analogy, has been used as a favourite argument by South African politicians to justify enforced inferiority and exclusion of non-Europeans, with special reference to Indians.

Caste is associated with Hinduism, and in South Africa other religions and sects, with different systems of control and a more egalitarian ethic, converted a number of orthodox Hindu and influenced others. Christianity, the religion of the dominant Whites and of approximately 6.7 per cent of the Indians in

[1] I was told of a case in Ladysmith where a man adopted Singh as a surname, and 'Genuine Singhs' objected and took the matter to court. The plaintiff stated that he was not trying to become one of them, but simply adopting a well known surname; the objection was over-ruled.

Durban[1], does not recognise the Hindu caste system. Some of the early Christians are accepted by South African Indian elite, others, especially more recently converted, are known to have been drawn from the poorer economic strata and lower castes and are despised as such. Most Christian Hindu deliberately drop their caste names and usually assume biblical names for surnames as well as first names.[2] Almost one-third of the Christian Indians in Durban belong to the Protestant Churches, about one-quarter to the Roman Catholic Church, and the remainder are members of minor sects. The strongest proselytising influence is at present exerted by the Holy Gospel Bethseda Mission, whose leader (a European) has deliberately adapted his teaching to Hindu symbolism and theology, but eliminated all references to caste.[3]

The claim of the convert to equality is not of course acceptable to the most conservative and in some cases is not even made.

> S.V., a Tamil of high caste told me that less than 10 years ago, when he was about 18 years old, he took home a friend who belonged to a well known Indian Christian family (the father was an elder of the Anglican Church). S.V. asked his mother to give them tea. In the kitchen she whispered that while she had no objection to his friend visiting them, she would certainly not make tea for him, let alone serve him. The son made a fuss and threatened to leave home if she didn't, and eventually she gave in. His friend apparently told his people he had tea at their home. The next morning, his friend's mother called on S.V.'s mother to apologise for her son's audacity in taking tea with them. Young people, she explained, did not know that a Pariah remained one even though he became Christian. Emerging from this case is the difference in outlook of the older generation of mothers, whether Christian or Hindu, and the younger generation of sons; neither religion nor caste was relevant to the friendship of the boys, and to retain his friend, the high caste Hindu boy was prepared to leave (or threaten to leave) his home. It was because of this threat, and her love for her son, that his mother acquiesced. She did not accept Christians as equals.

[1] Union Census, 1951.

[2] E.g. David John; some of his sons chose John as the surname, others David, and one took his own first name as surname with his father's surname as Christian name.

[3] Many of the past and even present generations of converts to the Apostolic faiths (particularly the Bethesda and Baptist) are virtually endogamous, but as we shall show, endogamy is not caste. There are also cases of Christian Indians, particularly among the Telugu Baptists who came as Christians from India, where caste considerations made (and make) marriage endogamous.

Roughly sixteen per cent of the Durban Indian population are Moslems, whose religious authority, the Koran, professes the equality of all Believers irrespective of race and class.[1] In 1951, the Moslems of Natal included, in addition to 23,429 Indians, 13 Europeans, 954 Coloureds and 335 Africans.[2]

A number of Hindu reform movements that originated in India also express disapproval of caste discrimination and state that all men are equal in spiritual potentiality. Of growing importance, drawing a membership from many of the more educated, are the Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Centre, Saiva Siddhanta and the Divine Life Society, whose broad ethical non-sectarian doctrines cut across caste differences. Buddhism[3] in South Africa has about a hundred adherents of mixed origin.

In no section of the contemporary South African Indian population is the caste system maintained with traditional elaboration of detail, but contact with different cultural values always affects societies unequally, particularly societies already highly

[1] While ignoring caste, South African Indian Moslems evaluate in-group differences by sect, place of origin and local dialect. The Kathorians were the first to acquire wealth and at one period were very exclusive. The Gamadia are drawn mainly from a number of villages (Gam) and are considered less sophisticated. In the Transvaal the Kholwadians from Kholwad are the elite.

[2] In a unique position, somewhat between indentured and passengers, is a community of under 300 Moslems known as the "Zanzibaree'. They are descendants of African slaves from Zanzibar who, on their way to the East in an Arab slaveship, were liberated by a British man-of-war, placed under the control of the Protector of Indian Immigrants and became technically 'Indians'. Later they were settled on a piece of land owned by the Moslem Trust at King's Rest in Durban, where they form a closed and distinctive group into which they incorporated African, Coloured and occasional Indian women as wives. The most physically mixed group in Durban, they are supported by other Moslems because of their orthodoxy; they are regarded with fear by non-Moslem Indians because of their reputed knowledge of 'black magic'. In 1958, they were officially classified as Coloureds under the Group Areas Act!

[3] The Buddhist society in Durban is interested in spreading the principles of the Eightfold Path to the masses, but the present officials are relatively untrained.

differentiated, and the extent to which caste survives varies with different interest groups (economic, religious and political) in the total South African context.

The only community organised on caste divisions and adhering to traditional caste ideas at all strictly, is the Gujarati speaking Hindu. (In Durban, Gujarati, (Hindu and Moslem) totalled less than nine thousand persons in the 1951 Census.) There are also a few exclusive caste pockets in the rest of the Hindu population, more especially among the Hindi speaking Brahmin and Kshatriya, the Telugu-speaking Naidu and in isolated areas least touched by Westernisation and industry.

But is is necessary here to underline the distinction between caste practices and caste consciousness. Caste consciousness is more widespread than the caste system and involves an awareness of pollution through breach of caste laws though not necessarily an attempt to follow the "right" caste practices. Many informants, particularly of the older generation, expressed guilt at breaking away from caste practices, but were unable to change their environment and withdraw into the smaller world prescribed by caste as a system of regulating behaviour.

The persistence of caste among the Gujarati Hindus flows from their passenger status and their greater economic freedom. They did not come on the ships with the 'indentured'—they could afford to bring their families with them, or to them, and they retained contact with their castes through business and/or marriage. The Gujarati Hindus, though described by other Indians by the general label *Banyas* (traders), are very conscious of caste divisions within this broad Vaishya group. Confronted with the difficulty of finding suitable mates for their children in South Africa, the Gujarati Hindu had, of caste necessity, to send their daughters to husbands in India (since tradition demands that a girl accept the domicile of her husband) and they imported wives for their sons.[1] The Gujarati will be most affected by the recent Immigration Amendment Act prohibiting the entry of wives from India, and the boys, as well as the girls, will either have to leave permanently the country of their birth or follow the general Indian pattern of South Africa and admit cross-and inter-caste marriages.

[1] Gujarati Moslems also imported wives for their sons.

Already some of the most respected Gujarati families are faced with this problem: in one instance, an only son of a leading family went to India with the approval of his widowed mother because no girl of the right caste was available locally. The mother knows he will not be allowed to bring a wife back with him, and so is trying to dispose of the family property in South Africa and join him. His sister, a highly intelligent girl, who has fallen in love with a local Hindi speaking man, is being subjected to strong family pressure to go to India as well and marry 'right'.

Organised inter-caste marriage is distinguished from breach of caste endogamy, of which there have been a few instances over the years, even among the Gujarati.

In one instance the educated son of a leading family fell in love with a beautiful Coloured girl and in face of family opposition insisted that he marry her and no one else. Eventually his family accepted this and the girl was instructed for a period in the religion of her future husband, then married with full ritual. She now conforms as far as possible to Gujarati custom, but is always aware of in-law disapproval.

Despite these deviations, the Gujarati show that a caste structure can survive among urbanised immigrant groups under the following conditions; namely, if caste members

(1) can maintain a ritual exclusiveness from the time they leave India;

(2) hold a privileged position in the economic organisation and avoid proletarianisation;

(3) retain ties with a protected caste nucleus in India, and

(4) isolate their women from intimate cross-caste contact.

Among indentured Hindu in South Africa, the only really active caste practice is that of endogamy.[1] In exceptional cases, and usually among people who rate themselves as 'high' caste endogamy may override all other factors in a parents' choice of a child's marriage partner. At the same time the family

[1] In one area in Durban, 169 out of 180 marriages of Hindi speaking Hindu and 113 out of 120 marriages of Tamil speaking Hindu, were with people of the same varna.

background, health, economic standing, appearance, and standard of education are also considered.

The traditional sub-division of castes into exogamous units (e.g. *gotra, sapinda*)[1] is not generally adhered to. Writing of India in general, Hutton states: "Quite clearly the internal exogamy of Hindu castes is infinitely variable and every sort of system seems to be represented" (p. 57). In Durban, the position is extremely confused. Again it is the Gujarati who stress for purposes of marriage the exogamous *gotra*,[2] analogous to clan, tracing descent in the male line from a mythological *rishi*. Some members of other Hindi-speaking castes of northern origin also know their own *gotra* but few know the names of other *gotra* in their caste. Informants who claim to follow tradition sometimes give as their *gotra* names that other informants regard as *pravara*.[3] There is clear evidence that Telugu South Africans once had ancestral 'house names' (*intiperlu*) as indicative of exogamous units, resembling exogamous lineages, but at present only a few elderly conservatives abide by them. In urban areas and among most of the younger people in the country, the ancestral house name is unimportant as a basis for exogamy and often its existence is unknown, but the elders still consider it important enough to be discussed, with emotion and interest.

The relative persistence of caste endogamy and caste consciousness among the Telugu is explained by the fact that a sufficient number of people from the same castes (especially Vellamar, Kappar, Kammar and Gavra) and from the same districts of the Andhra country migrated at much the same time, and were able to set up small 'colonies' when they had completed their indenture.

Ranking of castes as 'higher', 'lower', or 'equal' is important in most Hindu marriage negotiations, and conservatives distinguish between 'high' and 'low' families within a single caste category, talking for example of 'high' Chetty or 'low' Chetty, 'high' Pillay and 'low' Pillay. The 'high' Chetty or 'high' Pillay

[1] Hutton, *op. cit*., pp. 54-62; Kapadia, 1955, pp. 118 ff.

[2] Generally speaking, the gotra is an exogamous subdivision of a caste, comparable to an exogamous clan, derived from a limited number of rishis. See Hutton, pp. 55-58; Prabhu, pp. 156-158.

[3] *Pravara* involve the recital of famous ancestral names (Hutton pp. 58-60, Prabhu, pp. 158-160).

are generally placed as Vaishya and the 'low' Chetty or 'low' Pillay, distinguished 'by their low talk' (or dialect) and social habits, are put into the Sudra or Scheduled castes.

Hypergamy for women is generally approved, but there have been cases where a girl's parents rejected a suitor because of his poor character or because of his family's reputation though his caste was relatively high.

For a woman to 'marry down' is generally condemned, though the extent to which this is changing is illustrated by the following case:

> About 50 years ago, a Brahmin and his wife came to South Africa where they died leaving behind two small daughters, who were adopted by a wealthy Dhobi and married to two Dhobi boys. This created such a turmoil that the police had to be called out at the marriage to stop a fight between some Brahmin boys and the groom's supporters. About 30 years later the daughter of one of the 'high caste' families whose boys had offered such strong resistance, fell in love with the son of one of these women. The boy and girl were both teachers and though her family objected to the marriage, she won the day. The marriage took place without any open repercussions. Her parents often remark to their friends that she 'could have made a better match', but they accept the boy in their home as a son-in-law.

Ceremonies ordained for different occasions in the life cycle of the individual are seldom controlled by caste[1]; they depend primarily on the degree of Westernisation, irrespective of caste, of the individual as well as his family. Among the Hindi, traditional ceremonies must be performed by priests of the Brahmin caste but among the South African Telugu and Tamil this is usually not necessary. Even the sacred thread ceremony (*Upanyana* in Sanskrit, *Janao* in Hindi and Gujarati, *Punul* in Tamil), traditionally the most important ceremony for the "twice born" castes, and which still reflects caste differences, is enacted in very abbreviated form by all the higher castes. In Durban Brahmins generally wear the sacred cord on special occasions; but they find it impossible to wear regularly because of the inevitability

[1] See Chapters VIII and IX.

of pollution through contact with the 'unclean' and the elaborate precautions required to maintain its purity. There is no annual gathering of Brahmins even of the same language group for the purpose of renewal of the cord; each Brahmin usually performs the ceremony on his own, or with a couple of colleagues.

Overt symbols of caste are few and are becoming fewer. Informants state that both fellow workers and European employers poked fun at those who retained caste hair style, ornaments and local costume. Today men have their hair cut at public barber shops, except for special rituals; and they conform to Western dress except at special ceremonies when officials don the *dhoti* and various traditional garments (e.g. the turban); all children (apart from Moslems attending private and government-aided schools) wear Western dress; there is no restriction on the ornaments or dress of the various castes; the younger generations of married men and women have abandoned caste tatoo marks.

The religious sanction behind caste is seldom expressed. The belief in *Karma* and *Dharma* is generally accepted, but rebirth into a higher caste is not formulated as one of the highest rewards of virtuous conduct. Individuals who have broken fundamental caste laws are seldom required to perform the traditional purification ceremony; as far as we know, this was enforced only once during our 5 years of study when a Hindi speaking Hindu, who had been converted to Mohammedanism returned to Hinduism. We were told of two previous cases: in the first, a Hindi speaking Hindu in a rural area killed a cow, and had to be purified before he was re-admitted by his family; in the second, a high caste Tamil Hindu family drove out one of the sons because he lived with a 'loose woman of low caste', and would not re-admit him till he had undergone a ritual purification, after which his people married him to a girl of their own choice.

Elaborate dietary rules have fallen away almost entirely, and in the sharing of the common meal the invitation of friendship generally replaces the credential of caste. Many, though not all, Brahmins dine at the houses of members of various castes as long as they are provided with only vegetarian dishes. For services performed by them, Brahmins are frequently given '*siddha*'—reward in uncooked foods—but this is not strictly

related to caste structure. Nor is the traditional caste distinction drawn between food cooked with ghee and food cooked with water. Traditional utensils, designed to maintain caste purity, are replaced by Western crockery. Only at ritual meals, especially at weddings and funerals, the portion for each guest is still often served on separate banana leaves and these are thrown away when the meal is over; but the usual explanation given me for the use of the leaf plate (*pattal*) was that it 'costs nothing to hire' and 'can't break'. Some families have a number of brass drinking vessels from which liquid can be poured into the mouth without the vessel touching the lips, but these are now regarded as ornaments and heirlooms, and china cups and glasses are in common use. There are however, a few families who use special crockery for guests and outsiders, and metal (tin or aluminium) vessels, which are cleaned with sand or ash for people of the home. Bars and restaurants introduce further contact and pollution. There are not very many Hindu who will eat only in the homes of people whom they consider 'caste' equals. Nor is there clear social separation on a caste basis at weddings, funerals and temple ceremonies.

Certain customs associated in India with the Brahmin castes —more especially their food habits, and social manners—tend in South Africa to become symbols of a particular individual outlook irrespective of caste. Priests in Durban are generally vegetarian, but members of their own families, living under the same roof, are sometimes 'flesh' eaters, obeying only a general injunction against eating meat of the sacred 'cow mother'. On 'fast days' and special feast days all South African Hindus abstain from 'flesh'.

Participation in communal ceremonies formerly regulated by caste, is now on a voluntary, personal basis, and responsible positions are attainable by the learned or the wealthy. In one of the main orthodox temples, the honoured position of trustee is held by a member of a Sudra caste. No person is officially disqualified by lowly birth from entering any South African temple though I have been told of one case in Durban where there is a 'freezing out' of 'undesirable low castes'. The players of wind instruments required in certain ceremonies, are generally described as 'low' because they 'must have alcohol' (to give them

energy), and 'don't mind spittle': they usually remain in the yard of the temple and do not try to come inside.

Generally speaking, caste and occupations no longer have any significant correlation.[1] Caste names specifying occupations (e.g. Lohar—smith, Vannya—oil presser) have become functionally meaningless, and are often changed or discarded. Members of the same caste follow a variety of occupations. Only small numbers of the Brahmin caste carry on the traditional occupation as priests and scholars, full or part time; others are tailors, furniture dealers, estate agents. There are Singhs (Kshatriya) who are doctors, lawyers, butchers (dealing only in mutton), market gardeners and hawkers.

However, certain occupations still tend to be found more in one caste than another. Among South Indians, jewellers are drawn from the Pathers, and among the Hindi speaking priests of the Brahmin varna, most goldsmiths are Soni, most washermen Dhobi, most potters Kumbar, most barbers Nao. People of other castes when fulfilling these roles are sometimes described by these trade-caste names.

Several informants voiced the opinion that 'high' caste people are found in 'clean' (upper status) occupations—the professions and white collar jobs—and 'low caste' people are mainly in jobs considered physically and spiritually dirty—leather working, hair cutting, street sweeping, washing other people's clothes, handling dead bodies. There appears to be something to this opinion, but it would be difficult to examine statistically because of the ambiguity in present caste names; it is clear that high caste families object to their sons' taking on manual and poorly paid jobs, but the question of earning power and general prestige of occupations are as relevant to this outlook as is their caste. A typical text by a Brahmin states:

> "I will always give my son the freedom to choose his occupation for himself put I would not like him to be a shoemaker. I will not object to his becoming a carpenter. Some fathers would like their children to become doctors or lawyers, and force them into it, but it is not right to do this to another. For my son-in-law, I will look first to see that he is not one who walks about the streets associating with anyone and everyone, and that he does not drink. Yes, I would look also to caste, and would not go below a Singh; but most I want a good man and I would not mind any clean occupation."

[1] For the position in modern India, see Marriott, ed. *Village India*, 1955; *India's Villages*, a collection of articles published by the Development Department, West Bengal, 1955.

It is also clear that the conditions prevailing in South Africa since the time of the first immigration, undermine the retention of any rigid occupational stratification, except in a few specialised crafts (such as goldsmiths, or pot making) and trade in the passenger group. In South Africa there were restricted opportunities and sometimes no opportunities for the practice by Indians of some of the caste crafts: Oilmen, Land Surveyors, Popcorn makers, Shepherds sought other avenues of employment. Occupational openings in South Africa operate irrespective of caste, and the occupational interdependence of castes, which maintains the caste structure, has virtually disappeared. In a random sample of 84 men, 64 had taken on occupations different from their fathers. Parents accept that they may direct their children into a particular profession, but cannot force them.

There is in many circles—especially among conservatives—a strongly held belief that a person of a high caste family will be decent and honourable, and that relatively little can be expected from a person of a lower caste family. On this point a highly educated Telugu commented "If someone from the high Naidoos —Yellama, Kappar or Kammar—did something bad, people will try to think in his favour and find excuses or an explanation, but if he was a low Naidoo—a Gavra—or an Odde Chetty (low in the Chetty caste category)—it is considered understandable, and people will say 'You know the group he comes from' or 'We should have known what to expect', or 'The blood in him will show up'. The individual who goes beyond his family status is regarded with suspicion, and the ability to use only acquired techniques is always dangerous."

It is significant that most of the accepted leaders are from 'good families' with high caste names, and that their outstanding qualities are not often attributed to their individual ability or intelligence, nor even to special economic or social advantages given them by the family background, but to 'their blood'. At

the same time it is only the closer kin who benefit because of their association with these leaders; no specific privileges can be claimed by others simply on the basis of belonging to the same castes.

Attacking the foundation of caste is the 'democratic' schooling system of the country in which Indians are admitted to Indian schools on a non-caste basis. The only qualifying factors are race, and in some schools, the ability to pay an entrance fee. Once educated, the future depends not on caste but on opportunity and ability. Vernacular schools are open to all members of a particular language group, and caste does not enter into, let alone determine, the system and syllabus of education.

The caste *panchayat* (council) does not exist and so cannot operate. Authority and control are vested in leaders selected for various non-caste qualities. Though in some cases trustees of a school, or a temple, or members of a Ratepayers' Association have been referred to as 'the *panchayat*', they include men of different sects and castes.

The ultimate sanction of caste rules is out-casteing. Where the caste is the social world, out-casteing cuts off a man and usually his family from all communion with his fellow men. In South Africa the caste has no power to impose this drastic punishment. In the field of law, the courts of the country have control, and though the family, in its widest form, may ostracise a member, his personal relationships are not ended. The man who breaks from his caste, is neither an exile nor the nucleus of another 'caste'. It is clear that caste is so complex a phenomenon that the retention of any single characteristic—even endogamy, the final stronghold of caste—cannot itself create or constitute caste in South Africa.

A Telugu scholar of Brahmin caste, who came to South Africa as a teacher to a vernacular school and later moved into business on his own, stated in discussion with a group of students that caste originated in an attempt to decentralise the national economy, but that the system was subsequently abused by people who because of their own ego, motivated by economic greed and the desire for power, rated the people in the various occupations as high or low. He argued that the doctrines of *karma* and *dharma* had been distorted by being attached to the caste

system whereas they were really ethical principles applicable to any social structure. He attributed the acceptance of the caste system to ignorance, and considered that the 'school education' in South Africa was the most effective single factor breaking down caste. His emphasis was primarily on the power of 'foreign ideas', supported by the material effects of Western industry, and he emphasised that for those reasons, caste had broken down much further in South Africa than in India.

The changes that have taken place, and are taking place in the concept of caste can only be understood as part of the general process of adaptation of Indians to the South African milieu. In India there appears to have been a constant process of segmentation of castes[1] through increased occupational specialisation, the rise of new religious sects and through local peculiarities, while fusion of a number of castes into a single unit for political or social prestige, was a less frequent occurrence.[2] In South Africa, the process as expressed through caste is reversed—fusion of sub-castes not fission is the overriding tendency.

The attitudes expressed to the caste system varies with informants. With a few exceptions, it is the older Hindus in South Africa who are prepared to speak openly in its support. The verbal reaction even to caste endogamy is not fixed by caste membership. People in the same family may, and often do, hold different opinions, and there are members of high caste families that condemn it, and of low caste families who defend it. The majority of young South African Indians are ignorant of the intricacies of caste[3], but they are conscious that it is a system of discrimination. To them, it is an embarrassing subject, irrelevant in the daily battle of existence, and the surprising thing is not that they are so ignorant of caste, but that it survives at all.

Terminology in South Africa reflects the weakening of caste divisions. 'Jati' or Jat' is usually applied to more inclusive units than the traditional castes or even classes of castes.[2] It is

[1] Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 270; Hutton, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-52.
[2] For examples see Thurston, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 376, and Hutton, p. 50.
[3] A questionnaire set to 325 boys in one boys high school in Durban included a question on their caste. 74% Hindu gave no caste name, 3% gave their linguistic or cultural or ethnic group (Andhra, Telugu, Dravidian), or their religion (Hindu, Moslem, Christian), and 23% a traditional caste name.

used predominantly for large religious-cultural categories (e.g. Moslems, Christians and Hindus), and for linguistic-cultural groups (e.g. Gujarati, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu), and is frequently translated by South African Indians into English as 'nation' or 'race'. These categories rather than the traditional sub-castes are endogamous, self-conscious and exclusive.

The intensity of prohibition of contact between these large categories expressed in 'caste terms', varies with language, religion, cultural affinity and ethnic identity. It is least between South African Tamil and Telugu, whose language and religion and culture are very similar, and, in case of marriage, if the families of the young couple are considered equal in status, there is usually no opposition. Reaction is stronger between North Indian (Hindi or Gujarati speaking) and South Indian (Tamil or Telugu), though the bond of a common religion (Hinduism) coupled with social equality sometimes mitigates disapproval of inter-marriage. Hinduism however is such an amorphous bond, and between 'Hindus' there are such cultural distinctions, that as a rule the differences in language and culture between Northern and Southern dominates over other considerations. There are many examples in which a Hindi speaking Hindu boy fell in love with a Tamil girl and both parents refused permission not on grounds of caste, but of 'custom'. Sometimes the couple eloped, and sometimes one party was quickly married off to a person of 'the same kind'.

The customs are not necessarily judged inferior or superior, though an ethnocentric cultural approach is sometimes evident. Thus a Tamil boy wanted to marry a Hindi speaking girl and negotiations went smoothly, until the girl's people learned that the boy's parents were cross-cousins. This was considered 'not clean' and they immediately broke off negotiations and married her to a Hindi speaking boy.

The linguistic-cultural categories are, however, not castes: they are not graded into an accepted social hierarchy, they are not functionally interdependent, and they do not claim divine sanction for difference. The concept of caste is equally inapplicable to the separate and distinct religious groups—Hindu,

[2] This is also found in India but the more usual application of the ward is to the small endogamous units.

Moslem and Christian. In India, Moslem and Christian minorities tended to form castes in the total structure defined by caste Hinduism;[1] in South Africa they are grouped together as 'Indians' in a total structure defined by race. Though the facade of solidarity imposed through sharing in anti-Indian discrimination cannot eliminate the distinctiveness of the three religious groups, the complex of caste characteristics is absent. Their inter-relationship is very similar to that of Catholic and Protestant, where endogamy alone does not create caste.

There are a number of cases in which parents refused permission for marriage because of differences in language, religion, caste or race, and though as a rule young people abide by this ruling, there have been cases, said to be increasing in number, in which, in spite of disapproval, they have married civilly. Moreover, disapproval may not be general or equally intense even in a circle of close kin. The following case indicates the type of complications arising in the current urban setting:

> P.S., an orthodox and high caste Hindi speaking Hindu, who lived in a single house with his old father and older married brother had two sons and one daughter. P.S. and his brother had married two sisters of the 'right caste', and planned that their children do likewise. P.S.'s older son conformed to family tradition and accepted in marriage a girl chosen by his kin.
>
> The second son, had fallen in love with a girl whose father was also Hindi speaking and of good caste but whose mother was Coloured. His family opposed the marriage because of the 'race' of the mother, but her people accepted the boy, and eventually the young couple married by civil rights without any of P.S.'s family attending. The girl's older sister had previously married an upper caste Hindi speaking boy with full ritual; another sister was eager to marry a Tamil whose parents were opposing the marriage on the grounds of difference in language, culture, and race of the families; their only son had married a Coloured girl in the Catholic Church (both were so light-skinned that they 'pass' as 'Whites' when they wish).

[1] Hutton, p. 2.

P.S.'s daughter, was a teacher who wanted to marry a fellow teacher of low caste; the whole family expressed their disapproval, but eventually her parents 'could not resist their beloved daughter's tears and threats of suicide' and gave their consent. But P.S.'s brother and sister-in-law remained adamant, and there was a strong rift in their relationship. However, P.S. won his old father over to his side, and the marriage date was settled. On the morning of the marriage the old man died suddenly. The marriage took place 'in an atmosphere of mourning'. The girl died in childbirth. At her funeral, the parents and the second son were reconciled, but though five years have passed they still do not speak to P.S.'s brother and his wife (the bereaved mother's own sister).

If the term caste is applied analytically rather than descriptively, it is more clearly embodied in the South African social structure as a whole than in the Indian community in particular. Nearly all characteristics of the traditional caste system are evident in the relationship of the so-called 'races'—'Europeans' (Whites), Coloureds, Indians and Africans graded in that order. Definition of race is by fiat of the white rulers, and is primarily a political (and mystical), not genetic (and scientific) concept. Maintenance of Whites at the top is explicit in government policy. The relative position of every citizen and his dependents will be fixed for all time by a Population Register classified into racial categories. Breach of race endogamy for Whites and Non-Whites is a criminal offence under the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act.

Contact between Whites and Non-Whites through other channels—living in the same neighbourhood, sharing the same schools and universities, enjoying the same civic amenities—is restricted, and the restrictions increasingly carry penal sanctions. *Apartheid* demands the minimum of inter-racial mixing.

The occupational rating present in the traditional caste system has a limited parallel in South Africa where the majority of 'upper class' positions are held by Europeans. However, despite the disadvantages under which Indians, Coloureds and Africans live and work, a small number are moving up into professions which are traditionally monopolised by Whites. Desire to check this upward mobility of Non-Whites is rationalised in myths of biblical origin, by unfounded generalisations on inherent ability, or by beliefs of pollution or contamination through 'contact'.

But the maintenance of the neo-caste structure supporting white rule in South Africa requires complete racial segregation in spite of industrialisation and world developments. The South African Nationalist Government is attempting to pursue this policy through *apartheid*. Whether or not it succeeds depends largely on two factors: (1) the possibility of effecting isolation at the present stage of economic integration, and (2) the acceptance of racial stratification by all races. Integration has already gone so far that complete isolation appears virtually impossible and stratification, implying inferiority, is rejected by most non-Europeans and a few Europeans. Though opposition to *apartheid* is at present mainly verbal, there are signs in non-European liberatory movements that it will be translated into mass action.

The breakdown of caste within the Indian population itself reflects the complexity of the process of its adaptation. Even within the Hindu community the majority find the social cost of a caste system too high and the rewards too low, and have developed other values in keeping with their contemporary milieu.

CHAPTER III

The New South African Indian Elite

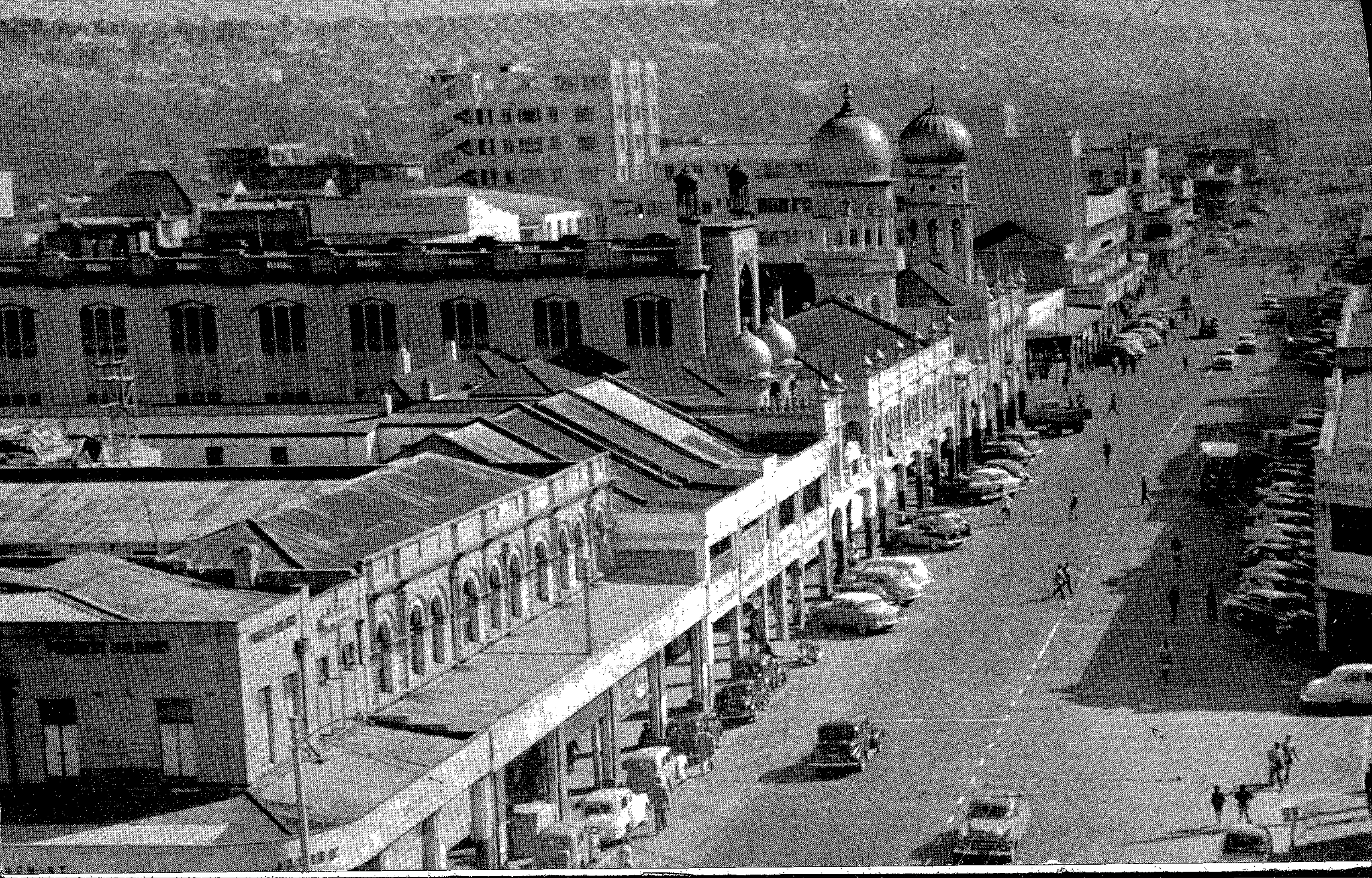
1. Caste and Elite

While caste is no longer the major index of stratification, other systems of value, giving rise to new elites, operate in the total South African context. In all fields of social action—politics, business, education, sport and entertainment—control of power is monopolised by Whites; Indians, together with other Non-Whites are excluded to a greater or lesser extent. Generally speaking, Indians aspire to full and equal participation, but their adaptation to exclusion and their techniques for attaining their goals, vary with the values of their own elite.[1]

An 'elite' is here defined as a group of people of recognised pre-eminence in any particular field of social action and therefore considered worthy of emulation. It need have no formal organisation, but those who 'belong' have specific values and interests in common and may join together when necessary to promote or defend them. Whereas in the caste system position depended almost entirely on birth, in the present South African Indian context individual achievement is the main criterion. There are usually a number of distinct elites (political, economic, religious, educational, sporting, etc.), varying with the structure and cultural values of each society, and within the total circle of elite are smaller overlapping circles of people representing more than one of the highly rated value systems. Social classes are now forming within the Indian community of Durban, but so little of the basic research necessary for class analysis among South African Indians has been carried out, that a more exploratory approach seems desirable in terms of separate elites. This should provide a basis for future research into the more general aspect of social structure conveyed by 'social class'.

[1] The approach in this chapter is derived largely from Lasswell, Lerner and Rothwell, *The Comparative Study of Elites*, Stanford, 1952.

Indian-owned buildings in Durban
[Photo by Krishna Naidoo



Modern homes in an Indian township *[Photo by Arthur Bowland*

Shacks in a working-class Indian area *[Photo by Mickey Padayachee*

II. The Political Elites

The indentured came to South Africa stripped of traditional leadership. Negotiations regulating their immigration had been between the British Government in India and the White Government in Natal, and had ignored the village *Panchayat* (Council) and/or the feudal prince. In South Africa the immigrants developed new political organisations in accordance with their new status.

The first political elite arose from the trader class. The indentured Indian was desired as a labourer and fitted into the status pattern ascribed to non-Europeans—that of menial and inferior with limited opportunity for personal development. The passenger Indians on the other hand, by entering into trade, challenged White privileges and were the first to be affected by anti-Indian legislation. As a result, merchants, who were mainly Moslems, took the lead in organising legal defence against attacks on Indian trading rights. Indians still under indenture voiced their grievances through government appointed inspectors who visited their places of employment once or twice a year, and on rare occasions penalised the over-harsh employer by removing his labourers to complete their terms of indenture elsewhere. The newly 'freed' Indians were struggling in marginal isolation and were not incorporated into any organisation of the traders, who gained nothing by association with them.

This division of economic interest groups in early Indian politics was narrowed under the leadership of a young, self-conscious lawyer, Mahatma Gandhi (then only Mohandas Karamchand), who came in 1893 to try to settle a business difficulty of some Gujarati clients. In his autobiography, *The Story of my Experiments with Truth*, he attributes his entry into South African politics partly to a most painful, humiliating personal experience in a first class railway carriage in South Africa which led him to identify himself with the misfortunes of his fellow countrymen. His approach marks a new era in South African Indian history. He shaped Indian political action through the Natal Indian Congress, which he founded in 1894 and of which he became Secretary.

In the early years, the passenger Indians were treated in the

same way as European colonists and granted full voting rights and these rights were extended to the indentured when freed from service; but in 1893 there was already a move by European settlers to disenfranchise the Indians, and in spite of opposition locally and overseas, they lost the Parliamentary franchise in 1896. This was one of the first issues taken up by the Congress. Though for several years Congress continued to draw its personnel solely from the trader class, and directed its actions primarily against measures affecting their interests, it also organised educational youth clubs for the children of indentured Indians; it formed a Colonial-born Indian Education Association, and with the support of passengers and indentured fought to improve the general conditions of all Indians.

The broadening of Gandhi's Congress policy is reflected in the developments between the opening and closing phases of the First Passive Resistance Campaign. The opening act in 1907 was directed against restrictive and humiliating immigration laws affecting the rights of Indian traders in the adjacent Transvaal—and the trader became the resister. The final act incorporated two new issues, one of which specifically concerned the indentured, namely an Annual Tax of £3 imposed on 'free' Indians who failed to reindenture or to deport themselves back to India; and the other affected all Indians, being a Union High Court Judgment of 1913, which invalidated all marriages contracted in accordance with Indian tradition, thereby automatically making all issue of such marriages illegitimate.[1]

Passenger and indentured both participated and women from both groups joined and inspired the resisters. The scene of action and organisation shifted correspondingly from Gandhi's first settlement, Tolstoy Farm, which was in the Transvaal, where the Indian population was small and mainly Gujarati, to Phoenix in Natal, the area of indentured labourers. Gandhi's humanitarian principles did not run counter to the interests of the passengers, on whom he depended chiefly for political and financial support, and they followed his lead in gaining members for Congress from the ranks of the indentured. The second part

[1] Esop *vs.* Union Government, 1913, Cape Provincial Division, p. 133, which ruled that no marriage could be recognised as valid if celebrated according to the rites of any religion practising polygamy.

of the First Passive Resistance campaign emancipated Indian politics from the personal interests of the traders and paved the way for the raising of a political elite drawn from all sections of South African Indians.

Gandhiji left South Africa in 1914 and the divergent groups which he had brought together largely through his personal influence, drifted into separate and conflicting political camps.

The first major split followed an agreement by the South African Indian Congress leaders to participate in the work of a Colonisation Commission (the Young Commission) set up to investigate the possibilities of sending large numbers of South African Indians to other underdeveloped parts of the world. A section of Indians opposed collaboration, and, under the leadership of a Christian lawyer and a Hindu of indentured parentage and Kshatriya caste, formed (in 1933) the Colonial-Born and Settlers' Indian Association. Members of the Association represented an emerging middle class of ex-indentured descent, predominantly Hindu in religion; the majority of Congress members were merchants of passenger origin. A further split along religious lines occurred in Congress itself in 1936 when the Indian Agent General for South Africa, a Moslem, married a South African Hindu woman, and the Gujarati speaking Hindu leaders of Congress resigned in protest. A few joined the Colonial-Born Association, most withdrew from political action. The nucleus of Congress that remained, divided into antagonistic cliques on the basis of personal differences. Two men, one Moslem and one Parsee, originally close friends and representing similar values, became rivals for power. The Moslem won greater support and was a central and dominant figure.[1]

Internal dissension was destroying political effectiveness of the Indians as a group, and, largely through the influence of the great philosopher, Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, who visited South Africa in 1939, the Natal Indian Congress and the Colonial-Born and Settlers' Association agreed to amalgamate and form the Natal Indian Association. The Moslem merchant leaders of Congress remained aloof and continued with, and in fact virtually became, Congress.

[1] See Calpin, G. H. A. I. Kajee. His Work for the South African Indian community.

But opposition on ideological grounds was developing in the people. This was the period when revolutionary ideas on the Russian pattern were spreading among young intellectuals the world over; it was also for Indians in South Africa, a period of rapid educational advancement, following the Capetown Agreement. And finally, and perhaps most important, the workers were organising into a new force, the Trade Unions. With the drift from agriculture to the towns, Indians became semi-skilled operatives in new and expanding secondary industries. Some Unions, organised on an industrial basis, were inter-racial, other Unions, more especially craft Unions, were racially exclusive;[1] and the exclusion from various Unions (particularly in the building industry) evoked the formation of Non-European Unions with left-wing tendencies. They gave support not to the businessmen but to the radical young intellectuals. Together they became the 'Forward Bloc' and formed themselves into the Anti-Segregation Council. The threat by radicals led to a re-alliance of conservatives in opposition, and the Natal Indian Association merged again into Congress.

The position of Indians in South Africa had steadily deteriorated in spite of resistance and negotiations at both the personal and governmental level.[2] They had lost the parliamentary franchise in Natal in 1896[3], in 1924 they lost the municipal franchise. The rights to trade and property were curtailed and attempts to repatriate the Indians intensified. The Cape Town Agreement, which some South African Indian leaders had accepted in 1927, attempted to encourage repatriation, at the same time as it expressed a readiness to provide for the 'upliftment' by educational and other facilities of those who remained in the country. But when Indians wished to adopt a higher Westernised standard of living, and began to move out of the Indian areas to the more attractive and better serviced European suburbs,

[1] Vide Ringrose, H. G., *Trade Unions in Natal*, 1951, p. 47.

[2] E.g. The Smuts-Gandhi Agreement (1914); the Paddison deputation from India (1925), the Beyers Deputation from South Africa (1926), the Habibullah Deputation from India (1926), culminating in the Cape Town Agreement (1927).

[3] In the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, the Indians were denied political rights; only in the Cape Province they enjoyed parliamentary, provincial and municipal franchise. This discussion is focused on the Indians in Natal.

opposition was raised against 'Indian penetration' leading, in 1943, to the 'Pegging Act'[1], restricting Indians in the ownership or occupation of property.

The intellectuals and trade-unionists of the Anti-Segregation Council condemned the conciliatory techniques adopted at the time by Congress, and in 1945 they challenged and overthrew the conservative merchant leaders whom they described somewhat contemptuously as 'The Old Guard'. The new leadership of Congress was recruited largely from the Anti-Segregation Council, which, once it had captured Congress, in turn became redundant, and dissolved itself. The paid-up membership of the new Congress in 1945, at the height of its success, was 35,000 with leadership drawn from both the Colonial-born and passenger groups. Almost immediately on coming into power the new 'protest' leaders of congress launched the 1946 (Second) Passive Resistance Campaign against the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act of 1946, (the so-called 'Ghetto Act').[2] The conservative clique that had been ousted from power resurrected itself as the South African Indian Organisation, a relic of mercantile exclusiveness.

Significant differences continue in the ideology and structure of the Organisation and Congress as they existed in 1955, (a decade after the coup by the Anti-Segregation bloc). The Organisation operates as a Right Wing, or Conservative group, with an exclusive leadership ready to work by conciliation and compromise, in contrast to the Congress which is Leftist or Radical, with a leadership that claims support from the masses and which is organised for 'protest'. Organisation leaders are mainly successful businessmen of passenger origin; the Congress leaders are intellectuals, professional men and trade unionists of both passenger and indentured origin. In the Organisation, executive power is vested in a few prominent personalities; the

[1] The Trading and Occupation of Land (Transvaal and Natal) Restriction Act, No. 35 of 1943.

[2] The first Indian to passively resist the 'Ghetto Act', before the Passive Resistance was officially launched, was however a leading member of the Natal Indian Organisation whose property was threatened by the so-called 'Ghetto Act'.

Executive Committee of Congress is more representative and more open to democratic pressure.[1]

The internal structure of the two parties reflects the type of action to which they are committed. The president of the Organisation is prepared to act independently of mass support and to take decisions after private discussions with his 'caucus' following,[2] most of whom are also important people in the community because of their roles not only in the Organisation, but in business and various non-political associations. The President of Congress on the other hand is guided by the group that put him into office and which discourages individualism. As one member of the Executive expressed it: "He must not think of himself as Congress, but as the mouthpiece of Congress." Many of the men prominent in Congress have no other claim to communal recognition.

Caste is never mentioned as a qualification for political power but a good reputation and family background undoubtedly carry weight, as they do in the choice of official representatives of most South African Indian organisations. The President of Congress for the past 10 years has been a Tamil doctor with the surname cum caste name of Naicker (a leader). Many people think he is of indentured origin; he is, in fact, a second generation born South African of passenger origin. The President of the Organisation is a business man of passenger background.

The Organisation has fewer branches with small numbers of men of selected quality; Congress has a wider spread and more popular representation. No Indian woman has held any official position in the Organisation; Indian women have been on Congress executive and spoken on Congress platforms. Directives of the Organisation emanate from the centre; in

[1] In 1956, the Executive Committee of the Natal Indian Congress (the powerful local branch of the South African Indian Congress) consisted of 25 members of whom 16 were from indentured stock, 9 from passenger; 16 were Hindus, 8 Moslems and 1 Christian; of the Hindu, 12 were Tamil or Telugu speaking, 3 Hindustani, 1 Gujarati; of the Moslems, 1 was Urdu and 7 Gujarati speaking; the Christian was English speaking. Occupationally 5 were lawyers, 4 doctors, 5 businessmen, 10 were working class and one man was retired.

[2] I am indebted to Mr Eric Whittle for the terminology clarifying the distinction between the 'caucus structure' of the Organisation and the 'democratic structure' of Congress. (Unpublished Manuscript). Mr Whittle derived this concept from M. Duberget, *Political Parties*, 1954.

Congress, each Branch is entitled to send delegates to the annual Provincial Conference, the highest policy making authority for the whole area. The Organisation operates from the business office of its leading officials, Congress from special offices in the same building as the African National Congress.

Supporters of the Organisation are mainly property owners; supporters of Congress are drawn from all sections, particularly the workers, though neither association has ever proclaimed any economic policy in socialist or capitalist terms. Congress leaders, drawn mainly from the middle and professional class, realise that conflicting economic ideologies might split their organisation. They consider that the main issue in the immediate future is the struggle for racial equality of opportunity. The allegiance of the small traders and shack owners is not fixed, and while they may admire the success of Organisation elite, they have on several occasions given moral and financial help to Congress. Both Organisation and Congress leaders realise that the majority of Indians turn more readily to religious, welfare and social organisations than to political groups whose aims are usually frustrated. At the same time Congress, in contrast to the Organisation, attempts to rouse the people to political action by holding mass meetings and small discussion groups.[1]

The political elite in the Organisation explicitly favours conciliatory tactics. In the words of the President . . . 'the Organisation regards itself as the watchdog of Indian interests. It acts by negotiation, discussion and meetings with the relevant authorities'. A professional European journalist and 'top' European lawyers are employed to prepare memoranda and petitions, and if necessary argue the cause of Organisation before the powers that be. The leaders use primarily economic, not political arguments; they negotiate for greater opportunities to trade, and not for the right to vote; they are interested in trading rights in the different provinces and prefer to leave aside such political issues as freedom of movement. They have wealth to preserve, and are reluctant to fight for further advantages for themselves or their community lest they lose what they so

[1] It is impossible to give any accurate figures of the paid-up membership of Congress because their records were raided by the Security Branch of the South African Police.

precariously possess. Congress on the other hand, to quote one of its Executive 'is prepared to oppose all oppression and injustice and will not compromise principles for expediency'. It seeks to remove disabilities, not to adjust to them, and urges 'non-co-operation and non-participation by all Non-Europeans in the machinery of their own oppression'. It is served by its own Indian legal elite assisted by European barristers well known for their 'left' political affiliations.[1]

The Organisation in accordance with its conciliatory policy and distrust of any clearly defined political philosophy, limits its public activities to the Indian people, and does not consider it wise, or even right, to identify itself with other Non-European organisations in any political issue. Organisation leaders deliberately abstained from taking part in the 'Congress of the People', sponsored by the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the South African Coloured Peoples Organisation, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (the Left-Wing of the Trade Union Movement) and the Congress of Democrats (Left-Wing Whites), which aimed at producing a 'Freedom Charter' for the peoples of South Africa. The Organisation is however anxious to win the friendship of Africans, more especially since the 'Durban Riots' of 1949 when African mobs attacked Indians and looted their property. Fearing a recurrence of violence, which was committed by less urbanised and literate Africans, and aware too of the dangers of African nationalism, Organisation leaders are anxious to raise the Africans' social and educational level and to establish amicable relations with the more educated leaders. They therefore encourage members of the Indian community to endow various schools and institutions and to give bursaries to Africans, and they negotiate with African educationalists and welfare workers. In all these dealings the Organisation elite functions primarily as a self-conscious minority, jealous of its own distinctiveness, and afraid to lose its few hard preserved rights.

[1] At the sittings of the Board appointed to implement racial segregation under the Group Areas Act, spokesmen of the Organisation submitted proposals in an attempt to have the Act administered with as little hardship as possible; Congress lawyers used the hearings for political propaganda protesting against the fundamental injustice of racial discrimination as evidenced by the whole process of compulsory segregation, and refused to submit any counter-plans.

Congress considers that in South Africa the first objective is the removal of discrimination based on race, and is prepared to co-operate with people of all groups who share this ideological outlook. It identifies the Congress movement particularly with African development in a 'national' (Non-European) liberatory movement. Co-operation with other Non-European national organisations was one of the points in the programme of the Anti-Segregation Council when campaigning for leadership, and on gaining control of Congress, its leaders made open contact with the African National Congress. The third and last Passive Resistance Campaign, 'The Defiance Campaign against Unjust Laws' (1952)[1] was supported by the three Non-European groups, but mainly by Africans, and each batch of resisters in Natal included Africans and Indians and was led by one of the elite of either group.

Inevitably there is a certain mutual antagonism between Organisation and Congress, though their aims frequently overlap. The Organisation leaders are accused of being prepared to 'play down' their own system of values if they think their aims can be better achieved by expressing themselves in terms approved by the dominant (i.e. White) elite. They are also criticised by Congress dialecticians for being politically naive because they declare themselves opposed to clear-cut ideologies, unaware of their own ideological framework. They in turn describe Congress as 'unrealistic', 'too radical' and 'often irresponsible'. They claim that 'Congress' does little and talks much, and that its constant assertion of principles has not assisted the people in their immediate and urgent struggles, whereas the Organisation by the fact of not being bound to 'ideological absolutes' is more effective in dealing with actual situations.

The cleavage between the two Indian political elites, the 'compromise' and 'protest', is logically extended to international politics. Initially both the Organisation and Congress were prepared to argue the case of the South African Indians before the United Nations but the Organisation considers that at present it would not help to do so because of the relative ineffectiveness of outside intervention. It also fears that the support of Mr

[1] For a full sociological analysis see Leo Kuper, *Passive Resistance in South Africa*, 1956.

Nehru, far from advancing the South African Indians' cause, makes their position more difficult. The Organisation officials therefore claim, in conformity with the present South African Government's own views, that the South African 'Indian question' is a domestic matter. The Organisation elite are at the same time anxious to arrange a Round Table discussion between the Prime Ministers of Pakistan, India, South Africa, together with leading South African Indians.

Congress on the other hand, sees its own struggle for national liberation in South Africa as part of national liberatory movements throughout the world, and is ready to support cultural, social or political issues which may be presented by international non-racial bodies. It too has changed its attitude to the United Nations, but for ideological reasons, the Secretary of Congress, stating in his 1950 report that 'The United Nations has been turned into the world wide agency for imperialism'.

The reaction of the present South African Nationalist Government to the two different types of Non-European leadership, compromise and protest, influences its relationship to Organisation and Congress. It apparently considers the Organisation to be a useful body on whom its own (Nationalist) propaganda can have effective results, and the Nationalist Government's Prime Minister (Mr Strijdom) was prepared to meet Organisation representatives and concede that his government would give their requests 'sympathetic' consideration. But the Nationalist Governments' Minister of Justice aware of the influence of the protest leaders of Congress on the Indian people and the Non-Europeans generally, banned many of the responsible and policy making leaders of Congress under the Suppression of Communism Act. In the mass trials in which 156 people of all races were originally arrested in December, 1956, and charged with 'High Treason', there were 20 Indians, all of whom were at one time or other associated with Congress.

The differences between Organisation and Congress however, are not as absolute as may appear. Decisions in Congress are also ultimately the responsibility of a small sophisticated leadership, and for the Organisation to be at all effective necessitates some recognition of mass needs. (It is significant that in recent negotiations with the Government, Organisation representatives

claimed that they spoke for 30,000 Indians.) Both Organisation and Congress are not official parliamentary parties and are intensely aware that as a voteless minority they suffer discrimination and that they must attempt (by protest or compromise) to improve the position of 'the Indians' in South Africa.

Local authorities in Natal cannot ignore the existence of Indians in the area, and have established relationships, more or less formal, with Indian representatives. In Durban the Indian Advisory Committee of the City Council, a body consisting of European councillors only, invites prominent Indians to discuss matters affecting 'their people', and though the men most regularly consulted come from the Organisation, Congress leaders have also presented their point of view both before the Indian Advisory Committee, and other Committees of the City Council.[1] In such situations, Representatives of Organisation and Congress realise the need to present a united front and not to stress internal differences. Moreover some of the Congress men who were radical in their youth have become more conservative with age and success, and it would sometimes seem that the uncompromising protest role they played in the past forces them to continue in public in that role, but their personal lives contradict their political stand, drawing them closer to a compromise adjustment.

While political support wavers between Organisation and Congress, the future of both depends less on the Indian people than on the government of the Union of South Africa from which they are excluded, and which has the power to ban not only individual leaders but political organisations. In such a situation individual personalities assume greater importance than in a democratic party system.

Apart from the two main Indian political associations

[1] It is possible that some form of local representation will be restored to Indians in the near future. In 1959 the suggestion was made by the Mayor of Durban that Indians be granted representation on the Council; the matter was referred to the Natal Municipal Association but no decision was taken. The question has also been raised in other centres in Natal where Indian Ratepayers have formed strong associations. In the little town of Stanger on the North Coast, a limited number of Indians still remain on the Municipal Voters Roll from 1924, and one of them has on several occasions been elected to the Council by a vote which is predominantly White. In Tongaat, also on the North Coast, two Indians are appointed as full members to the Local Town Board.

(Congress and Organisation), two others, the Liberal Party and the Non-European Unity Movement, are open to Indians. The Liberal Party is inter-racial in membership, but, being a recognised Parliamentary party acting within the Parliamentary framework of the country, it is suspect by certain radical Non-Europeans. It has, however, a few hundred Indian members in Natal and receives support from several of the leaders. The Non-European Unity Movement, as its name implies, has a Non-European emphasis in membership; its main strength lies in the Coloured teachers in the Cape but it also includes a few Indian intelligentsia in Natal. Though in theory it has a protest leadership, Non-European Unity Movement spokesmen in Natal are critical of any action directed against specific discriminatory legislation, and direct their energies to discussion groups and study circles which they hope will lead to the production of a new intellectual Non-European leadership. Neither the Liberal Party nor the Non-European Unity Movement is considered by the majority of Indians as representative of Indian interests as Congress or Organisation.

The political outlook of the various elites is reflected in their social life. Among members of the Organisation, in-group exclusiveness becomes intensified, and they participate almost solely in social and religious organisations of a sectional character, often serving on these in the capacity of officials and/or patrons. The Congress elite on the other hand avoids such associations and expresses overt disapproval of organisations which may cause communal divisions. The Liberal Party operates on an inter-racial level and its members make deliberate attempts to hold mixed gatherings. The Unity Movement restricts association with Europeans and Non-Europeans who belong to political bodies other than their own.

Despite the intensity of Indian political activity, the number of political elite is small. The masses, involved in the struggle for daily existence, take little part except in situations (e.g. wages, housing and education) that affect them directly and individually. Moreover, at present, political activity is dangerous and many of those who are interested in political issues are not prepared to incur the risk of being banned or penalised in some other way (e.g. by being refused permits and passports). The

failure to improve Indian conditions over the past years has also disillusioned many of those who were recognised as 'elite' through participation in the various Passive Resistance campaigns. As for the political elite, their interaction with Whites in the total political structure is inevitably restricted, since they represent a virtually voteless people. They experience continuous frustration in their struggle against discrimination, they cannot hope to realise the satisfaction of their political ambitions, and if they take a radical stand, they are exposed to personal danger.

III. The Business Elite

The interaction of economics and politics developed the two distinct branches of the political elite analysed in the previous section. But wealth itself is a dynamo driving by its own power into other than political fields.

In the economic structure, Indians are pressed between two powerful opposing forces, the one represented by Europeans who monopolise privileges through various restrictive techniques (e.g. the Colour Bar) backed sometimes by law and sometimes by convention, the other represented by Africans who, by their better physique and preparedness to accept a lower scale of pay, are replacing Indians at the base of the economic pyramid (Table IV). Indian occupations are mainly restricted to manual work (about three-quarters of the labour force in 1951), mostly semi-skilled and unskilled: a large number of Indians (almost one in seven) are regularly unemployed.

The broad stratification of Europeans, Indians and Africans is not altered by the presence of a few hundred Indian big business and professional men in the highest (i.e. European) income group. The majority of traders have little capital and own small retail shops, the few wealthy are mainly wholesalers and factory owners.[1] As a community, the Indians of Durban are poor, with a per capita income about one-seventh of the Europeans;

[1] In Durban there are about 25 large wholesale merchants and about 20 flourishing industrialists, of whom five run clothing factories, four furniture factories, two printing presses and the remainder have factories producing various foodstuffs, some specifically related to Indian diet.

TABLE IV.

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF OCCUPATIONS WITHIN EACH ETHNIC GROUP, DURBAN—1951 CENSUS

Occupational Category	Percent Gainfully Occupied			
	Europeans	Coloureds	Indians	Africans
1. Professional Technical and Related Workers	10·98	3·86	3·04	1·27
2. Managers, Administrators, and Officials ..	8·79	0·53	5·87	0·23
3. Clerical, Office and Related Workers	28·85	1·58	4·44	0·92
4. Salesmen and Related Workers	8·29	1·21	8·70	0·69
5. Farmers, Fishermen, Hunters, Lumbermen, etc.	0·60	0·96	4·08	1·21
6. Mine, Quarry and Related Workers	0·33	0·08	0·07	0·53
7. Workers in Operating Transport Occupations	3·41	5·79	4·44	2·89
8. Craftsmen, Factory Operatives, Manual Workers, Labourers, etc.	30·12	60·84	41·29	54·26
9. Services and Related Workers	5·69	13·34	13·22	36·55
10. Other* and Unindentifiable	2·94	11·81	14·85	1·45
TOTAL	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00

* This category includes members of the armed forces, consular personnel, unemployed, Native Chiefs and headmen.
Source: Kuper, Watts and Davies, *Durban: A Study in Racial Ecology*, 1958.

this is only partly because they have the highest dependency rate of any other racial group in the city as a result of the high proportion of people too young to earn and the restricted number of women in employment.[2] In 1951, less than 100 Indians in

[2] In 1951, the per capita income of Indians in Durban was £40.02 per annum, and of Europeans, £282.74 per annum. Of the total Durban Indian population of 146,183 people, 113,629 (77.73%) were in receipt of no income at all and approximately half the population was under the age of sixteen years. These figures are based on a special census tabulation: the total for the Indian population of Durban, given above, is slightly different from the total given in the 1951 Union census.

Durban were recorded liable for super tax payable on incomes over £1,775, while the total number of Indians paying any Income Tax was under 1,500.[1]

The division into indentured-labouring and passenger-trading groups underlies the distribution of poor and wealthy Indian families, but class divisions associated with Western industrialism cut across the original straightforward economic dichotomy. The indentured labourers who came as poor men and women, and who severed their ties with village India, were dependent on earnings in Natal. After they had served their term, some became market gardeners, others followed in the footsteps of the passengers and turned to hawking and trading. The majority however remained as labourers in agriculture until secondary industry created new openings and, over the past forty years, there has been a steady drift of Indians as labourers and industrial workers to the towns.

The dynamic aspect of Indian economy has been the emergence from the ex-indentured of a small core of wealthy elite in business and in professions. Whereas until about 30 years ago all the wealthiest business men were Gujarati speaking Moslems and Hindus of the passenger class, it is estimated that today about twenty-five percent are Tamil, Telugu and Hindi speaking Hindu from the indentured class.

The passengers were not all wealthy. A few started branches of businesses already established in Bombay or Mauritius, but the majority had little or no capital. There was however a sense of solidarity between them and the better off helped their 'own town' boys into trade. Though they did not all prosper and the upward mobility from the indentured group was to some extent paralleled by a slipping down the economic scale of a few passengers and their entry into non-commercial occupations, the extent to which the original divisions persist is evident from the following table:

[1] Woods, C. A., *The Indian Community of Natal*, 1954, p. 32.

TABLE V

HOME LANGUAGE, ANNUAL MEAN INCOME, DEPENDENCY RATE AND PER CAPITA INCOME OF THE INDIAN POPULATION, DURBAN—1951 CENSUS

Home Language	Annual Mean Income*	Dependency Rate†			Per Capita Income
		Male	Female	Total	
	£				£
Gujarati	458·42	147·07	2761·07	346·29	102·71
English	219·23	120·36	1022·22	239·82	64·51
Urdu	208·91	187·09	4709·92	441·87	38·55
Hindi	165·06	162·18	3339·43	382·05	34·24
Tamil	146·09	152·57	2218·76	353·73	32·19
Telugu	144·95	147·57	1916·39	335·99	33·25

* Of persons in receipt of income.
† Number of persons *not* in receipt of income per 100 persons in receipt of income.
(Figures from Kuper, Watts and Davies, 1958.)

The Gujarati, who so conspicuously have the higher income are, as indicated above, either Moslem or Hindu of passenger origin. Among the Moslems, those from Surat are more wealthy than those from Kathiawar. The English speaking are mainly Christians. The Urdu speaking are both passenger and indentured Moslems. The remainder are predominantly of indentured Hindu origin.

Objectively viewed, there are within the Natal Indian community three economic classes—the working class (many of whom are unemployed), the middle class, consisting of trading and white collar workers, including teachers, and the upper class of wealthy merchants and independent professionals. To the majority of working class Indians, however, there are simply two main divisions, *Banya* (merchants and business men) and Not-*Banya* (workers), most workers being inevitably Tamil, Telugu and Hindi speakers, and the *Banya* mainly Gujarati.

Indian economic development was restricted by lack of capital, trading experience and opportunity, and the easiest and safest investment lay in property, a recognised source of prestige and power. At first, the passengers invested in trading sites,

and lived in premises attached to their shops; they were criticised for transferring their profits to India. Later the wealthier also bought agricultural land which they usually leased to ex-indentured Indians and to Africans.

Home ownership developed into a driving ambition among the majority of Indians, who feel and are insecure, and from the time of the first 'freed' indentured, Indians strove to acquire their own homes on land they bought or rented. The more wealthy were then criticised by Whites for buying up the land. Yet even in Durban, the main area of Indian living and development in South Africa, their investments are relatively small. Indian owned property in Durban was valued at twenty-four-and-a-half million pounds in 1951 and European owned at about one hundred and fourteen million pounds (Report of the Technical Sub-Committee on Race Zoning, appointed by the Durban City Council on 20th November, 1950: Part III, p. 173).

In 1943, the free purchase of land by Indians was restricted in Durban and in 1946 this restriction was extended throughout Natal. At present, the survival of the Indian propertied (and landed) class is threatened by powers conferred on the government under the Group Areas Act and the Group Areas Development Act. It is obvious that, in economic power, the Indians of Natal, including the more wealthy, are relatively light weight, and are dependent on the government of South Africa and the province of Natal for the preservation of what they have and the goals to which they can aspire. It is, and has always been, against the successful Indian that the strongest prejudice is directed. This was expressed in an official document which summarised the majority view of the Euopean population of Natal as follows: 'The Indian of the labouring, peasant and employee class is serving a useful purpose, but the Indian of the more affluent classes is a menace to European civilisation in Natal' . . . (Ninth Interim Report of the Natal Post-War Works and Reconstruction Commission, No. 23 of 1945, Part II, para. 10)

Indian business men have no representative on the local Chamber of Industries or of Commerce, and attempts to be admitted have met with evasions. No Indian is on the Licensing Board or Transportation Board: applications by Indians are put forward mainly by European lawyers. Though in actual

trade relations with Europeans, Indian merchants usually receive courteous treatment commensurate with their custom, there are no easy opportunities for equal status contact in social life between them and their European counterparts. To overcome some of the prejudice, deliberate attempts are made by Indian merchants to entertain European personalities at formal banquets. This is one of the main functions of the exclusive Orient Club, but Indian women are not present and the functions (without liquor, and at which the 'honoured guest' must always make an after-dinner speech) lack the spice of intimacy and maintain contact at a superficial level. The Indian hosts are also increasingly sensitive to the fact that the invitation is seldom, if ever, reciprocated.

The employer-employee relationship is controlled basically by colour. Europeans employ Indians in semi-skilled and skilled occupations, but after any dispute between Non-European labour and European management, there is a tendency to replace Indians by Africans or Coloureds. Some of the larger Indian firms employ Europeans as bookkeepers and accountants, but, except for one large fashionable soft goods shop with connections in Bombay, never as salesmen nor in any other capacity. The employment of Europeans by an Indian might give him prestige in his own community; the non-employment of Indians by Europeans accords with the accepted values of White Natalians. A preference for employment by Europeans is generally expressed by Indians.

Indian traders have developed largely through the African as well as the Indian market. They have shown a quick appreciation of African needs and desires, and many of them have stocked their shops accordingly; their prices are often lower than those of the Europeans; they frequently assist their customers with credit; many of them have acquired a fluency in the African language (they sometimes also employ African assistants) and the African responds to the oriental convention of bargaining. Despite this economic inter-dependence, the merchant elite maintains towards the African a narrow in-group exclusiveness which is only gradually breaking down. They have begun to differentiate between the tribesman and the educated Westernised African; and while they describe tribal Africans

as 'simple', 'uneducated' and 'without any real culture of their own', they are willing to give financial assistance to raise their educational and social standards; they are also increasingly prepared to associate with the African middleclass, professional and business men. It is in Indian owned premises that African agents, trade unionists and business people may obtain rooms without discrimination and prominent Africans are sometimes invited to special functions and sit on the platform with leading Indian merchants.

Wealth is the main measure of success among most South Africans and occupations are rated largely by their economic return. Occupational snobbery associated with caste has a historic background. Among South African Indians hawking, pawnbroking and dealing in second-hand goods fall into the category of traded, and are not generally looked down upon as long as they bring in adequate incomes. Merchants and professional men are given precedence in most situations by the semi-skilled and skilled workers, largely because of their higher income or high salary scale. Yet wealth is not necessarily displayed in possessions or standard of living. Austerity of living is part of South African Hindu tradition and is still deliberately adhered to by some of the older, less Westernised generation, though the younger men tend to consume wealth more conspicuously, particularly in clothing, motor-cars, and lavish weddings. The reputation of wealth is established largely by donations to public institutions which are widely publicised in Indian papers, in the market place and at social gatherings.

The names of the wealthiest families are known throughout Durban Indian society, and when collections are made for any educational or welfare purpose the elites are approached in order of estimated wealth. It is accepted that the donation of 'the top man' sets the level for subsequent donors and every effort is therefore made to elicit from him the maximum amount. It is important that the approach be made by the 'right people', and never by one person alone and never by letter. A worthy cause has been known to suffer because the collectors were socially or economically insignificant.

The wives of the wealthy are the elite within their own restricted religious and linguistic boundaries and while they

seldom appear on public social occasions, they set the standard of ambition and of fashion by their clothes, jewels and general deportment, at the weddings or religious functions which they are permitted to attend. The luxuries of an elaborate home are often desired but difficult to achieve in a town where there is racially restricted ownership or occupation of homes in the more fashionable suburbs, and where substantial houses are almost impossible to obtain in the over-crowded 'Indian Areas'.

But the wealthy elite is not a secure well-established class with a tradition of permanence and associated power. On the contrary, very few South African Indian families have had wealth or kept it for more than a generation. Wealth belongs to families, rather than to individuals, and as the family increases in size, the per capita wealth does not necessarily expand accordingly. Sons inherit 'the throne of the father', whether or not they are trained or fitted for it, and in many cases they have, through wastefulness or incompetence, squandered the hard won fortune. These are normal vicissitudes, and relatively insignificant beside the general attack on Indian property and trading rights under the new laws for racial segregation.

CHAPTER IV

The New South African Indian Elite (*continued*)

IV The Intellectual Elite

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION was tied to religion[1] and for Hindus and Moslems was evaluated primarily by knowledge of the sacred books.

The early immigrants did not include any outstanding scholars, but among both passengers and indentured there were a few individuals able to give limited instruction in the vernacular. When the people became more settled, religious and language groups imported special teachers, but for the most part the salaries offered were too low and the social environment was too difficult to attract the best qualified and most highly cultured. After 1913, when Indian immigration was virtually prohibited, teaching was one avenue whereby new men could enter the country, and after nine years in the teaching profession, obtain domiciliary rights. Having served the nine years, many of the more ambitious and enterprising moved into more lucrative business.

More recently, through developments in India and Pakistan, and increasing anti-Indian discrimination in South Africa, the interest of South African Indians in traditional Indian culture has grown, and a few (less than a dozen) outstanding scholars trained in leading universities and *ashrams* have been induced to come to South Africa as teachers. They form a recognised intellectual elite within their own sub-groups, and, to a much lesser extent, within the Indian community as a whole. They depend on the patronage of the wealthy who employ them in private schools where the pay is low and their public activities are restricted by religious boundaries.

[1] See Chapter X for a discussion of religious leaders and religious organisations. See also Indian Elites in Natal, Social Sciences Conference Durban, 1956.

The most influential and esteemed of the intellectuals are men and women who have attained a high degree of Western education. The Cape Town Agreement of 1927 offered the hope that citizen rights would be accorded Indians who followed Western standards of living; and Indians, realising that a Western education was necessary to achieve this objective, intensified their efforts for educational facilities. While the Agreement did not itself provide the means, the 'uplift' clause of the Agreement marks a stage in Indian development in South Africa—the capitalisation of Western education.

Initially children who conformed in dress and habit to Western standards were allowed to attend European private schools, but the State made no provision for the other children, a few of whom went to schools started by Christian missionaries. Later, by Law 20 of 1878, the Indian Immigrant School Board was created to care for the education of the children of indentured immigrants, thus laying the basis for educational segregation, and in 1899 the Government discontinued the admission of Indian boys, and in 1905 of Indian girls, to European schools.

A study of South African education[2] reveals a constant struggle by the Indian community to obtain adequate education for their children. There were, in 1950, five times as many Indian schools in Natal as in 1927, and the number of students had increased from under 10,000 to over 80,000. Yet despite this increase, the Department stated in 1956 that 9,207 children (7,016 in Durban alone) had not been able to gain admission into any school.[1] The great majority of pupils do not go beyond Standard VI and of these only a small percentage reach matriculation standard. Thus there were 2,729 scholars in Standard VI in 1951, and only 349 scholars in Standard X (Matriculation) in 1955. Those who pass Matriculation standard and are ambitious for further study may attend a Teachers Training College or the University. The Natal University since 1936, has given an

[1] By 1959 the number had been reduced to under 4,000 through the concerted efforts of the Natal Indian Teachers' Society (whose members are contributing a self-imposed levy for school buildings), the Indian public (through donations) and the Natal Provincial Administration (which contributes on a pound for pound basis) and it is possible that in a few years every Indian child will be able to enter a primary school.

[2] See publication of Natal Indian Teachers' Society, Silver Jubilee, 1925-1950.

increasing number of courses for Non-Europeans,[1] and a few who can afford it, study at the two (at present) non-segregated universities in the Union,[2] or, preferably, in universities in the British Isles (mainly Edinburgh and Dublin) or in India.

The number of Indian intellectuals is still small. In Natal, approximately 2,000 are in professions, and of these more than 1,800 are teachers, some 70 are doctors, 25 are lawyers, 3 are dentists, 1 is a surveyor, and a few are in social work. There are as yet no engineers, accountants, pharmacists or architects. Of the teachers, some 200 are University graduates, of whom between thirty and forty are post-graduates. There is one Indian with a Ph.D., and he holds a research (not a teaching) post in the University of Natal. That the Western educated elite is a newly emerging group is illustrated by the wide difference in educational standards between scholars and their parents.[3] Professional women come mainly from homes in which one or both parents were educated beyond Standard VI, but this does not apply to the men.

The composition of the present educated elite reflects the process of adaptation of the two streams of Indian immigrants. The first passenger merchants, both Hindu and Moslem, were the least interested in Western education which was less profitable than business. The later passengers included Christians who already spoke English and who came in as teachers. For the poor, education provided the main opportunity for upward mobility, and the ex-indentured showed the greatest desire for education.

From interviews, observations of behaviour and protocol on important public occasions, it is clear that the professions are rated on a prestige scale, though there is less occupational snobbery than in Western society. At the top of the scale is the doctor. This is partly because of his unlimited, i.e. unspeci-

[1] These courses, started for the Bachelor of Arts degree, now include Commerce, Social Science, Education, Law and Medicine (since 1951). By 1958 there were 301 Indian students of whom 40 were women.

[2] The Nationalist Government is forcing apartheid on all South African Universities and introducing legislation for ethnic and tribal Universities.

[3] Of 236 students training as teachers in 1956, 105 had passed Standard VIII and 131 had matriculated (Standard X); in the parent generation 88 fathers and 27 mothers had passed Standard VI, and 148 fathers and 209 mothers were either completely illiterate or semi-literate.

fied, earning capacity, derived from his long and expensive professional training, partly because of the prestige of the title (or 'handle') associated with his knowledge, and partly because of his service to the community.[1] The first Doctors were from the passenger group and qualified overseas, but later children of the 'free indentured' entered the profession.[2]

TABLE VI

RANKING OF OCCUPATIONS BY FIRST YEAR SOCIOLOGY STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, 1957

Occupation	Rank		
	Indian	African	European
Doctor	2·0	2·1	1·4
Teacher	3·0	3·8	3·0
Industrialist	3·7	3·8	3·9
Skilled Artisan	4·8	6·0	5·8
Farmer	5·3	3·6	4·8
Banker	5·8	5·4	4·7
Civil Servant	6·0	7·3	6·7
Clerk	7·3	7·8	7·6
Small Shopkeeper	7·8	7·3	8·1
Factory Worker	9·0	8·5	9·2

Next to the doctors come the lawyers, of whom the first to practise in South Africa was Mohandas Karamchand (Ghandiji). Until ten to fifteen years back, Indians anxious to qualify as lawyers had considerable difficulty in being articled, but, with the gradual increase in the number of those qualified, new opportunities were created.

[1] First year Indian students in the Sociology classes at the University of Natal rated the doctor highest and next the teacher. This high valuation of these two professions was also given by African and European students, showing the importance, among students, of intellectual qualifications and service to the community.

[2] Of 67 doctors practising in Durban in 1956, whose background we analysed, there are forty of passenger, and twenty-seven of indentured stock. In the passenger group, twenty-three are Moslem, eight are Hindu, five are Christian and four are Parsee; except for one Christian, all the 'free indentured' group are Hindu, of whom seventeen are Tamil and Telugu and nine are Hindustani speaking. Apart from one man, who has specialised in ear, nose and throat, all the doctors are in general practice, and their work is confined to private patients and beds in private hospitals run specifically for Non-Europeans.

Teaching is ranked lower than other professions, partly because teachers have a relatively low earning capacity (it approximates most closely to that of skilled workers in industry) and require a shorter period of training than other professionals. Only principals of high schools and a few senior teachers with University degrees and top salary scales are honoured socially by other elite. A somewhat larger number of teachers form an elite within the teaching profession itself and serve on Teachers' societies. The teacher holding only a Junior Certificate still finds employment, but matriculation is recognised by most of the younger generation as the first rung on the intellectual ladder. The majority of teachers are drawn from the ex-indentured group, and it is only since 1943 that children of the merchant class began to enter the teaching profession in any significant numbers.[1]

The rating by the communtiy of the intellectual elite does not depend on service in the social or political fields. Teachers, less highly rated than other professionals, play the most pronounced role in social welfare organisations, and though they are debarred by their contracts from taking part in politics, they are recognised as a politically conscious group.[2] On the whole, lawyers are more politically active[3] than doctors, who, apart from a few notable exceptions, show relatively little interest in community activities. The majority of all professional men active in politics belong, openly or covertly, to the protest elite.

The South African Indian intellectuals have adopted many of the values and symbols of White South Africans. Their homes are furnished in western style, and their social relations are noticeably free and non-sectional. They hold parties to which they invite

[1] In 1943, the teachers in Government-aided schools were put on the same (relatively high) economic scale as teachers in Government schools, and at about the same period avenues for commercial employment were restricted. But the proportional preponderance of 'ex-indentured' to 'passenger' is still apparent. In 1956, of 236 students at the Springfield Teacher Training Centre, only 13 were definitely of 'passenger' origin (i.e. spoke Gujarati as a home language). Of the remainder, 88 gave Tamil as their home language, 55 Hindi, 23 Telugu, 51 English and 6 Urdu.

[2] As early as 1900, teachers organised to improve teaching conditions. In 1925, the present Natal Indian Teachers' Society was formed to deal with various aspects of Indian education, and in 1957, it had 16 active branches.

[3] Of the 21 best known lawyers, 14 hold official positions in political parties, while from among as many as 70 doctors, only 9 or 10 are associated with political parties; however, others are active, in a voluntary capacity, in religious, social welfare and health institutions.

colleagues from all sections of the Indian community, Europeans with liberal sympathies, and occasionally intellectual Africans. Men and women eat together from Western utensils,[3] and the women are expected to take part in general conversation. English is often the chief, and sometimes the only, language spoken in the home. The adaptation by the intellectuals, however, is not deliberate emulation of 'European South Africans' and few Indian intellectuals aim at being accepted by Whites as Whites.

Between Western educated children and uneducated or traditionally educated parents, conflicts of values are frequent. The relationship is complicated further by the fact that the entry of one member of a family into the educated elite is usually made possible by financial contributions from kinsmen; they subsequently share the deference accorded their protégé, while he tries to repay his economic obligations towards them. The conflict between the Westernised child and the conservative parent is frequently based on differences in regard to marriage and domestic life. The young professional generally desires a wife who will bolster his modern ways, and he is reluctant to marry a woman whose mode of life has been restricted by an orthodox upbringing. He finds the traditional technique of wife-hunting embarrassing, but opportunities for meeting Indian girls socially are limited. As a result several young professional men have married against the wishes of their parents, choosing women accessible for premarital acquaintanceship, i.e. women from the less conservative families in the Indian community or from other ethnic groups (European, Coloured and Malay). The occurrence of outgroup marriage is rare, but appears to be most frequent among the educated sons of Gujarati Moslems, i.e. the group where segregation of the sexes is most rigid.

Most professional men follow the general pattern of bringing their wives to live with their parents for the first period of married life, but this restricts Western acquired individualism, and, when they have the means, they try to establish separate homes. Once on their own, the Western educated man and woman tend to restrict the size of their family, emphasising the high cost of

[3] Some, however, still consider the use of cutlery less hygienic than fingers for taking food to the mouth provided they are able to wash their hands before and after eating.

educating children and the difficulty of rearing them without the help of relatives in the same house.

Indian women are generally considered extensions of their husbands, but the more highly educated women are rated by their own accomplishments. Their status is a personal achievement sometimes attained in the face of strong family opposition, and until a few years back in face of strong social opposition. Their emancipation is sometimes overtly manifested in dress, or occasionally hair style. (Western dress is universally permitted for school wear, but for married women to dress in Western fashion or cut short their tresses still invites criticism.)

Because of the ascription of a domestic role to Indian women, not many girls were able to acquire high school education, but in the past twenty yeats the restrictive attitudes have changed considerably, and the number of girl pupils has increased correspondingly. In 1937, only forty-seven girls attended secondary schools; in 1955 the number had swelled to 781. During the same period, the percentages of girls to boys in all standards, both primary and secondary, almost doubled—38% in 1937 and 70% in 1955.

For women, as well as for men, recognition as members of the intellectual elite requires more than a secondary education and Western clothing. By 1959 between twenty and thirty women had obtained the degree of Bachelor of Arts at the Natal University, one had a Master's degree, there were eleven doctors and two women lawyers. The intellectual women are the only women who do not lose status by spinsterhood, and if they marry they are expected to continue with their careers. Independence and self-confidence, qualities not desired in the average South African Indian woman, have won for the educated a certain immunity from social criticism, but generally speaking they try to observe most of the conventions of their groups, unwilling to have their enlightenment misinterpreted as disrespect of their own people and slavish imitation of Western ways.

Several educated women are active workers in public affairs as well as valuable ornaments. They serve on various women's committees, act as patrons of organisations, speak at social functions, or play other prestige-giving roles. Until recently they took

little part in politics, which were regarded as primarily a man's field of action, but with an intensification of 'apartheid' there is a change of attitude and a special women's branch of the Natal Indian Congress was formed in 1956.

The Western educated Indians, having moved furthest from tradition, consciously suffer most through exclusion in South Africa from European theatres, music and other cultural activities. They are faced with additional conflict when these are offered on the basis of segregated seating or segregated performances. The 'protest' leaders of the political elite generally boycott such occasions and urge others to do likewise, but the majority of Indians are not prepared to deny themselves such rare pleasures, tainted though they be by guilt and humiliation. Informal social relationships with educated Europeans are rare, except for a few personal friendships across the colour bar between individuals drawn mainly from the professions and non-racialist political groups. The few inter-racial organisations of the do-good type are not particularly popular, and some of the educated Indian members say they belong 'without pleasure', unwilling to be patronised and sensitive to rebuff, and feeling that it is not worth the effort to deliberately strive to break down in isolated instances the accepted status relationships. It is mainly from the less radical and more conciliatory section that office holders of such race-relations organisations are drawn.

Since educational qualifications are not sufficient to break through the colour bar, the attitude of Indian intellectuals towards Europeans is characteristically ambivalent: on the one hand they identify with European culture and on the other, as they are rejected by Europeans, they in turn desire to reject them. At the same time the Indian intellectuals who protest most strongly against segregation, and who identify themselves politically with Africans, are aware that they cannot identify themselves with the culture of Africans except through sharing in Westernisation. They cannot—even if they wished—spread the culture of India throughout South Africa, a culture of which many are very ignorant.

V. Sport and Entertainment

Exclusion of Non-Europeans, irrespective of ability or qualification, is extended in South Africa to their participation in sport. It is in those fields that Non-Whites in America and England first broke through into an established elite and the possibility of a similar development is being consciously explored by African and Indian protest leaders in South Africa.

While sport and entertainment are part of any developed society, the promotion of the participants to the status of elite depends not only on their individual achievements but on the values underlying the structure of their associations. In South Africa the Indian sport and entertainment personnel fall into two distinct categories, the players and the organisers (often described as 'administrators' or 'managers'), and while the players as yet do not form part of the generally accepted 'upper circles', the organisers qualify for membership at certain levels. Within the 'players', sportsmen are more admired and appreciated than entertainers, but in neither field is there a developed 'hero' or 'star' cult. The popularity of a player on the sports ground or on the stage does not elevate him to a position of importance in community affairs. The power and prestige role is assumed by the manager or promoter.

Non-Europeans co-operate more closely in sport than in any other activity. Though teams are usually selected separately from Indians, Africans and Coloureds, they play against each other and sports organisers are appointed to boards of control for their personal qualities irrespective of sectional affiliation. Indian officials play an impressive part, predominating numerically over officials from other groups, though Indian teams are in the minority. This is indicative of the inter-racial tolerance of the players, which is also promoted by the publicity given to sportsmen in most Non-European papers.

Organisations formed by Non-Europeans in recent years have not only been inter-racial, but deliberately non-racial. The South African Soccer Federation, the South African Cricket Board of Control, and the South African Table Tennis Board all function as non-racial bodies. European sporting bodies however, abstain from joining, and maintain their own exclusive organisations, and

the protest leadership among Non-Europeans is attempting to exert pressure on them through international organisations. The urge is for equal status recognition not only in South Africa but in the world generally, and representations are being made for affiliation to the various international sports organisations.[1] Already the South African Table Tennis Board, with membership open to all, has been accepted by the world body (which refused affiliation to the European counterpart on the grounds of sectionalism), and played its first tournaments overseas in 1956. When Non-European sportsmen leave South Africa they become more than 'players' or 'athletes', they are raised emotionally to the level of ambassadors.[2]

The pressure for international recognition of non-racial local organisations comes mainly from the organisers drawn largely from the wealthy elite, some of whom in other situations have conservative political alliances. Protest, not compromise, is being advocated, and the Non-European cause in the field of sport has been publicly championed by Europeans of liberal outlook, including Father Trevor Huddlestone, Canon Collins, Alan Paton and Harry Bloom.

Apart from the status of Indian sportsmen vis-a-vis racial outgroups, they are a potential, rather than actual, elite in their own community. No specific 'Indian sports' are played, but 'Western' sport is supported by all sections of the South African Indian population. In 1890, the free indentured formed the first Indian soccer teams and since then clubs have developed for cycling, cricket, boxing, football, tennis, table tennis, swimming and athletics. The provision of a few central sports grounds, and the

[1] In 1956 the South African Soccer Federation, representing all Non-European players, stated its case against the Football Association of Southern Africa composed of Europeans only, before the International Federation of Football Associations at Lisbon. The decision was postponed. The South African Cricket Board of Control (Non-Racial) is about to seek world recognition and South African Non-European sporting organisations are contemplating seeking admission to the Olympic Games at which South Africa has, up to the present, been represented by Europeans only.

[2] Since writing this, a young Durban Indian, Sewsunkar 'Papwa' Saligrow, has won the Dutch Open Golf Championship of 1959; he is being proudly acclaimed—and claimed—by local Indians. Previously he had no standing, since he was uneducated and very poor. He was sent overseas by his White employers who had been impressed by his golfing skill when he acted as their caddy. Local Indians are now interested also in helping him become literate and move into a better home.

comparatively cheap price at which games can be enjoyed by large numbers, accelerated the progress of sport among people whose opportunities for entertainment and self-expression were economically, politically and culturally restricted. Indian newspapers are cognisant of the place of sport in the lives of the Indian public and give sporting news as much space as political news. Obituary notices, described by an Indian friend as 'the final act of self-assertion by members of an oppressed group', rarely fail to register the sporting activities of the deceased, no matter how parochial these may have been. While the European press confines its reports of Non-European political activities to the sensational, it gives a fair amount of publicity to Non-European sport.

Sports organisers and managers are elected to prominent positions on sporting organisations by virtue of their pre-eminence in some other field of social life such as politics, business or education. The majority of these men no longer play themselves, nor need they have excelled in sport in their youth, though they may have had past personal experience, but it is as members of the general elite that they continue to be actively interested.

The outstanding player who receives mass adulation during the game and has his picture published in the newspapers, provides a measure of aspiration for the young would-be sportsman, but in so-called 'high society' he need enjoy no special status. Only in boxing, the arena in which South African Non-Europeans have already won international fame, the professional receives more than public acclaim and newspaper publicity, and has a distinctive and high status. Apart from the occasional boxer, all South African Indian sportsmen are part-time and non-professional and their achievements do not add to their livelihood nor elevate them to the influential role of organisers. Each year the various sporting bodies arrange banquets and parties, and honour is conferred on players by the presence of a few specially invited men and women from the recognised elite, who extol the teams in speeches.

Focussing more sharply on Indian participants in different sports, a selective process (based on economic class distinction) is evident though the training ground in most cases has been the school which draws pupils from all levels. Soccer, football and boxing are played mainly by the working class, cricket and tennis mainly by the wealthy, the professional and the intellectual elite.

Following the pattern of group exclusiveness in the Indian community which is most pronounced in the merchant class, tennis and cricket clubs exist in which membership is confined to a single religious group.

Indian women are not prohibited from sports but the domestic role of the average housewife excludes her participation. A few Indian women from the intellectual elite play tennis and table tennis, even entering for inter-racial tournaments, while wives and daughters of some merchants play in the seclusion of private courts. Indian schoolgirls from all socio-economic classes are actively interested in athletics, and school sports serve indirectly as a means of bridging social and racial gulfs, but the 'sportsgirl' is not a South African Indian ideal.

The status of Indian artists is somewhat differently evaluated from that of sportsmen. The concert performer, the professional actor, the sculptor and painter were essential to traditional Indian (i.e. Hindu) culture. Talent was highly developed but the artists were associated with the court or the temple. In modern India and Pakistan 'the state' is the foremost patron, subsidising the arts and raising the status of artists. In South Africa, the Indian artist suffers from lack of appreciation and patronage. The European western-orientated state does not sponsor South African Indian forms of art and the Indian community regards traditional entertainment as of secondary importance. Those who can afford to patronise it, carry much of the burden for educational and social welfare projects, and many of the Indian intellectuals prefer the more modern cinema and western productions. Stripped of financial support and prestige, Indian talent remains relatively undeveloped and the status of performers is low.

The most popular occasions for traditional entertainment are religious festivals, at which no charge is made, and which usually draw an audience from the poorer and less sophisticated. Women never take part in these performances, and the men, who act for a small remuneration, lack training and often talent. There are also productions, usually plays on traditional religious themes, by the numerous Associations and vernacular schools in aid of charity. At least twenty such productions take place in Durban alone each year, and they are well attended—several have packed the Durban

At the end of the massage and bath
[Photo by Mickey Padayachee

City Hall which seats 2,000 people. But the producers use the cause and the play, not the quality of acting, to sell the tickets. Among Moslem groups, Quwaalis (religious singing) and Mushairas (described as 'the gathering of poets') are privately organised, and while the standard of performance is often high, poor patronage limits their development. No fees are charged but the artist who succeeds in stirring the emotions of the listeners is rewarded in money which is thrown at his feet as a mark of appreciation.

Non-religious bands with solo performers are in a somewhat different category and usually play pseudo-Eastern numbers from Eastern films. They are hired for the more sophisticated and wealthier Indian weddings but the players have no other social entrée. Occasionally a girl with a good singing voice or talented in dancing performs with such a band and adds to its market value, despite the fact that the 'better class' families do not approve of their own girls exhibiting themselves in this way. Bands playing modern dance music are the most popular in the Non-European community as a whole, and the best have earned some fame through being recorded, but players, whose earnings are small, are not regarded as important in the community.

It is Westernised productions—plays in English, and concerts on the Western model—that receive recognition, and Indian women participate in these without evoking adverse criticism. Such productions, however, are almost invariably staged to raise funds for welfare or educational purposes and little or no remuneration is given the performers and producers.

With the revival of the traditional arts in India and Pakistan, local intellectuals are being drawn to their own cultures and the artist of today expounding 'pure' Indian music or dancing is beginning to be acclaimed and sought after. Musical societies to foster 'traditional' instruments and improve the standard of performance are being organised by a few men and women who have returned recently to South Africa, and by a few Indian born who have come to South Africa in the last decade.

However, there is as yet little recognition in South Africa for the professional Indian artist following either the Oriental or Occidental styles, and it seems that his acceptance into the elite will only come when, through the development and recognition of

utting the child's "first hair"
10to by Mickey Padayachee]

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his talents, he is able to compete with other artists and earn an income commensurate with that of other professionals. At that stage the Indian artist may become, in the same way as the sportsman, a symbolic figure in the struggle of a protest group against exclusion from the elite on racialist grounds.

It is clear that the new Indian elites in South Africa derive their values both from past and present associations with India, and from South African European culture. But the values even when common, are not shared; South African Indian society has a sub-culture of its own. It is less stratified socio-economically than that of the surrounding South African Whites and since its members are denied admission to many positions, it operates in a relatively retarded cultural area. Adjustment to this has led to the emergence of two broad types of Indian elite in each field of social life—the protest and the compromise elite—advocating different methods of producing social status changes. The protest elite, led mainly by intellectuals, identify with Non-Europeans and 'oppressed people' in general; the compromise elite operate as a defensive and exclusive minority. The attitude of South African Whites to the Indian elite is conditioned by these two approaches in public life. Those who accept exclusion suffer less from exclusion than those who challenge it.

In South African Indian Society, the political and wealthy elites exercise the greatest influence, the professional class receives the highest esteem and the sportsmen are the most popular. The criteria overlap and wealth is the most general single constituent element of the various elites. It influences the different outlook of the leaders. The compromise leaders, drawn from the wealthy traders, follow a policy of conciliation in the conserving of their wealth and find a measure of security in the activities of their cultural, religious and language groups. The protest leaders derive from less privileged groups, but also from professionals whose occupations give them a measure of independence and a claim to full acceptance in South African society, and they seek support by identification with Africans and Coloureds.

Underlying most of the present socio-economic stratification are differences, not between castes, but between the indentured and the passenger. Though both groups are represented in each

sphere of elite activity, their respective ratios can be traced historically to this initial status cleavage. It is now being reduced by the upward mobility of the ex-indentured and the downward pressure from Europeans. Western education, which provided the main avenue of mobility for the descendants of the indentured, and inculcated values which challenged both the traditional Indian and South African caste structure, was a strong influence in the shaping of a protest political elite.

The insecurity of the South African Indian population in the face of increasing racial discrimination has sharpened the polarisation of political outlook, and it has also accentuated awareness of internal divisions on the basis of language, place of origin and other cultural foci which express themselves in the wide variety of associations to be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

Associations

ASSOCIATIONS, more characteristic of urban than rural societies, enable people to come together on a voluntary basis for various purposes. In Durban, these associations proliferate not only along the usual lines of interest in specific activities—economic, religious, political, welfare or recreational—but also along lines of racial, tribal and cultural cleavages.

By definition an association is exclusive, but the area of exclusion may be narrow or wide. In Durban, the least exclusive —or theoretically the most inclusive—are the inter-racial associations such as the South African Institute of Race Relations, the Durban International Parliament, and the Durban International Club.[1] Since only limited numbers from each race are prepared to associate, the actual membership in inter-racial association is, however, considerably smaller than in several more openly exclusive associations, such as the Kathiawad Hindu Seva Samaj, the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha.

The contemporary Indian elites represent success in various associations. Though as Indians few of the associations to which they may belong include all sections of the population and the limits of success are racially restricted, the number of Indian associations in Durban is high. This can be accounted for on several grounds. The absence of any positive policy of integrating Indians with the ruling Whites encouraged perpetuation of differences of their own ethnic and linguistic origin in separate associations. At the same time, conscious of a need to establish themselves as

[1] In December, 1958, the Minister of the Interior, acting on powers under the Group Areas Amendment Act, refused the Application of the Durban International Club for a permit to continue its organisation in the premises, which were owned by Indians, and therefore the Club was forced to close down as it could no longer operate on an inter-racial basis. The Minister of Bantu Administration also refused the application for the issue of a permit authorising members of the African group to occupy the Club Room.

South Africans and as urban dwellers, they promoted additional associations for services provided by central and local authorities for Whites but not for Indians. Exclusion from security in the wider society also expressed itself in the need for identification in a number of small-scale group relationships, in which sectional rivalries were exploited by individuals with personal ambitions to create separate associations.

The growth of Indian associations is also geared to events in both India and South Africa. The partition of India, coupled with an intensification of Pakistani nationalism, and exacerbated by the South African Nationalists approach to Indians, not only infused new fervour into some of the existing associations, but led to the creation of additional associations. (The Kashmir issue, which was given great prominence in the local Indian press, further inflamed Hindu-Moslem differences, the position being complicated by the fact that most wealthy South African Moslems have their property connections in India, but their emotional and political loyalties lie with Pakistan).

Comparable, on a smaller scale, to the Hindu-Moslem cleavage is the growing self consciousness of a section of the 'Dravidians' of South African Indians. A few leading Tamils expressed resentment against alleged claims of 'Aryan superiority', and rejected traditional interpretations of ancient history, which extolled the 'Aryans' at the expense of the 'Dravidians' (for example the classical Mahabharata glorification of Rama as the noble King of the North and Ravanna as the evil King of the South). They advocated that certain elements of North Indian ritual be deliberately expunged from South Indian practices, that Tamil instead of Sanskrit be the language of local ritual, that rituals be performed by a non-Brahminic prietshood, drawn from scholars irrespective of caste (but following the entrenched values of vegetarianism and 'a clean life') and that the teaching of Tamil and membership of Tamil associations be encouraged. Other leaders, however, have to some extent countered this linguistic and cultural nationalist tendency by emphasising the eclectic philosophy of Hinduism.. This approach was evident in the amalgamating of the Young Men's Vedic Society and the Hindu Tamil Institute into the Natal Tamil Vedic Society—one of the few instances of the fusion of two associations into a single body.

The creation of the independent State of Andhra further accentuated sectionalism. Though the Telugu speaking people of Andhra had been closely identified with the Tamil in South Africa, who were both more numerous and included a large number of scholars in early years, a pride in the Telugu language had existed since 1913, when Sir Kurma Reddy (a Telugu) arrived as Indian Agent General to South Africa. But the main stimulus to cultural nationalism followed the formation of the State of Andhra, in 1957, which crystallised the distinctions between local Telugu and Tamil, and led to the establishment of more separate Andhra schools and a greater loyalty to the existing Andhra association.

The impact of world religious movements is also reflected in the multiplicity of Indian associations in South Africa. Hindu associations such as the Rama Krishna Centre, the Divine Life Association and the Arya Samaj have their centres of inspiration in India, and are more directly tied to their place of origin than Catholic or Anglican or Methodist associations which include Indians among their members.

The structure of associations affecting Indians in South Africa ranges from those internationally oriented to those which include a few people in the same street, but the immediate local conditions and needs provide the point of departure of many associations. In districts where people have lived together for many years, they usually express their interests and in-group awareness in local associations, some of which are independent, others are branches of wider associations operating at district, provincial or national levels.[1]

Because of the pre-eminently domestic role of women, it is not surprising that more men than women belong to Indian associations, but there are—and have been for many years—specific women's associations devoted largely to religious and social work. The majority of associations do not specifically exclude women members, but there is a recognised tendency for men to assume public office in mixed associations in most of which men and women, even husband and wife, sit in separate sections. With increasing education and emancipation, women are receiving

[1] In Merebank there were, in 1955, 54 associations of which 16 were branches of larger associations; in Springfield there were 25 of which 13 were local branches.

greater recognition in some established associations, and new associations are being formed to extend their activities.

It is possible to classify the Indian associations on conventional principles of sex, age, locality, occupation or interest, for all these factors have contributed to their growth.

They can also be differentiated on the basis of origin, and placed in two broad categories: those rooted in traditional distinctions (ethnic, religious or linguistic) and those organised on a European model specifically round new interests. The first category covers such associations as the Surat Hindu Association, the Hindu Kathiawad Seva Samaj, the Saiva Siddhanta Sangham, or the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha; the second category includes associations of ratepayers, traders, teachers, market gardeners and so forth. The distinction in origin is not, however, reflected consistently in present activities; many traditional associations have become the basis for new urban ends and deal with immediate local issues of education and welfare. They retain, however, a stronger ritual emphasis than the specific urban associations which express more direct objectives in their constitution and which hold more secular functions and meetings.

But the mechanical typology of associations, whether on grounds of conventional distinctions, or of oriental and occidental origin, is less important to a sociological understanding of South African Indian Associations than an analysis in terms of the wider social structure in which they form so important a part. They are the main units making for internal cohesion in a minority group excluded from the central power of the state, and are to some extent comparable to the corporate groups which in certain tribal societies without central administrative machinery interact in such a way as to maintain the social whole.[1]

In South Africa there is a tendency for associations to subdivide, but co-ordination of associations is urged by many Indian leaders who consider that multiplicity of associations weakens effective action by the Indian population as a whole. Thus there have been deliberately created several large loose federations of

[1] For the concept of 'corporate groups' I am indebted to the writings of M. Fortes and E. Evans Pritchard. Obviously the Indian associations are different from corporate groups, such as lineages based on kinship ties, to which individuals belong by birth, without voluntary selection.

associations, and we shall see that many associations interact both through their leadership and membership.

In a people as diversified as the South African Indians, and a people excluded from the formal political structure of the country and without any centralised machinery capable of wielding effective authority over themselves, the associations provide the main source of power and solidarity. At the same time Indian associations—like all voluntary, legal associations—operate within the limits of policy and procedures set by local law and custom; they must abide within these limits, negotiating when necessary with the responsible authorities. For example associations engaged in welfare work, and welfare is rigidly and narrowly defined, must be registered under a Welfare Organisation Registration Act; non-welfare organisations are less directly controlled by state law, but are governed by constitutions established by custom within the broad framework of the state.

The associations have for the Indians a structural permanence, a quality of lasting relationships. Though every Indian does not automatically belong to associations, membership of different associations is available to all, and though some associations are of short duration, and all can, by their very constitution, be dissolved, voluntary associations provide the most enduring formal structures available to the Indian people of South Africa.

To describe all or even several associations is unnecessary; they follow a basic organisational pattern despite differences in aim and could be illustrated from any one of at least 58 associations, religious, political, sporting or educational. Many have been in existence for 25 years and over, but it is not time which is the criterion of their significance: Indians in South Africa stand as it were within and yet separate from the State, and must rely on their own associations to give them social cohesion, and a degree of security. The state, itself an association, is distinct from all other associations by its greater range of control, sharper exclusiveness, and permitted exercise of various means of compulsion to enforce its dictates. Indians hold no positions in the machinery of the state, they are linked to it only indirectly by associations. These are organised for services not otherwise provided, and their members join together when their rights are attacked. Indian associations build schools, clinics, orphanages, sportsfields and

clubs and press for development in all fields of social life. Though new associations are constantly formed and old associations subdivide both on personal and ideological lines[1] the structure of associations and their interaction are persistent.

Associations entrench their positions by building up material assets in which the public has invested. Schools, clinics, clubhouses, temples, mosques and sportsfields are tangible achievements of associations, rallying points of communal sentiment. Each building is not only a visible symbol of associational success, but of communal activity. It is indicative of the importance of Indian associations in Durban that, while the community as a whole is poor, its associations control property estimated at more than ten million pounds.

The material achievements often make dissolution undesirable and act as a stabilising influence. The way in which associational property should be used or disposed of is sometimes a most contentious issue dividing members into two or more factions remaining in the association to forward their own viewpoint. Once a faction gets control, there is little that the defeated section can do about the property since it is vested in the name of the association.

The sources from which the revenue of an association is derived indicates its range and level of dependence on the wider society. The amount contributed by the subscription of members may be the entire income or a relatively small part of it. If an Association starts a Home for the Aged or a Settlement for tuberculotics, or a sports club or a Trade Union, a great number of outside people become indirectly involved. Thus each Welfare Association generally interacts with a whole series of contributory groups culminating with the Union Department of Social Welfare which allocates grants at the national level. In addition local money raising organisations—a Community Chest, Trust Houses, the University Student's Rag Committee,—may all be drawn into the network of supporters.

Individual Indians and Europeans may also make regular donations and officials may arrange a number of special functions,

[1] Anthropologists will recognise this process of segmentation. It is similar to the 'hiving off' of lineages or sub-clans characteristic of the growth of various societies.

—plays, bazaars, competitions, street collections—which both publicise the association, bring in money and create new links or strengthen already existing links within the society. For the main associations, important and respected men are asked to raise funds in different areas. In this process of associational extension, each member has ties outside any particular association, and each association is part of the general system of associations.

Associations can be visualised as a number of horizontal bands each including different segments of the population, and crossing these bands are vertical ties created by membership in different associations and by the sharing of a common elite.

This can be briefly illustrated from the religious associations. In the Hindu section, there is one major association, the South African Hindu Maha Sabha, to which various other associations are affiliated, of which six, two Gujarati, two South Indian and two Hindi-speaking are recognised as of greatest importance. The two Gujarati associations are the Kathiawad Hindu Seva Samaj and the Surat Hindu Association; the two South Indian Associations are the Natal Tamil Vedic Society and the Andhra Maha Sabha of South Africa; and the two North Indian (Hindi) associations are the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha (A.P.S.) of South Africa and the Sri Sanathan Dharma Sabha (S.S.D.S.) of Natal. The two latter associations—the A.P.S. of South Africa, and the S.S.D.S. of Natal—embrace a number of smaller or branch associations; the A.P.S. of South Africa represents the Reform (Arya Samaj) organisations and the S.S.D.S. of Natal represents the Orthodox (Sanathan) groups.

There are also some Hindu associations not affiliated (at present) to the Hindu Maha Sabha. Two of these, the Rama Krishna Centre of South Africa and the Divine Life Society of South Africa, are described as 'non-denominational', and though neither has been in existence as long as the six major associations in the Hindu Maha Sabha they are growing rapidly in membership and local branches. The extension of their influence has been explained by the fact that the medium of instruction is English, (only the sacred hymns are sung in Sanskrit or a vernacular) their philosophy is an eclectic, monotheistic interpretation of the Vedanta, and their efforts are directed largely to awakening interest in the younger people and in the women.

Holding a position among the Moslems structurally equivalent to that which the South African Hindu Maha Sabha holds among the Hindu is the Natal Muslim Council (N.M.C.). When for example functions of large non-religious associations, such as the Natal Indian Teachers Society, are held, invitations are always sent to these two main religious bodies. To the N.M.C. are affiliated such Moslem associations as the Arabic Study Circle, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Propagation Centre.

Analysis of Christian Associations might reveal a third large bond in the religious structure, but here my data is inadequate; as far as I know there is no particular Christian organisation representing the various Christian associations and each denomination has its own associations.

Religious sectionalism is reflected in welfare institutions. Major Hindu institutions are often paralleled by Moslem counterparts. Thus the Aryan Benevolent Home, run by the Arya Yuvuk Society, includes among its inmates Christians and Moslems as well as Hindus, but the name itself is exclusive and the ritual at public celebrations is Hindu; it is not surprising to find that there exists a parallel home for Moslems supported by Moslems.

Sectional sub-division in the associational framework is also evident in educational developments. Few institutions exert as wide an influence in the society as schools, most of which have been developed through the efforts of one or other association. The majority of Indian schools are Government-Aided, depending for their establishment on public effort, the associations taking the initiative in collecting from their groups, and the Province contributing to the building on a pound for pound basis. Teachers of the ordinary curriculum are then paid by the Department, vernacular teachers by the associations. The associational proprietors of the schools are represented by grantees who on behalf of their supporters negotiate with the relevant authorities, and exercise the right of admission of pupils for the limited number of available places. The result is a dichotomy, more or less explicit, between

Moslem and Hindu financed schools;[1] within the Hindu schools there is further subdivision according to the amount contributed by any particular vernacular group.

But in welfare and education the cleavage on religious and sectional lines operates within a wide framework of co-ordination. Major welfare organisations (Hindu, Moslem or Christian) are brought together in a loose federation through the Durban United Council of Social Agencies. Other welfare organisations, such as the Natal Indian Child Welfare Society and the Natal Indian Blind Society, do not differentiate on religious grounds; they, however, are forced to operate in the racial category, within the wide Welfare Organisation Act. Similarly Indian schools fall within the orbit of the Provincial Education Department; apart from religious instruction the syllabus is identical for all and inspectors are appointed on merit irrespective of sectional positions. The teachers themselves interact through the Natal Indian Teachers Society whose President speaks in the name of the group as a whole, but which is distinct from the Natal Teachers' Association (Europeans Only).

Opposition between associations of different Indian religious or language groups is also restrained by cross alliances of individual members through other organisations, political, sporting or recreational. The two major political associations—Organisation and Congress—are non-sectarian, and though, as we saw in Chapter III, there are (through historical circumstances) proportionally more Moslems in the conservative Organisation than in the more radical Congress, leaders of Congress include a couple of outstanding Moslems, and though there are proportionally more Hindus in Congress, the present President of Organisation is a Hindu.

Associations may sub-divide for more effective activity into local branches, each within its own functions, ritual and personnel. Described by one informant as the 'vertebrae' of the associations

[1] Until 1957, religious denominational instruction was limited to the Moslem schools (Madressa); after 1957 following pressure from a Hindu section, the Department decided that instruction on Hinduism may be imparted to Hindu children in Government-Aided Schools, except for certain schools which are mainly Christian or Moslem financed. This move had been opposed by the majority of teachers on the grounds that it would further divide an already divided people.

and by another as the 'backbone', these local units are, sociologically, structural segments of the major unit, and provide training for its key officials of the future.

Under certain circumstances, branches are encouraged to compete with each other, in the same way, but within more rigidly set limits, as debating and sporting associations compete, and affiliate themselves for this very purpose, to large sporting, cultural or educational associations. This is different from competition between separate associations serving the same ends which develop hostility and may even attempt to drive the opposition out of existence. At present two major religious associations are engaged in such a conflict, each recruiting from the same sectional groups.

The central occasions for recognition of associational position include Annual General meetings, anniversaries, laying of foundation stones, and opening of new buildings. These events are more or less ritualised by at least 54 associations whose celebrations I was invited to attend at least once in the course of my four years research. For the larger associations printed invitations are sent to a large mailing list and even the smaller associations may put an announcement in the Indian papers. Sometimes the number is limited by the venue, but it is not unusual to hire a special hall or obtain permission to use a school, and for 300 to 500 people to attend. To these large gatherings men generally come with their wives, and some bring their very young children who sit through the entire afternoon without a murmer of complaint. The people come dressed in their best, and socially on the alert. The meetings seldom start punctually, but the wait (from a few minutes to an hour) is usually filled in with recorded music, both religious and secular, relayed by microphones.

Meetings even of non-religious associations are frequently opened and closed with prayers in Sanskrit, or in one of the Indian vernacular languages or in English, and there is often a deeply religious undercurrent in the reports of Chairman or Secretary. Some of the Western patterned associations are more secular: there are no elaborate decorations, no incense, no music, no bestowal of floral recognition—garlands or bouquets. (We have already mentioned that the degree of ritualisation appears to be the main distinction—i.e. a cultural distinction—between tradi-

tionally inspired associations and those based on European models.)

Annual general meetings of branches are also events of community interest. Representatives from the central committee take part, activities are fully reported, guest speakers help in the 'build up', the financial statement gives weight to achievements; the place of the branch in the association and the association in the social structure of the Indians in South Africa is publicly affirmed.

Every association creates its own in-group, but the boundaries are not necessarily rigid, and are frequently more apparent than real. Even associations which carry on under sectarian names interlock with a wide section of South African society. At the same time associations—which are overtly critical of exclusiveness—are compelled to operate within a racially restricted field.

People who make a success of one association form part of the pool from which other associations draw their own prestige giving personnel. The officials of different groups link together associations all of which have started through the initiative of one or more individuals; the oldest associations are less than 100 years and the names of the first founders are usually known. The permanence and success of associations have depended as much—and sometimes more—on the ability and social standing of these founders, and of the 'sponsors' or 'patrons' they were subsequently able to attract, as on the objectives they declared or on the needs they fulfilled.

The main office bearers are the Chairman and Secretary; in the large associations great importance is also attached to the positions of President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and a specified number of Committee members. Initially officials are Honorary; the presence of a paid employee meets with suspicion until the Association has proved itself when an Office, and paid Secretary, become hallmarks of stability. Certain qualifications of membership are always essential, and give status to the member. Candidates must be prepared to submit their names to a central committee or expressly indicate support of its aims. Acceptance by an association is usually notified by the payment of a subscription, which entitles a member to a say in the choice of officials.

Important outsiders help to establish the status of associations. A few of the Indian elite and prominent members of the White community are often on the platform in addition to the officials of the Association. The mayor, city councillors, officials of the departments of Education, Health or Social Welfare, the Protector of Indian Immigrants, leading social workers and University teachers, have all appeared as patrons or guest speakers. In this way each occasion brings together a number of people who, by their work or by their gifts, earn the recognition, so highly valued, in the community. Thanks are publicly announced to each of the main benefactors, to other associations that may have given the hall or contributed in some other way, to the firms that provided microphones, or lighting or floral decorations or refreshments, to the individual organisers and helpers. A few of the elite are on as many as twenty different Committees, but it is not necessarily as committee members (which position involves active work over a long period) but as patrons and guest speakers that they act as links in the network.

A single person may come to symbolise a larger circle than the association on which he is serving at any particular time. He may even belong to associations which have conflicting interests on matters outside those immediately involved—and for the time being differences are subordinated to a common loyalty. At one meeting commemorating the establishment of an Ashram the six guest speakers represented different religious and political groups, but these differences were irrelevant to the immediate celebration.

It is easier for guest speakers to deal with commemoration of concrete achievements, than when the meeting is a pre-eminently religious or ideological celebration. At a meeting arranged by the Arabic Study Circle to celebrate the Birthday of the Prophet, there were 18 guest speakers deliberately selected from the three main racial groups (Indians, Africans and Whites) and they included Hindus, Christians and Jews as well as Moslems, their political affiliations ranging from ultra conservative to extreme liberal. Each speaker carefully selected from the life of the Prophet a particular aspect or developed a universally accepted ethical theme, but the common ground was thin. This meeting was an excellent illustration of the manner in which traditionally inspired South African Indian associations operate in a complex social

context and make contact with other groups at different points. While one person may symbolise many associations, a single organisation at any function must symbolise the interaction of varied interest groups.

Though it is unusual to invite as patrons, people who are known to be hostile to an association, even this is done on occasion. In that case the office, not the person, is desired. Hence approaches have been made to a Mayor known to be anti-Indian and he, though never prepared to attend in person, has sent the Deputy Mayor or other representative. Once a person accepts, it is taken for granted that he will not express antagonism or opposition. Acceptance of the role imposes its own conformity, and when a devout Hindu organisation invited a politically and intellectually prominent, but most unorthodox, Hindu, as a guest speaker, he began by apologising for being illiterate in Hindi, his mother tongue, and ignorant of Hinduism. While the association had chosen him for his many other qualities, he in return adapted himself by expressing respect—sincere or not was immaterial—for the organisation that was honoring him.

In Indian society conflict for power is waged in and through associations. There is seldom a lack of people prepared to accept public office, and disputes ostensibly over policy, are often feuds between rival personalities.[1] If one man is defeated he may withdraw altogether, or form a separate association. These feuds, especially if the contestants are considered important, usually receive considerable publicity in the Indian press. Unpleasant though this publicity appears, it also serves to spread the social principles which the association claims to serve.

While Indians are generally eager to accept positions on Indian associations, since this both helps their own people and enhances their prestige in the community, the number of South African Whites prepared to work on Indian associations is small, and the process operates rather in the opposite direction: acceptance on Indian associations does not enhance prestige in European society. The anomalous position develops in which the few Europeans who are willing, gradually lose their status as elite in

[1] cf. Gluckman, H., 'Custom and Conflict in Africa', Oxford, 1955. Gluckman shows inter alia how social systems may be maintained by a complex balance of antagonistic interests.

their own associations, since the more closely a European identifies himself with non-European interests, the more marginal he may become in the European, and anti Non-European, community. He correspondingly loses some of his value to the Indians in the field of race-relations, but he still serves as a symbol of a wider unity, and a narrow and tenuous bridge across a deep and widening chasm.

Prominent outsiders (religious leaders and diplomats from India as well as local Europeans of standing) have also been effectively used in internal Indian associational crises. Being less vulnerable to criticism, these outsiders have been in a better position than officials of any in-group to state principles, and even, if necessary, to force the resignation of the opposition that was retarding development.

The nature of associations among Indians indicates interesting differences between their adaptation and that of Africans to the South African urban milieu. Nearly every aspect of African life is controlled, both at the national and local level, by the Native Affairs Department which itself provides an overall political structure. There are relatively few voluntary associations, of which the more extensive are modelled on European patterns and often started by Europeans, and the more numerous and intensive are small semi-traditional sociable associations, generally known as *mahodisane* or *stokfel*, which serve largely as savings and mutual aid societies.[1] The closest Indian equivalent is the *chita* (Hindi) or *chitu* (Tamil) erroneously spoken of in English as 'lottery' in which a few relatives and/or friends regularly pay a stipulated amount into a pool which circulates to each member in turn. But the *chita* is more restricted in personnel and purpose: it has no officials, no special sociability, and a single specific monetary function; it is the other Indian associations which are elaborate, functionally diversified and widely interacting.

I suggest that the reason for the conspicuous differences in Indian and African associations existing at present in urban areas rise from three main sources. In the first place, as already mentioned, greater control and direction are exerted on Africans than

[1] Kuper, H., and Kaplan, S., 'Voluntary Associations in an Urban Township', *African Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1944.

on Indians, and the various fissiparous tendencies indicated in the Indian community can more easily be expressed in associations. Secondly, African associations reflect a transitional adaptation of a people the majority of whom still have a small scale, rural and relatively homogenous, non-literate background sanctioned by a narrow tribal religion; Indian associations were developed by people who came from an already highly stratified, economically specialised society with extensive commercial contacts, a highly literate tradition and world wide religions.

Thirdly, many of the functions of African associations in the town are fulfilled for Indians—as for tribal Africans—by kinship units. In the towns, as a result of the migrant labour policy, African family ties have been broken and it is the mutual aid societies which assist members in distress and provide a circle of allies; it is also significant that most urban Africans contribute weekly or monthly to burial societies. Indians on the other hand have managed to build up family units even in the towns since there was not the same system of recruiting males for service, nor were there reserves in which Indians could leave their dependents. When the men moved from the estates they brought their wives and children with them into the towns, where the building up of a family home was accepted as the first essential in the process of urban living. Indian associations developed to link the family with the neighbourhood and community, not to provide those services—help in times of personal crisis—which the family itself could perform, and was expected, to perform for its members.

I have also tried in this chapter to indicate that it is their associations that give to South African Indians a distinctive unity; on the other hand associations of White South Africans are subservient to the state political associations, and associations of 'Natives' of South Africa are less important because of the extensive machinery of the Native Affairs Department. It is possible that the Indian situation is not unique; and that an analysis of disfranchised minorities in other countries would reveal a similar associational structure.

Associations have been a more effective means of adaptation than the traditional castes, which as we saw are breaking down as functional units. The elites that link together associations are to a large extent independent of caste ranking.

PART II

CHAPTER VI

Kinship

'THE FAMILY' of the immigrants did not conform to a single type, but to several different types. The majority of Hindu, and all Moslems and Christians, were patrilineal, but there were also people from Malabar and parts of Madras with matrilineal succession; though monogomy was the rule, polygyny was acceptable to the Moslem and permissible under special circumstances to the Hindu, and from the records, there were even a few people who came from the Nilgiri hills where polyandry was the custom; the levirate was prohibited by some immigrants, encouraged by others; and the range of permitted marriage partners was also extremely variable.

With the passing of the years, and the enforced close contact between groups, many of the differences fell away, and it is at present possible to talk, albeit with reservations, of 'The South African Indian Family and Kinship System'.[1] However, I will limit myself specifically to the Hindu section, recalling to my readers that most South African Indian Moslems and Christians were descendants from Hindus, their new beliefs being interpreted through the old social structure, and their later religious institutions carrying the quality of the original matrix. It has, however, already been made clear that 'the Hindu' are not culturally homogeneous, and that within the broad framework of an eclectic religion, differences are particularly marked in South Africa

[1] See Kuper H., "The South African Indian Family", in *The Indian as a South African*, 1956.

between two linguistic cultural groups—Hindi and Gujarati speaking of Northern India and Tamil and Telugu of Southern Indian origin.

The Indian family type is distinct from that of other racial groups in South Africa, even when the groups live under similar economic conditions in the same urban environment. The most conspicuous differences between the South African Indian, African and European urban family is the greater strength among the Indians of joint family ties; the emphasis on arranged marriages; the higher proportion of Indian households occupied by more than one related family; the small number of women, widowed or deserted, living alone with unmarried children; and the virtual absence of people, men or women, living completely on their own.

Present day marriages of Indians in South Africa cannot be analysed in any rigid caste framework, even when caste is the chief factor influencing choice of spouse. The extent to which caste endogamy persists has already been discussed,[1] and, as shown, endogamy alone does not create caste. Of greater significance in South Africa are other traditional regulations still governing choice of spouse. Marriage is prohibited between any two persons who have a common ancestor on the father's or on the mother's side,[2] these prohibitions depending primarily on whether the immigrants came from the northern or southern areas of India. South African Hindi speaking do not as a general rule permit marriages between persons related within four to six degrees on the father's side, and three to four on the mother's, and all cousin marriages are forbidden though occasionally marriages of cousins occur.[3] Tamil and Telugu on the other hand permit and to some extent encourage close kin marriage. Until recently a man had a prescriptive right to marry his sister's daughter, a right seldom enforced at present, though his per-

[1] See Chapter II.

[2] These are the rules of *sapinda* relationship. Vide Hutton, p. 60, and Prabhu, p. 157.

[3] Criticism of such breaches is initially strong, but not as strong as marriage across language, religious or colour lines. In one case where the girl's paternal great grandfather and the boy's paternal great grandmother were brother and sister, the families opposed the marriage, but the wishes of the couple, both of whom had a Western education, prevailed and there appears to have been no reaction by the rest of the community.

mission is generally sought for her marriage to another. While marriage between the children of brothers is forbidden, there are a few cases in our genealogies of marriage between the children of two sisters, and cross-cousin marriage is generally acceptable. Informants, however, assert that kin marriages are becoming more rare, and they account for the decrease by the spread of Brahmanic Hinduism, disapproval of Europeans and the belief of many of the younger Indians of all groups that close inbreeding has detrimental effects on the offspring.[1]

Kinsmen are regarded by South African Hindu as of primary importance: from them each person receives his or her foundation in social values and behaviour, and derives status in the community.

The most important structured kinship unit of South African Indian society is the patrilineal extended family, best known amongst the Hindi and Gujarati section as the *kul* or *kutum*, and amongst Tamil and Telugu speakers as *kudumbam* or *kudumor*. The characteristics are sufficiently similar in all, to be able to use, for the purpose of this book, only one term, except when referring specifically to a particular group, and I will use *kutum*. A *kutum* includes a male head, his wife, unmarried children, unmarried brothers and sisters, younger married brothers, married sons, and brothers' married sons with their wives and children. The number of *kutum* members living at any particular time varies from a couple of individuals to over a hundred.

Monogamy is the rule, and by a Natal law, every Indian immigrant is required, under a penalty of £5, to register his religious marriage within one month of its occurrence, and only one woman may be registered. In the rare cases in which more than one wife has been married by Hindu rites, only children of the registered marriage are legitimate. Polygyny is justified by the older generation of South African Hindu if the first wife is barren or if she has no sons to carry out the funeral rites and make the prescribed ancestral offerings. There are also a few cases among the Tamil where a man who was considered a very good husband and son-in-law, was given a younger sister as second wife, but

[1] South African Moslems continue to practice cousin marriages, arguing that they strengthen the relationship and keep property in the family.

informants state that this custom has been abandoned. In some cases, men who were contracted in marriage as children in India, and who found these marriages uncongenial in South Africa, also married local women as second wives. But at no time has polygyny been advocated as an ideal or regarded with approval by South African Hindu.[1]

Structurally the *kutum* must be envisaged as a hierarchy with the eldest living partriarch at the apex, and constituting with his wife the highest authority. He is *Bada* ('The Big one', in Hindi), and *Periver* ('The Big Man', in Tamil). Next come his younger married brothers and their wives, then his unmarried brothers, then his married sons and his brothers' married sons and so on to the youngest generation of descendants. The *kutum* is not an aggregation of independent and equal family units, but of graded sub-units interacting through bonds of patrilineal descent and of marriage. In each order, the status and roles of the individuals are further regulated by age and sex; males exercising special privileges over women of their age group, but in turn submitting to the authority of males older than themselves and of women of senior generations.

The structure is reflected in a classificatory kinship system characteristic of societies with developed kin responsibility. Paternal uncles and their wives are called "fathers" and "mothers", with the qualification of "big" or "small" depending on whether they are older or younger than the biological parents. Their children are called "brothers" and "sisters" and the children in turn of "brothers" and "sisters" are identified with one's own children. In the group category their rank as individuals is again similarly defined as "big" or "small". The terminology indicates the patterns of correct behaviour. Thus the term "father" carries a series of responsibilities, most marked in the case of the "big father" who receives the greatest respect. In theory no man should give his own children clothes, food, or other benefit, without doing the same for at least one of his brother's children. Non-fulfilment of this obligation, which often leads to friction, is more likely to occur when brothers live in separate households, and a man's

[1] Nor is it usual—or approved—for a Moslem in South Africa to take more than one wife, though he is permitted in the Koran to marry four wives provided he treats them equally.

ambition to advance his own children is one of the main reasons for establishing an independent home.

A survival of cross cousin marriage among Tamil is reflected in the kinship terminology given me by conservatives, in which the term for wife (*maituni*) is extended to a number of other women: daughters of men called *maman* (basically mother's brother), daughters of women called *athe* (basically father's sister) and wives of men called *anna* or *tambi* (older and younger brothers and ortho-cousins). Similarly the term *maitunan* is applied by a man to sons of *maman*, sons of *athe*, brothers of his wife and his own sister's husband. The identity of terms is based on the fact that previously a man was expected to marry either a mother's brother's daughter or a father's sister's daughter or someone standing in an equivalent relationship to him, hence the term for wife is the same for female cross cousin, and the term for father's sister is the same for wife's mother and mother's brother's wife.

Again in the first descending generation a Tamil applies the term *magan* to his own sons, to the sons of his brothers and to the sons of all women he calls *maituni* (wife), but he applies the term *marumagan* (masculine) or *marumagal* (feminine) to the children of his sister, and to the children of any other women whom he terms *akkal* or *tangai* (older and younger sister) or of any man he calls *maitunan*. These same terms *marumagan* and *marumagal* are applied to his son's wife and his daughter's husband, since, because of cross cousin marriage, my son's female cross cousin will be my sister's daughter to whom therefore I apply the term for daughter-in-law.

It is significant that at present vernacular terms are being replaced by English terms with different connotations and allowing for more individual patterns of behaviour. The terms "uncle" and "aunt" are being substituted for parent surrogates, cousins are being separated from brothers, and there is less formal respect shown to the classificatory relatives. Looseness in terminology is criticised by elders (who correct the children, especially if they live with them in one home), but it is jokingly accepted by many of the younger generation.

Overlapping, but distinct from the *kutum* with its emphasis on patrilineal relationships extended by marriage, is the consanguineous group, widely known among the Hindi speaking, as *kul* and

among the Tamil as *ratum kudumbam* (blood family). The two sections do not include identical relations under the 'blood' category probably because of the fact, already mentioned, that among the South African Hindi close kin may never marry, whereas among the Tamil, this is permitted in certain cases. Thus a linguistic distinction is drawn in Hindi between maternal and paternal kin in both ascending and descending generations; these relations are merged in Tamil. A Hindi will list among his '*kul*', his parents, his paternal grandparents, his father's siblings, his own siblings, his own and his brother's offspring, while South African Tamil frequently include the maternal grandparents, the maternal aunts and uncles and their children. In Hindi, the in-law and natal kin are linguistically separate; in Tamil they overlap. Consanguinity is, however, never identified with affinity and a special ritual in the South African Tamil marriage ceremony, known as 'the gold for the mother's breast milk', is interpreted as symbolically buying the girl from her blood relatives, represented by the mother, and incorporating her into a separate affinal, not consanguinal, family.

A woman on marriage joins the *kutum* of her husband, but remains a member of her own *kul*, the extent to which her natal ties continue varying with local custom and individual circumstances. Among the South African Tamil, her kin are considered to have defined jural rights over, and obligations towards, her and her children; among the Hindi, *hukum* (authority) over her is transferred to the husband in the sacred ritual of *kanya dhan* (literally: virgin gift), a rite known in Tamil as *daravava karadu* which is scarcely elaborated in, and often omitted from, South African Tamil weddings. However, in both groups, ties of interest and affection are maintained with the girl's kin.

Distant kin (*palwar* or *pariwar*,[1] *naathith* in Hindi, *bandugal*, *yenattar* in Tamil) are also important as a reservoir from which individuals may be drawn for specific functions or as surrogates for close kin when required. In the particular situation, the selected individuals are oriented by reference to three major channels of establishing kinship—paternal, maternal, and through the spouse, and special words for these relationships are in common usage.

[1] The more correct term is *pariwar* but most South African Hindi say *palwar*.

It is typical of the South African milieu that basic kinship groups are defined with little precision, that there is often disagreement on the composition and that vernacular terms are being replaced by English substitutes with different implications. Some Hindustani speakers do not distinguish *kutum* and *kul* and sometimes use the terms '*palwar*' and *naathith* for both or either '*kutum*' and '*kul*'; Tamil may describe blood relatives as '*sine kodumbam*' (small *kodumbam*) to distinguish them from the '*periyar kodumbam*' (big *kodumbam*) consisting of more distant relations, or talk of them all simply as *sondhamunsal*—our folk. The English speaking Hindu usually describe the *kutum* as 'the family' or 'the joint family' and the *kul* as 'relations' or 'close relations.'

There are no specific vernacular terms for the elementary family of man, wife and children; they derive their identity through the *kutum*. In families that retain the 'caste' name, the bond between sons of one man is often indicated by the retention of the father's initial plus their own individual initials, e.g. the sons of Birbal Singh are S. B. Singh, T. B. Singh, K. B. Singh, etc. There is, however, a tendency at the present time for the parent-child unit to become more clearly and separately defined and this is reflected in the system of surnames developed by those who have abandoned 'caste' names. In these families, children may keep their father's surnames until marriage; after marriage the girls take over the surnames of their husbands (which may not be caste names) and sons frequently use their own personal names as surnames, retaining a nomenclature link with their father by preceding their names with his initial. Or some sons will keep the father's name, and others use their own names, or add another family name or revive a caste name. In any case, several married brothers may each have separate surnames, and their wives and children are correspondingly distinguishable.

Adoption is a recognised means of completing a family: if a couple is childless, or has only one child or only girls or only boys, a close married relative of either husband or wife may promise to "give" them their next baby. Sometimes they register the child in their name, sometimes they simply take the child into their home, and sometimes they go through the full legal procedure. The child of an unrelated person is usually adopted in early infancy and if

possible the fact of adoption is kept secret from the child. Parents are more prepared to give up all claims to their child if they have many other children, or if the child is illegitimate.

Kinship ties were, and to some extent still are, extended among the Hindi speaking through the foster or "milk" (*dhudh*) relationship created by a woman wetnursing the child of a non-relative. Not only does the child become identified with her own children, but the bond is carried over to its entire family, and to its in-laws after marriage. This formal relationship is falling away with the acceptance of artificial feeding, but still exists among some of the older generation. It is distinct from the more casual suckling of another woman's baby—usually a relative's—if the baby's own mother is away or ill.

It is very seldom, especially in urban areas, that all members of a *kutum* live together. This occurs occasionally among land-owning families in rural areas and among a few wealthy trading families in town. It is, however, generally recognised as desirable for members of the *kutum* to live in the same neighbourhood.

If a family is spatially isolated from related families, it usually incorporates neighbours—(*padosi* in Hindi, *vidù-kar* (next door people) in Tamil) into the kinship group. Appropriate kinship terms are applied and the 'new kin' participate on that basis in numerous 'family occasions'. Even when the tie is not so closely formalised, children of neighbours are always invited to share with children of the home the sweetmeats offered at various family rituals. Pseudo-kinship ties may also be built on the bonds of home language and in areas where houses are allotted by an Indian Land Estate Agent, there is a definite tendency for people who speak the same mother tongue, even though unrelated, to be given, often at their request, houses in the same street or streets and to call each other by kinship terms. This language tie, indicative of cultural affinity, served as a method of uniting indentured labourers in the barracks and persisted in the growth of various Indian towns to which they moved when they were 'free'.

A South African Indian woman takes her husband's domicile, and usually spends at least the first few years of marriage in his parent's home. There are, however, certain recognised

exceptions to this: if a family is without any sons, it is permissible for parents to insist on a daughter, usually the youngest, remaining with them and it is understood that she will then inherit the bulk of their property. There is also a tendency if there is only one daughter, and she is the youngest child, for her parents to try to persuade her husband to remain with her in their home, instead of taking her to live with his people, or separately. The possibility of living with the wife's people is greater among the Tamil than the Hindi, who distinguish more sharply between the two sets of in-laws, emphasising the incorporation of the girl into her husband's family and her separation from her own kin. It is naturally the boy's family which might oppose the move, arguing that instead of gaining a daughter, they have lost a son. In a few cases the mother of the boy and his friends hinted that he was 'doped' or 'tricked' into choosing the wife's parents' home. The mother's lament is stereotyped: 'They took my daughter and my son' (for on marriage a daughter-in-law becomes 'a real daughter'); or 'they are getting rich with my son's money', or 'they are trying to steal our son from us.'

Ideally, all the sons should continue to live in the same house as their parents even after marriage. A room is given each newly wed couple, and if possible, an additional room after they have children. Domestic architecture, an interesting document of social relationships, reflects their integration into the *kutum*. In the wealthier and more conservative homes, there is usually a large and seldom used joint livingroom in the front, a small passage leading from it with bedrooms radiating on either side and often opening into each other, and a large joint kitchen-cum-dining room at the back. Where there is a front and back verandah, the front is used occasionally by the men, but never by the women who do much of the preparation of food at the back. There are no side doors, the passage is reduced to a minimum, doors to bedrooms are kept open during the day, and the only privacy of the young couple is in the darkness of night; for the rest of the day, including meal times, all their doings in the home are regulated by their position in the *kutum*.

Among the majority of South African Indians, the *kutum* is divided into a number of spatially separated houses, each group of

'house-people' (*ghar-ke admi* in Hindi, *vittu mansal* in Tamil) having their own 'house head' (*ghar-ke malik*, *gharwala* in Hindi, *periver* in Tamil) but recognising one *kutum* head. Sub-division has apparently always taken place, and without comparable figures it is difficult to tell whether or not the process is accelerated by South African conditions; though most informants state categorically that this is the case, they are basing their opinions largely on hearsay and on memories (often idealised) of Indian village life.

Moving from the paternal roof is frequently an indication of underlying conflicts, economic or psychological. The joint family developed in an agricultural caste society in which each member contributed labour and was restricted in occupational mobility, but with a shortage of land and the rise of towns and industries, the economic foundation of joint living weakened. Tensions, traditionally submerged and controlled by economic expediency and the absence of alternative ways of life, are becoming openly expressed in South Africa. Brothers are less prepared to pool their earnings and are more anxious to give advantages to their own children. In barracks and sub-economic municipal townships where there is control over the number of occupants of each dwelling, it is usually prohibited for more than one son to remain on after marriage. Adequately large houses are almost unobtainable even by wealthy Indians and the desire of an increasing number of young Indians for Western standards of living intensifies the process of segmentation. At the same time the very factor of shortage of houses makes it difficult to find other accomodation, and may keep a joint family in existence longer than the members wish.

Segmentation of the joint family takes place where the structural links are weakest, each specific break away being precipitated by individual conflicts. The most difficult relationship, as we shall see, is that of the new wife and her husband's female relatives, more especially her mother-in-law. In many homes the wife arrives as a total stranger, even to her husband. She must adapt herself completely to his family, learning their way of living, cooking and worship. If she considers that she is too hard worked, too strictly guarded, too frequently abused, her escape lies in a

home of her own. But before achieving this she must bind her husband closely to her, weaning him from his attachment to his mother, an attachment recognised as basic in Hindu life. Antagonisms may be suppressed for years, then erupt in a violent quarrel over a trifle, or there may be such frequent bickering that a quarrel, a climax, is engineered to justify separation. The move reduces strain before the relationship has become permanently impaired, and still enables the members to come together and function as a unit on special occasions.

Separation may take place in stages, beginning with an agreement to 'cook separate' and ending with a minimum of contact. In some homes with more than one daughter-in-law, each may have her own kitchen or hearth (perhaps a stove, perhaps iron rods on bricks in a corner), her own utensils and provisions; in other homes the daughters-in-law may share the same kitchen but have their hearths in different corners. One daughter-in-law is usually responsible for feeding the husband's parents and unmarried siblings.

A situation similar to that of young wife and mother-in-law arises when the parents are dead and a man marries and brings his wife into the home, now under an older brother and his wife. If the relationship becomes strained and it is financially difficult to separate completely (either because both brothers have contributed towards the buying of the house or because it is a joint inheritance), there is an attempt to partition the whole house by a wall, but this is not usually successful because the entrance and the yard are still shared. A few Westernised Indians, appreciating the difficulties of joint living, arrange for the young couple to move immediately after marriage into a house of their own, but still not too far for daily communication.

Table VIII, based on a random sample of houses in two working class areas of Durban, indicates the size of families living together in one house, and Table IX, based on a different sample, but in the same areas, indicates the family composition. A house with more than one related family is described as a joint household.

TABLE VII

NUMBER OF PERSONS PER FAMILY (i.e. KINSMEN) LIVING IN THE SAME HOUSE, CLASSIFIED BY LANGUAGE GROUP (HINDUSTANI AND TAMIL)—SUBURBS OF MEREBANK AND SPRINGFIELD, DURBAN, 1953.

Number of Persons	Number of Families			
	Merebank		Springfield	
	Hindustani	Tamil	Hindustani	Tamil
1	2	2	0	1
2	4	1	0	1
3	8	10	3	7
4	10	10	6	11
5	12	22	11	19
6	10	19	24	30
7	12	18	20	44
8	12	22	10	45
9	12	20	13	35
10	8	11	19	35
11	1	7	12	19
12	7	9	10	9
13	2	8	2	16
14	0	2	1	10
15	3	0	3	9
16	2	1	1	5
17	3	3	0	3
18	1	0	1	3
19	3	0	0	0
20	2	2	0	3
21	1	0	0	2
22	0	2	0	0
23	0	0	0	0
24	0	1		
25	0			
26	1			
27	0			
28	0			
29	1			
30	1			
31	1			
32	3			
33	0			
34	0			
35	1			
Total	123	170	136	307

	Merebank		Springfield	
	Hindustani	Tamil	Hindustani	Tamil
Mean number of persons per family ..	9·7	8·2	8·3	9·0

TABLE VIII

COMPOSITION OF FAMILIES (KINSMEN) LIVING IN THE SAME HOUSE, CLASSIFIED BY LANGUAGE GROUP (HINDUSTANI AND TAMIL) — SUBURBS OF MEREBANK AND SPRINGFIELD, DURBAN, 1953.

Family Composition	Number of Families					
	Merebank			Springfield		
	Hindustani	Tamil	Total	Hindustani	Tamil	Total
Elementary family..	75	111	186	34	111	145
Joint household ..	82	71	153	68	156	224*
Incomplete (widow or widower and children, i.e. 1 parent only and children)	13	14	27	5	19	24
Unmarried head ..	5	6	11	0	2	2
Childless family ..	5	4	9	3	0	3
Two wives	2	1	3	0	2	2
Total	182	207	389	110	290	400

* This includes joint families, and divided joint families (i.e. married sons or daughters still living in the house but with separate hearths).

Reading the figures from both areas together (Table VIII), we see that forty-two per cent of all the house-families consist of a nucleus of elementary groups of husband, wife and unmarried children, forty-eight per cent are joint households, six per cent are single parent units, under two per cent are isolated male individuals, under two per cent of the house-families are without children and in less than one per cent of cases, the house-head has more than one wife. From these figures it appears that even under South African urban conditions, the number of joint households may exceed the number of houses occupied by elementary family units.

Analysing the joint households, we found the following combinations as the nucleus:

	Percentage of Total Number of Joint Families
2 Parents and married son(s) ..	36·3
1 Parent and married son(s)	31·6
2 Parents and married daughter(s)	12·5
1 Parent and married daughter(s)	6·8
Married brothers	12·8

To these nuclear groups an extremely wide range of relatives were attached.

In many houses there are non-related families so that the total number of occupants per house is in fact higher even than indicated in Table VII. The size of house (number of rooms) influences the total number of occupants and also the number per room. The most common type of Indian working class home has 2 to 4 rooms. In a detailed study of housing in Durban, the following figures were given for Indian occupancy in 1 to 4 roomed privately owned Indian dwellings:

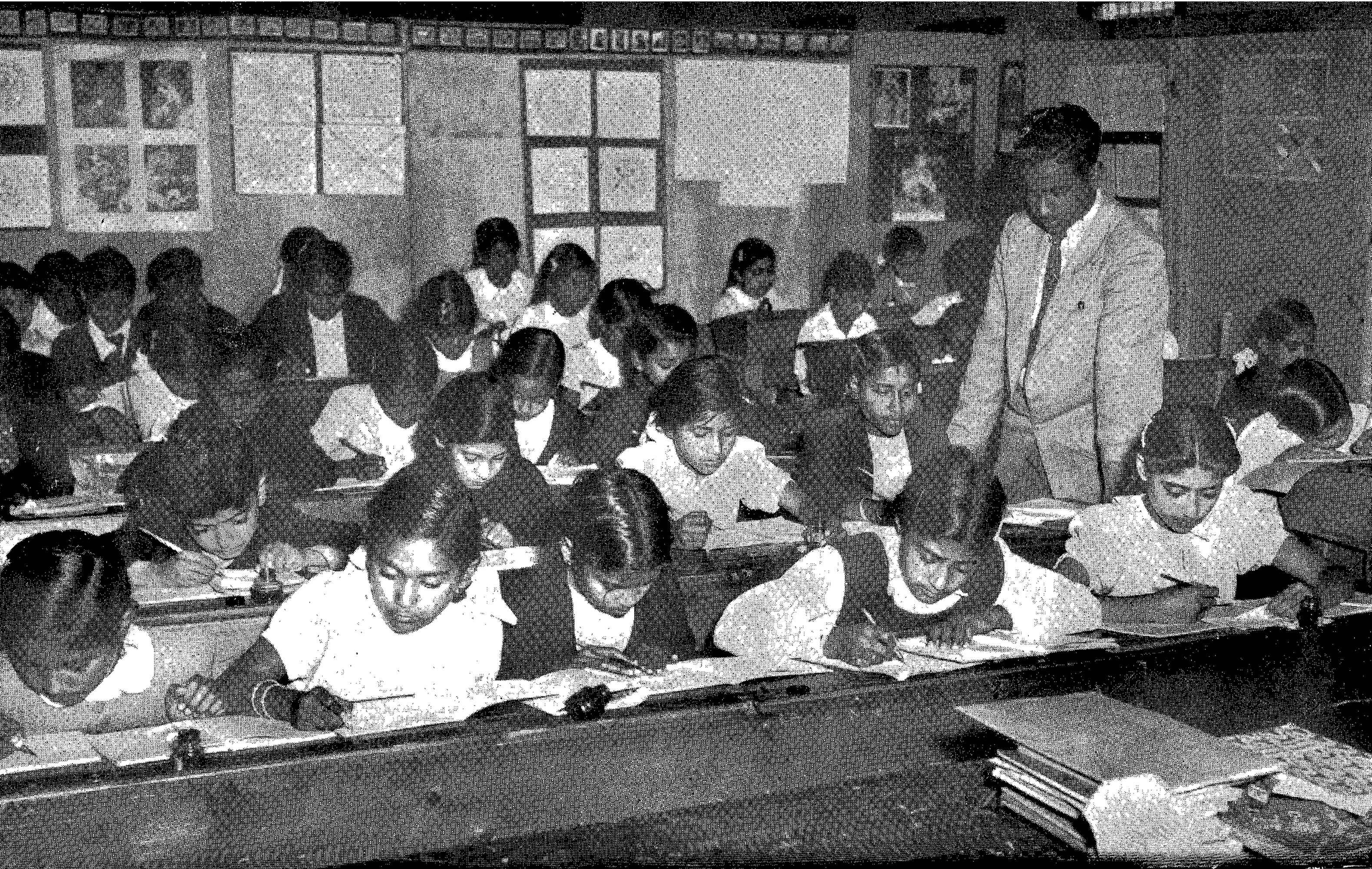
TABLE IX

	Number of Rooms				
	1	2	3	4	Total 1—4
Number of private dwellings (excluding flats)	1,043	2,278	1,594	1,713	6,628
Percentage of private dwellings ..	13	28	19	21	81
Number of occupants	4,519	13,773	12,198	14,970	45,460
Average number of occupants per dwelling	4·3	6·0	7·7	8·7	6·9
Average number of occupants per room	4·3	3·0	2·6	2·2	2·6

The Durban Housing Survey, 1952, p. 43

Sons hive off from their parents' home after their wives have lived there for varying periods of time. The most frequent pattern

Preparing a meal in a poor joint household
(Photo by Mickey Padayachee



is for each son to bring his wife into his parents' home for a few years, and for at least one son to remain with the parents till their death.

The character of the family head, the extent to which the father, or mother, is able keep the adult sons together through a sharing of responsibilities, is one of the main factors determining the period of joint family living and the subsequent relationship of the children. I was told that formerly it was usually the oldest son who remained longest; today factors of personality prevail over birth rank and there is a recognised tendency for the more educated or independent to stay for a shorter time. Parents may even encourage and help sons to move out to a better house or neighbourhood. On the death of a man his house does not necessarily go to his oldest son; he may bequeath it to any son. The factors involved in the disposal of property are subtle, and follow no single legal formula. One informant said "Five fingers are not the same. So with children. The finger you use frequently is the one which should be best looked after, and the child who cares most for the parents is the one who should get the best of their belongings." This statement was strongly criticised by others who argued that parents do not have this calculating attitude to children, and that sons do not remain in the parental home because of benefits anticipated at their parents' death.

There are very few sons who move immediately on marriage to a separate dwelling. Eighty-four men in one area in Durban, had spent the following period in the parental home.

Never with parents	*Under year*	1—2 *years*	2—5 *years*	5—10 *years*	10+
3	5	14	16	36	10

Of the three who lived on their own from the time of marriage, two had married against their parents' wishes, and in the third case, the man had a stepmother with whom his relationship had long been strained. Brothers seldom remain together once their sons marry; each becomes head of an independent family which may eventually develop into a separate *kutum*.

Separate living does not necessarily mean independence from *kutum* obligations, and though kinship ties are inevitably weakened by distance, they are still important in the major social and reli-

The rising generation
Photo by Arthur Bowland

gious activities. Kinsmen should keep each other, and particularly the parents' household, informed of anything important that happens in their own homes. Communication is mainly by personal visits; phone calls are reserved for emergencies especially amongst the poorer folk, and letter writing is rare. A birth, a naming ceremony, a flag raising, a marriage, a death and its associated ceremonies are recognised as family occasions. Specific relatives are selected for specific duties, but all are expected to be interested. Women are primarily responsible for the care of home and family, and especially in urban economy, where men are free only at weekends, it is the women who keep *kutum* relationships alive. Social visits extending over a few days, or even weeks, are frequent, and there are duty visits in times of trouble.

The separate identity of each elementary family in the *kutum* structure is permitted, and emphasised, by the application of South African law to the Indian family. The economic and legal authority of the head of a joint family is not part of this law—nor would most South African Indians wish it to become so. At the age of 21, Indian children like White South Africans attain their legal majority and are held responsible for their own contractual arrangements. Father, son and brother are terms involving moral, social and religious obligations; legally and economically, when adult, each of these persons is a stranger to the other. Any decision to the contrary is voluntary, and though there are many family businesses, the share of each relative depends on the nature of each specific contract.

Economically, each separate household acknowledges the authority of its own house head and may appear to be completely independent. But a young couple should take no major decision (whether it be buying furniture, making a loan, taking a journey, purchasing a property, etc.) without consulting the seniors of the family. Though they may not be able to give assistance, they expect to be asked for advice. The head of the extended family in particular should never be ignored, for to do so, or to override his opinion, creates tension and invites failure. He is referred to because he is the social and religious head of the *kutum*, though in legal and economic activities his power may be purely nominal. There is an accepted tendency when the children are married, for

an ageing father to hand over direct control of his material affairs to his sons, and, encouraged and supported by them, to spend his time in religious and communal activities. A man in Merebank quoted to me from the ancient Code of Manu: 'When a householder perceives that his muscles have become flaccid and his hair grey, and even his son has become a father, let him renounce all worldly goods and engage in contemplation of God'. In many Hindu homes which by Western standards are poorly off, men still in the fifties have been encouraged by their sons to retire and devote their time to religious and communal service.

Though under Western law each normal adult is considered responsible for his own debts, members of the joint family frequently assist each other. A Tamil scholar quoted to me from one of the classics, Ten Tamil Ethics: 'They are not kinsmen who, like birds in a tank, foresake it when the water dries up; they are the real kinsmen who, like the lily and the water plants in that tank, suffer with it.' The obligation to help is primarily on brothers by the same father and mother, but there have been cases where other kin, especially the father's brothers, have contributed.

Very much less help is expected (and received) from sisters' husbands and from maternal relatives, and there is also little doubt that, since there is no legal obligation to extend help, difference in wealth between two branches of the family that are not living together, may accentuate separation which becomes greater as kinship becomes more distant. A rich brother is more prepared to help his poor brothers than his brothers' sons after their marriage, and his sons, who will inherit his property, seldom feel the same close kinship obligations to their father's brothers' sons who have grown up in different homes. But though a man lives in a separate household and has a large number of children of his own, he recognises that he is under a moral obligation to support his parents, assist other poor relations, educate the younger members, help in emergencies, and contribute goods and services at marriages and funerals.

Individualism, the ambitious desire for personal success, is considered anti-social unless accompanied by an equivalent acceptance of kinship responsibility. Many men, themselves in dire poverty, are still prepared to bear the burden of helping distant as well as close kinsmen who would otherwise be entirely

destitute. A leading Indian social worker emphasised that help was usually given "not out of a sense of duty but sense of family. To help a kinsman is not only an obligation but a privilege. We like to keep relationship".

A family without effective kinship ties suffers recognised social and economic disabilities. Where a marriage has been contracted across prohibited barriers of religion, language, race or culture an elementary family is occasionally found, isolated in spirit as well as in space. *Kutum* and community are against the marriage of a Hindu to a Moslem or a Christian, or to a European, a Coloured or an African, or to a member of a different linguistic-cultural Hindu section. "Selling his mother (religion) for the sake of a girl" is the stereotyped judgment.

Marriage of Hindus into a different religious community usually involves proseletyzation. Hindu-Moslem marriages are very few, Hindu-Christian marriages are more numerous. The strongest opposition is offered by a Hindu family to the conversion of a woman—a man is recognised as having an independence of worldly experience, whereas a girl is believed to reflect the standards of the family itself, and her actions bring shame on all its members. Moreover the man can more easily keep up his kinship ties, though he will no longer be consulted on matters, particularly marriages, which affect the family intimately. The girl has no freedom to visit her people and they in turn feel 'they cannot eat with those people'.

Marriage across the colour line is disapproved of because of associated differences in language, religion and behaviour rather than on grounds of 'race'. The cultural gulf is widest between Hindus and tribal Africans, the group that has the lowest status in South Africa's colour dominated society, and here the avoidance is strongest. I have come across only one case of marriage between Hindu and African in Durban, and the number of illegal unions is very rare. More frequent, but still a rarity, are marriages between Indians and Coloureds, or Europeans.[1]

[1] Marriages between European and Non-European are now prohibited under the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act.

Kinship ties are seldom completely severed, and since the behaviour of each member affects the reputation of the wider *kutum*, older relatives feel fully entitled to interfere when they consider it necessary. Gossip is accepted as part of social intercourse, and very few matters can be kept private. Everyone in the neighbourhood knows which men drink excessively, bet too high, are having love affairs or beat their wives. There is no ritual outcasting by the family, but if the general disapproval is not an effective deterrent, members may ostentatiously disassociate themselves from the culprit.

In many cases, a reconciliation eventually takes place. This is usually brought about by the death of a close kinsman or by a serious illness; if the misfortune is in the husband's family, he may go alone to condole, and if in the wife's family, she will pave the way. The reconciliation is gradual rather than dramatic; the erring member appears, his kinsmen say a few words, and thereafter he is informed of major events (births, marriages and funerals), but there is never the same intimacy or frequency of contact. Complete reconciliation involves forgiveness and acceptance not only by the immediate family, but by the wider circle of kin, their friends and the community in general. There are usually individuals or cliques who, for a variety of motives, will not let the matter be forgotten. They express their disapproval in words and deeds, using every opportunity to remind the victims of their sin, and referring directly or indirectly to it in the presence of relatives whose social lives are in turn affected. Should any further misfortune befall the family, the *Karmic* inference is drawn with moralistic favour.

More rare than the isolated elementary family is the completely isolated individual. The migrant male labourer, characteristic of the African urban population, is not a social type among the Indians. In cases where a man must move on his own, he will, if possible, stay with kin or friends who incorporate him as a kinsman, and if he is married, he will bring his family to join him as soon as possible. No respectable unmarried Hindu girl is allowed to live alone; to do so indicates loose morals. Widows either stay with relatives or seek families prepared to have them in the 'grandmother' role.

Conflicts and contradictions in the Indian family system are sometimes reduced, sometimes intensified and multiplied, in the process of adaptation to the present South African milieu. Looked at objectively we see that the strong legal ties of kinship have been replaced by looser ties of association. From the point of view of the individuals concerned, the change is evaluated from two opposed interest levels. Conservatives both regret and condemn the refusal by the younger generation to conform to the standards of *kutum* living, but the 'modern' generation regards this nonconformity as a progressive step towards Westernisation. The composition of modern Indian families shows considerable variation but the range is not haphazard: it is set by the *kutum* structure.

The structure described above is not designed to give the impression that the Indian family system works without conflict; on the contrary there are many hundreds of families which do not cope successfully with their internal relationships. The annual reports of such welfare associations as the Durban Indian Child Welfare, FOSA, and the Aryan Benevolent Home indicate the necessity of agencies outside the family to help and protect the individual. In 1957, the Durban Indian Child Welfare Society alone dealt with 1,810 families, seeking maintenance grants—and 6,094 children were involved; and 506 families were involved in domestic difficulties affecting 1,439 children.

The weakening of the joint family system is not unique to the Indians. It follows from the impact of Westernisation and urbanisation and is evident in other sections of the South African population, more particularly the Africans. But it is interesting to note that in Natal, where the Natal Native Code operates, there is a deliberate attempt by legislation to maintain the "tribal system", and the responsibilities of the *kraal* head, which in many respects were similar to those of the *kutum* head, are entrenched by law. Yet under the urban conditions of Durban the Indian family retains a greater coherence than the African, and this can be related to conditions arising from (1) the process of Indian industrialisation and urbanisation in South Africa, and (2) the structure, functions, and values of the kinship system peculiar to the Indian. Caught in the stream of migration from rural to urban

centres, the majority of Indians in South Africa are forced to move with their entire families. They have no land in reserves (as do the immigrant urban Africans), where they can leave their women and children with any security during their absence. They must therefore take them along, or abandon them. To abandon them is to lose their own tenuous security which is derived from a specific set of reciprocal kinship services described in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VII

Kinship Behaviour

ORTHODOX SOUTH AFRICAN HINDU refer to ancient Hindu literature (particularly the epics of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, and the laws of *Manu*) to explain or sanction the behaviour required of specific kin. These books, written at different periods, and reflecting changing social mores, provide a flexible guide rather than any rigid code and allow for differences of interpretation and opinion. There are, however, certain basic principles accepted by Hindus in South Africa as expressing ideal conduct, the extent to which these principles are followed in practice depending primarily on the educational and social outlook of the family. The majority of South African Indians articulate the ancient requirements without necessarily considering them the ideal; conflict is created by an increasing knowledge of Western standards.

Marriage is generally regarded as right, natural and necessary in the life cycle of Hindu men and women in South Africa. Bachelors and spinsters, including those crippled in mind and body, are few and are considered to be afflicted by fate (*karma*, literally deeds): their time of birth or maturation was inauspicious, or their parents, or they themselves, committed a sin in a former life. Marriage itself is regarded as a cure for young people showing signs of emotional or moral weakness, and the parents do not think it necessary—or advisable—to inform the other party of these defects, which it is assumed are temporary.

Marriage is a sacred, not simply a civil, union, and divorce is not recognised by orthodox South African Hindu.[1] Though under South African law any registered marriage can be dissolved on

[1] Yet according to the *Smriti*, marriage could be dissolved under certain, circumstances; See Manu VIII, 205; Manu IX, 72. Also see Prabhu, pp. 192–193.

grounds of adultery, desertion or insanity, legal divorce is rare.[1]

Marriage does not inaugurate an independent family but strengthens existing ties within the kinship structure. It is not only a sacred union of two individuals, but also a contract between their respective kin. The initiative is taken by the girl's kin among the Hindi, and by the boy's group among the Tamil and Telugu, but in all groups the qualities that are considered important are those which will make for harmonious living with the in-laws. Family background, industry, temperament, health, occupation and education are all relevant; romantic love, like all assertive individualism, is a new and disturbing intrusion. In 'modern' families the young people may make the initial choice, but the final consent must still be given by the elders who supervise, and finance, the elaborate ritual, and who direct the future plans for living as members of a *kutum* and community.

Marriage transfers legal and religious rights and obligations from the woman's *kutum* to the husband and his *kutum*. The bonds between him and his kin are reinforced: 'instead of losing a son they gain a daughter'. The girl who comes under the authority of her in-laws, must make devotions for her husband's, not her own, parents after their death.

The behaviour patterns in the *kutum* vary with consanguinal and affinal links; and I will begin with the nuclear group of parents and children. The strongest affective relationships in Hindu idiom exists between husband and wife, and mother and son.

A Hindu wife is subservient to her husband, yet to describe her as inferior is to oversimplify and falsify a highly complex relationship. Wisdom and virtue rather than weakness and inferiority may be said to underly much of her attitude. No one with any perception would deny the tremendous influence exerted by the average Hindu wife who leads by withdrawing, rules by submitting and, above all, creates by receiving.

The sex bond distinguishes the husband-wife relationship from all others, and the strongest emphasis, religious, social and legal, is placed on safeguarding the sex rights of the man. Chastity

[1] In 1951 the total recorded Asiatic divorces numbered 20, of whom only 6 were from Natal. *Union Year Book*, No. 27, p. 209. These figures relate only to 'indentured' Indians, and the true figures, which would include Indians of passenger origin, would be somewhat higher, but still small.

of the woman before marriage and faithfulness during marriage are the ideal, and the norm. Women are described by male informants as 'more pure than men', but men and women must strive equally to attain virtue. Sita, wife of Rama, hero of the Ramayana, is portrayed in South African Hindu homes as the ideal woman—loyal, submissive, and above all chaste, retaining her virtues in the face of terrible trials and unjust accusations. Rama, the first exponent of the monogamous ideal in Indian literature, is supposed to symbolise strength of character as a husband, obedience as a son and justice as a ruler.

A wife is necessary for the average man's fulfilment of his *dharma;* man and wife together control the children and the home, and cruelty and neglect meet not only with outspoken disapproval from kinsmen and neighbours, but bring their own retribution. A man is allowed by custom to beat his wife if she has committed a misdemeanour, but if the beating is excessive, or unprovoked, he is treated with contempt; the woman should not, and seldom does, lift her hand against him even in self-protection. Complaint to her parents is also disapproved, particularly among the Hindustani, where the wife is more strictly under the control of her husband, but his kin must try to restrain him, for violence is contrary to the moral and religious basis of marriage.

The domestic role of women,—the care of the home, bearing and rearing of children, preparing the food,—is recognised as the foundation of family life. The hearth where food is prepared is a sacred place that should be approached with reverence, and a wife has an honoured role through her appointment as guardian thereof. *Pakasastra* (the art of cooking) is a highly rated accomplishment; on ceremonial occasions the most respected men often help prepare the vegetables and cook the rice, while the women see to the curries and blending of the spices. It is the task of a good wife and mother to see that her fare satisfies her husband and her children, and the highest respect a man can show a guest is for his wife to cook a meal and serve it herself.

It is the duty of the husband to provide his wife with the necessities of life. No matter how poor the family may be, a wife is not supposed to sell her labour on the open market. To do so, indicates that the husband is unable to look after her properly; and the whole family loses respect in the eyes of the community.

It is assumed that 'good' women have no inclination to work outside the home; if driven by the necessity of poverty they are pitied, but if by amibition for freedom and the desire for adventure they are adversely criticised. In rural and semi-rural areas, women may work with the men and children in the fields and help sell the produce, and in urban areas women may earn money through home industries, such as threading bags for local tobacco firms, weaving baskets and making sweetmeats—but contact with the outer world must be restricted. Only educated women, who are specially trained for a profession, meet with respect if they work at a career outside the home even after marriage.

Control over spending of a man's wages varies with the type of family. In the joint family it is the mother who is in control, and ideally if the mother is dead or if the man lives in a separate home, his wife should be in charge. There is, however, a recognised tendency, especially in families which are becoming 'modern', for the man to keep his pay packet and give his wife as much as he pleases, or as little. Feeding and clothing depend on the skill with which the woman manages the income; and in joint households the woman in charge decides how much to give even the adult men, the wage earners, for "spending money".

Falling as she does under South African law, an Indian women can inherit and dispose of property in her own right. If a marriage is registered, and there is no antenuptial contract, community of property automatically results, and on the death of the husband half his property goes to his widow who also receives a child's share of the remainder. While the more wealthy Indians usually leave wills, the majority of the working class do not, and the men generally accept it as right that the widow should be the main beneficiary. However, if the religious marriage has not been registered, the woman is not regarded as a legal wife and has no claims in that capacity; the sons are then expected to look after her, which they usually do. Women married in India where marriages are out of community, though domiciled in South Africa, are generally in the same position.[1]

A South African Indian woman exercises considerable

[1] There is, however, legal provision for a postnuptial contract giving her a half share from the date of this contract. This provision does not appear to be widely known or operative.

indirect control over the disposal of family property, and her husband may not sell or pawn goods (such as furniture, jewellery and clothing) given her on marriage by her own kin. Though she usually agrees that he should pawn her jewellery for a serious debt or for the benefit of the family, there are several cases in which a woman refused her permission fearing that he would use her wealth to indulge a weakness for gambling or drink. She may herself dispose of her own personal property to her daughters or daughters-in-law, and though she consults her husband, the final decision is hers.

It is clear that while the man may exercise authority over his wife, he neither owns her nor her possessions. In all spheres his authority is legally, morally and religiously restricted. He has authority to demand fulfilment of those vows she made him at marriage—sexual fidelity, the production of children, loyalty and assistance,—but he cannot force even his basic sexual right without reservation. Though the sex demands of men, particularly soon after marriage, are regarded as more urgent and frequent than of women, and a woman cannot refuse to cohabit with her husband under ordinary circumstances, he may not insist during her periods of purification for specific ceremonies and other ritual occasions. To do so, would incur both defilement and religious retribution.

The extent to which Hindu wives are kept secluded in Durban, varies with different economic and cultural groups, and with the woman's standard of Western education. Merchant class Gujarati speaking are particularly strict (see Chapter III), while the Tamil (whose women never draw their saris over their faces) have a tradition of greater freedom. But the position of women in all sections and classes is changing with the process of western education in the urban environment, and there is a general tendency towards greater independence both before and after marriage.

In public the behaviour of husband and wife should be, and usually is, restrained, circumspect and undemonstrative; any obvious sign of affection evokes as great a general embarrassment and criticism as any open insult. They should never call each other by name in front of others; he addresses her as 'mother' or 'mother of so and so', or draws her attention by saying 'You' or 'Are you listening?' A wife addresses her husband with special terms of respect, or as 'brother of so and so' or 'father of so and so' (giving

the name of the oldest child, male or female). A few very modern men and women are breaking through this convention, but they still find embarrassment in using each other's 'calling name' and often substitute a 'petname'. Special descriptive terms are used in talking of each other. A conservative wife avoids 'taking her husband's name'; and if asked directly, she might call some other member of the family, even a child or a neighbour, to 'give' it.[1] Speaking to each other in the vernacular, the husband uses the equivalent of "thee", and the wife the more respectful and impersonal "you".

In conservative homes a man does not eat with his wife, and even if he comes home late she is not supposed to eat before him, the usual order of feeding being the very young and very old first, then the men and lastly the women. To me it seems that one of the main indications of Westernisation was the sitting together of all members of the family at the table for meals, though the women had to get up to serve the food. The conservative woman says she does not like this; her pride is to tend the family and see their pleasure in her cooking. Occasionally, as a special demonstration of affection and intimacy, a conservative husband will invite his wife to eat from his plate.

Religion reflects the status which the family accords its members, and in South African Hindu religion it is the mother and wife who carry out the main devotions. A woman on marriage performs the rites of her husband's family and makes offerings to his house gods. She is, however, entitled under certain circumstances to continue to follow her own home deities, and if her husband's family does not also subscribe to them, she holds the prayers in her parental home, usually after the birth of a child. Very often among the Tamil, devotions to certain deities (particularly Katterie and Munespiran) specifically associated with childbearing and childrearing, are transmitted from mother to daughter. In certain circumstances a temple oracle instructs a woman to continue with her own family deities, but this is in addition to, and never a substitute for, her religious duties in her husband's home.

Hinduism, as we shall see, stresses both the female and male

[1] Avoidance and respect are more noticeable and strict among Indians of northern than of southern origin.

principles of existence. The female principle, (*Sakti*) symbolised in such powerful female deities as *Kali, Durga, Amma* (*Ambah*) and *Sakti*, is both benign and fierce, creative and destructive, individual and universal. It reaches its highest expression in the concept of the Motherhood of God. Motherhood is the ideal of womanhood. Even in the poorest homes, and irrespective of the number of children, the woman as mother is usually shown extraordinary reverence and attention.

No sharp dichotomy is drawn between the character of father and mother; in the secular and the sacred field sex is a matter of interaction not of opposition, and neither the father nor the mother is built up as a fearful figure of authority. The physiological tie of parentage is ritually reinforced at conception, pregnancy and birth (see Chapter IX). South African Hindus continue a cultural tradition in which sex is elaborated in religion and literature,[1] the act of sex is not regarded as a direct release of physical desire but as a religious consummation only to be indulged in after marriage and primarily for the purpose of reproduction. While coitus is recognised as essential for conception among mortal men, creativity rests ultimately with the Divinity.

Children are the fulfilment of marriage, and the hopes of the childless are maintained by the belief that conception is a blessing, a blessing that is demonstrated daily. The high birth rate of the Indian community is an accepted fact[2]. Should a young wife not fall pregnant within the first year of marriage, the usual procedure is to seek a possible purely physical defect through consultation with a doctor of medicine and also to expiate a more fundamental or spiritual misfortune. The woman is generally held responsible by the man's kin, who may in anger or disappointment insult her with her affliction which is regarded as possibly a punishment for sin in a previous life, and she, usually accompanied by one of her own kin, will try to expiate by devotions at the temple, or vows of

[1] In addition to the translation of the classical *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana, a wide range of literature on the subject is sold in the bookshops and advertised in the local Indian press.

[2] The 1954 Union Asiatic (almost entirely Indian) crude birth rate (36.7 per 1,000) is approxiamtely 40% above that of the European population (25.5) but considerably below that of the Coloured community (48.4). For fuller discussion, see Pollak H., "Some Aspects of Population Growth", paper delivered to the South African Institute of Race Relations, Durban, 1956.

penance to her home gods. Children of both sexes are desired, but since sons are required to carry out funeral rites and make ancestral devotions, special rituals are sometimes performed for them. No limit is set on the size of families, but there is no injunction against family limitation as long as it does not involve acts considered morally degrading and physically harmful.[1]

Illegitimacy is strongly condemned, and the illegitimacy rate is relatively low.[2] Should an unmarried girl become pregnant, her parents make every effort to marry her off before the child is born, or they try to have the child adopted; if they are unsuccessful in concealing her condition, the whole family is humiliated and loses face, and the unfortunate girl is married to a widower or allowed to go to a man as a second wife.

The marriage ritual of South African Hindu groups has many variations,[3] but there are a number of essential rites which symbolise basic obligations. Man and wife are united in a sacred bond for the purpose of procreation, authority over the woman is transferred to her husband who must provide for her and her children, and together they must fulfil their duties to society.

The domesticity of the South African woman makes her contact with her children more intimate than is possible for the husband and father who works outside the home. For the first forty days after birth mother and child are kept in close seclusion, and for the first six to eleven days in almost constant bodily contact, with the baby lying against the mother in the bed or held in her arms in the birth room. After the mother and child have been purified and are able to associate with the outside world, the mother is still expected to be in constant attention.

In a joint household, many of the activities of child-rearing are taken over by other women. Bathing the baby is the privilege of the grandmother, and the mother may never refuse to allow anyone in the home the pleasure of picking up the baby and fondling it. It may even be suckled by another nursing mother out of affection or if the mother is ill or has not enough milk.

[1] There has been a very positive response to birth control services started in Durban, though there is a definite aversion by both men and women to the usual contraceptives.

[2] Salber, E. J. "Illegitimacy in Durban", *Journal of Tropical Pediatrics*, Vol. II, No. 4 (March, 1957), pp. 181–188.

[3] See Chapter IX.

But the strongest bond remains with the real mother. She is expected to feed her baby and to carry out, under direction of the older women, the numerous protective rites. The child is the centre of attention, and the mother the recipient of advice. The breast is recognised as a source of comfort as well as sustenance and the act of weaning should not be abrupt. It usually takes place when the infant is between twelve and eighteen months,[1] and is accelerated if the mother finds herself again pregnant. The process is recognised as difficult for mother and child, and the youngest is usually breastfed for the longest period, in several cases till it was over two, and sometimes three and four years old.

The period of maternal indulgence generally terminates with the birth of a new baby. The older child's rivalry for the mother's affection and attention is not culturally accepted as 'natural',[2] while favouritism for the youngest[3] or weakest child is commonly and openly admitted. Among the Tamil, the first, third and fifth child, if girls, are considered lucky, or the sixth and eighth, if boys, but the fourth, sixth and particularly the eighth, if girls, are considered unlucky. Children born during Diwali or at the new moon are believed to be naughty, and even bad. Rejection of a child is generally rationalised in mystical terms—the child is born in a "bad month", or "unlucky star" or has a bad birth rank, or is of the wrong sex for family balance. I have come across no South African Hindu who openly expresses a preference for male children, but there are many instances of mothers in particular showing greater favouritism for the son, though in general fathers are said to be more indulgent towards their daughters.

Discipline begins when at about the age of three, the child is able to walk, feed itself, understand commands and recognise different tones of voice. Conduct that was previously ignored or

[1] In 1955, I attempted to find the age of weaning from questions put to 137 women of working class families. The results were as follows:

—3 months	3—5	6—8	9—11	12—14	15—17	18—20	21—23
11	10	11	21	24	22	13	7

24—26	27—29	30—32	33—35	36—47	48—59	60—
2	4	4	3	2	2	1

The four children nursed for more than 30 months were boys.

[2] In one family, where the demands of the older child had become excessive, a special ritual was performed to break her attachment to the mother. The more usual procedure is for the mother to ignore the older child's tantrums, or for it to be deliberately distracted by somebody else.

[3] For the youngest, there are special terms of endearment, e.g. *Kama Kuti* (light of the home).

even regarded with amusement or indulgence begins to be sharply corrected. To take food in the left ('unclean') hand, dribble, expose oneself immodestly, shout in the house, use foul language, play with water, destroy property, disobey, are all actions that may, and usually do, bring down the wrath of the family elders. Whereas in infancy a baby was cuddled as soon as it cried, the toddler is "given reasons for crying". Punishment, however, must not be too severe; physical pain is not considered the best cure for social misdemeanour. If a child has been extremely troublesome the grandmother or mother,[1] or less frequently the father, will smack it (usually with the open hand or a thin stick) on the hands or legs, never the face, but the mere threat or sight of the instrument is also a technique used to produce tears and the desired response. The expressed intention is "to frighten" the child, "not hurt it". "When you beat a crying child, it does not feel the pain and it becomes more fierce." To beat a child is equated by the extremely religious with beating a god. The "good" parent is not the over-indulgent parent, but the parent who, by use of the necessary disciplinary measures, is able to inculcate the virtues of obedience, modesty and respect.[2] There exists in the language an extensive vocabulary of terrifying threats, used to give vent to anger and inhibit action.[3] "A child must be taught that it will pay for everything it does." The promise of rewards (in the form of sweets, fruits or pennies) as well as the threat of punishment, is used to induce socially approved behaviour; and the promise—like the threat—need not be fulfilled.

Rejection or neglect of Indian children is, however, rare. The love lavished on them is one of the most conspicuous and pleasing features of family life. The parents are not encouraged to be over-possessive: "the joy of children should be shared", and relatives

[1] In a joint homestead, the mother is usually too afraid of the mother-in-law to smack the child.

[2] A scholar quoting to me from the classics said the parents and teachers who reprimand their pupils give them "a drink of immortality" but those who indulge them are in fact giving them "poison". I saw a grandmother smack a five year old boy across his head and ears, and then give him such a violent push that he fell down, because he had taken his father's razor "to shave". She adores this grandchild, but explained that she had to teach him "right".

[3] Examples of some of the more commonly heard threats are: I will kill you; put chillies in your eyes; skin you; tear you apart by the legs; send you to a reformatory; kick you; hang you; castrate you; beat you up.

are allowed to take them to stay with them for days or weeks. Indian children are socialised from an early age.

Children are not encouraged to develop as independent individuals, but as co-operative members of the *kutum*. Boys as well as girls are discouraged from fighting for what they want, and they are made to feel shame, guilt and sin if they do not suppress their own desires, initiative and aggression in the interest of the family. "They should eat a little short of their appetites", "never bathe in water of unknown depths", and "learn to walk in right ways". The child accompanies its parents to the most varied ceremonies and events, at which instruction is given on correct behaviour; it is not protected from contact with the maimed, the sick, the dying or the dead. An old Hindi woman said "A child cannot be shut off from life, but the family gives it strength to meet hardships."

Infant betrothal, once widespread in South Africa, continues to a limited extent in Durban. It takes the form of preferential claims by certain relatives among the South Indians, or by promises made between friends eager to cement their friendship. In some cases a baby girl is 'booked' for the friend's son, and the children grow up with this 'understanding', but the marriage itself is ritualised, as well as consummated, only when the two are physically mature.

Marriages of girls under sixteen and boys under eighteen are prohibited under South African law, but Indian parents still regard it as one of their main duties to see that their children marry fairly young; and if necessary arrange marriages for them. A boy should marry a girl younger than himself, but only by a few years, 'the son-in-law is older than the father' being a common gibe against a husband who is many years his wife's senior. The most popular age of marriage is sixteen to twenty years for girls, and between nineteen and twenty-seven for boys. To give a daughter in marriage is regarded by the devout as an act of virtue, a stepping stone in the parents' struggle to attain *moksha*—ultimate liberation from the cycle of recurring life.

Both parents take part in arranging and sanctioning a child's wedding; but the priority of the mother in rearing the child is specifically acknowledged. Thus among the orthodox Tamil, the groom's people signify their indebtedness by making a gesture of a money gift known as *molapaal koolee*; this she in turn refuses to

accept in order "to show that she wishes the inlaws to continue to look after the girl as well as she did herself". The marriage of a son does not sever the relationship with his mother, whose possessive affection for him is exhibited in her control over his wife, not in stopping him from taking a wife.

The conflict for wealth and authority, inherent in the father-son relationship in many patrilineal societies, is theoretically circumvented among the Hindu by the religious injunction for the father to renounce his mundane attachments when his sons have become mature married adults and to retain only the role of spiritual head. It then becomes the duty of the sons, particularly the oldest son, to support the parents and any other dependents of their household. Though in South Africa this mutual obligation has no legal backing, and sons appear to be increasingly prepared to assert their independence at an early age, the traditional moral basis of the father's relationship to his adult sons is generally accepted.

But it is the mother of a man who is frequently supreme in his home. Through his deep attachment to her, she is able to dictate to his wife and control his children. It is She as mother, rather than as wife, who represents purity and devotion in religion. Her relation with her daughter is tinged by the explicit knowledge that a girl will leave her own home on marriage, while the bond with the son will endure and be strengthened through the additional powers conferred on his mother as mother-in-law and grandmother.

Bonds between a woman and her own family are weakened on marriage, and become more formal. A married woman may pay frequent visits to her parents' home, where she is treated as an honoured guest but she cannot come and go as she pleases. A Tamil husband is obliged to send his wife to her parents' home three months after marriage for her mother to add a special ornament (*gundu*) to the marriage necklace (*tali*) which he tied round her neck as climax to their elaborate marriage ceremony. It is also essential for her to be sent to her home in the seventh or eighth month of pregnancy for the birth of her first child, and of subsequent children if possible. The maternal grandparents must pay for the midwife or hospital, provide the baby with the neces-

sary clothing and see that the ceremonies are correctly performed. Among the Hindustani, these obligations are customary, but not essential, though the girl's mother is always responsible for the first baby's layette, and helps with other expenses.

It is the duty of the girl's parents in all groups to keep her informed of important events at their home, and her husband must, if at all possible, allow her to attend any functions though it may necessitate her absence from home for several days. At the same time a wife cannot move freely between her parents' and her husband's home; and he has the right to refuse his permission if he finds her absences too frequent. As she can never go without being fetched by one of her kin, his resentment is usually directed against his in-laws rather than his wife.

> A highly educated man got so tired of his young wife going off to her parents, that he warned her if she went more than once again during that year, he would not go to fetch her back. She went a few weeks later, and he did not go till three messages had been sent him. "That taught her a lesson," he concluded. "After that she stayed at my home."

When a married daughter visits her parents' home and sees something that she likes, she is entitled to ask for it and if possible it is given her; and even if she does not ask, she never leaves empty handed. Her demands are usually small, for she is ashamed to take much lest it reflect badly on her husband, and also on herself for showing she is in need. For a married woman to be forced to take things from her own people, and above all, live with them through economic necessity, is regarded as humiliating.

> This was tragically illustrated in the case of a woman whose own parents were fairly well-off and whose husband's parents were poor. He met with an accident, was crippled for life and could get no job; her parents were prepared to help but he said it was too shameful to live with them, so he and his wife and seven children struggled on in the overcrowded shack till the man died and there was virtually no alternative but for the widow and her children to seek their protection.

When as sometimes happens, the man's pride and self respect are defeated by hunger, he and his family are open to insults, to which they are acutely sensitive.

Difference in status of son and daughter influences their behaviour as siblings. Though in the early years brothers and sisters play together, eat together and, in homes of the poor, sleep in the same room and even in the same bed, they soon become aware that their roles in the family do not coincide. The growth of a boy is usually more elaborately ritualised, and he receives special favours from the mother. In congested homes with only one bed, it is usually the father and sons who "sleep up", and the mother and daughters who "sleep down" on mattresses on the floor; and the boy is allowed to play more freely and to express himself more openly without fear of rebuke.

The brother is taught to protect and look after his sister, and (if he is older) he is particularly strict in seeing that she does not associate with "loose companions". Even in modern families it is often the brother who raises objections to the girl visiting other homes or choosing her own husband, and he does not hesitate to use the threat of leaving home if his parents do not support him in making his sister "behave". Several informants stressed that sex relations between brothers and sisters are "unthinkable";[1] to a psychoanalyst it might appear that it is because incest desires are so deeply suppressed that he adopts so high a moral stand towards her behaviour. He himself is permitted to take her out to bioscope and to escort her on visits, on the assumption that with him she is "safe". Should she be the older, he is expected, once he earns, to contribute towards the expenses involved in her marriage before he can marry himself.

She has no corresponding economic obligation towards him, but is consulted in the choice of his bride, and is one of the central figures in the marriage ritual. It is the groom's sister who must be induced by stereotyped gifts to admit the bride into the home of her people, and who leads the bride to her nuptial room. At marriage, the end of the bride's sari is tied by a member of her family (a maternal aunt or a sister) to the groom's shoulder band, and this knot must be ritually untied by his sister when he brings his bride to live in their parents' home. When the mother is dead, the oldest brother's wife becomes the most important woman in the home and has even on occasion overridden the expressed wishes of the deceased whom we must not forget was her mother-

[1] Even in homes where adolescent brothers and sisters had to share a room.

in-law, in regard to the marriage of her daughters (i.e. the sisters-in-law).

Seniority regulates the relationship between siblings of the same sex, and particular deference is shown the oldest brother and sister if their character is 'clean'. Between brothers, mutual help is the ideal with responsibility placed on the oldest for assisting in the education and marriage arrangements of the younger. Once these responsibilities are fulfilled, and if brothers no longer live together under a common roof, there is an increasing tendency for them to be relatively independent, and reluctant to give, or ask for, further economic assistance. Though living separately, they usually keep in close contact with each other during the lifetime of the parents, and after their death brothers, in the role of sons, are drawn together by the rituals performed for the dead. The charter for brotherly devotion is provided by the often quoted relationship of Rama and his younger brother Lakshman who accompanied him in his exile and behaved with such exemplary respect that he never looked on the face of Sita, his brother's wife.

Behaviour between sisters is less formal and persistent, deriving its strength from shared experiences in childhood and similar expectations of womanhood. Among Hindi speakers it is considered good for two sisters to marry two brothers, or for a sister and brother to marry a brother and sister; among the Tamil the children of sisters were allowed, and sometimes encouraged, to marry. A woman has an easy joking relationship with her sister's husband, but the persistence of sisterly association depends largely on the status and compatibility of their respective husbands; while it is unusual to find brothers who are obviously and permanently estranged from each other or from their sisters, there are several instances in our records of two sisters, one of whom has married better than the other, not seeing each other after their parents had both died, or knowing each other's children.

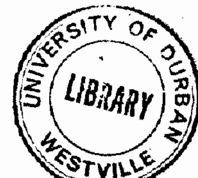
Friendliness between sisters even after marriage is generally demonstrated in the mutual exchange of gifts at the annual ceremony of Diwali and at the various celebrations for the children in the respective families. We have already mentioned that it is from a sister that a childless woman, or a woman with children of only one sex, is likely to ask for and be given the baby desired by her to complete her own immediate family. Children often spend much

of their time in the home of a favourite maternal aunt, who is called affectionately 'Mother' and who responds by spoiling the child.

Parallel cousins are classed as siblings, but—and here Hindi and Tamil differ—cross cousins are sometimes in a separate category. The Hindi speaking include the children of the father's sister (*phuwa*) and of the mother's brother (*maman*) with siblings. The Tamil describe the children of the father's sister (*athe*), and the mother's brother (*maman* or *amankarin*) as *morre*—i.e. in terms of marital relationship. Marriage is prohibited between all people put into the sibling category, but *morre* may be "wrong" or "right" for marriage. At the present time marriage is not prohibited but is not "right" with paternal cross cousins; it is repferred and is "right" with the maternal; between unmarried cross cousins of the "right *morre*" verbal flirtation is permitted, indeed expected; even such familiarity as pinching and slapping is tolerated though not altogether approved; sexual suggestions may be made obliquely though never explicitly. Married adults of "right *morre*" indulge in a typical "joking relationship", and make outrageous suggestions to each other even in the presence of each other's spouses.

Links with paternal and maternal kin outside of the immediate family are affected by residence. Paternal kin usually have the stronger pull over children, more particularly the older children, because they spend most of their childhood in the home of the paternal grandparents, and the decisions of the grandmother (*aji* in Hindi, *parti* in Tamil) override the wishes of the mother-cum-daughter in law. Even if they are not in the same home, the paternal grandmother has an important say in such matters as schooling, wearing of Western clothes by girls in the street, taking part in outside associations. When children grow up with their parents in the maternal home, the maternal grandmother is more cautious in her criticism, for the relationship with her son-in-law is ambivalent, and delicate, and he can if he wish take away his wife and children, and virtually break off her relationship with her daughter. More often daughters and their children visit, but do not live with maternal kin, with whom they maintain formal and affectionate relationships all their life.

One of the main advantages of the joint family system, and a



stabilising factor in marriage, is the fact that if the real mother is ill, a mother surrogate is on hand. When the family is living separate, the assistance of other relatives is obviously less, even though the relationship with them may be harmonious, and one of the stress points in the isolated family is that the heavy burden of bringing up children is born mainly by the individual parents. The disadvantages of the ever vigilant mother-in-law were counterbalanced by her role of attentive, protective and experienced grandmother.

Tamil extend the terms for both father (*naina*) and mother (*amma*) to the parents' siblings of the same sex, whereas Hindi speakers, reflecting the agnatic emphasis, classify paternal uncles with the father (*baapu*) but distinguish the mother (*matha*) from her sisters (*mausi*). The position of the father's brothers through identification with the father has already been indicated; the father's sisters illustrate the principle of the unity of the sibling group as it is affected by sex differentiation; the women have defined obligations towards their brothers' children particularly in the carrying out of their ritual. Thus among the Hindi, the father's sister (*phuwa*) is the main kin who officiates in the important rite of removal of the child's first hair, and she is important in various stages of marriage. Similarly among the Tamil she is given a special invitation to family functions and is one of the essential guests at the 'naming ceremony' of her brother's children; her invitation to a wedding is accompanied by a gift of betel leaf, areca nut and a coin; and at the marriage she receives from the groom's people a sari, and her husband receives a shirt.

The mother's brothers represent the interests of the maternal kin. Among the Tamil the *amankarin* are treated with great respect; they play the lead in the puberty ceremonies still practised by some families, and formerly they had the right to marry their sisters' daughters. Though they no longer exercise this right, they encourage marriages between their sons and their sisters' daughters and can still refuse their permission to these girls to marry boys of whom they do not approve. They should also be among the first to be invited to the marriage of their sisters' sons, whose brides to be should have received their approval. Among the Hindi the close link of mother, daughter and maternal uncle is publicly symbolised at the girl's marriage—if performed by orthodox rites—when all three bite ritually of seven mango stalks "mixing themselves", and the maternal uncle gives a gift to the bride after which he and his can claim nothing from her, but only give to her. In both Hindi and Tamil—i.e. northern and southern sections—the protective affection which characterises brother-sister behaviour norms should be extended to the children. No maternal uncle ever visits without bringing gifts, and many times when a sister's children have been sick, the maternal uncle has taken them to the doctor or temple priest. Yet, perhaps because he exercises pressure over his sister's children, who are not his direct heirs, their relationship to him has an element of potential strain; it is interesting therefore to note that if a birth is abnormal, the maternal uncle must undergo special ritual before he can see the child for it is believed that there will be friction in the family through their relationship, a situation classically illustrated in the killing by Krishna of his maternal uncle Kansa to rid the earth of evil.

The mother's brother therefore stands for several different behaviour patterns; he represents the protective maternal line; he can support or threaten the father's control over his own children; and among the southern group he also symbolises the potential husband or the potential in-law.

In the early years of marriage, man and wife are part of a joint family and for them to show any desire for a private independent life is considered morally wrong and asocial. The duties of the wife are much the same as those performed as a daughter in her parents' home, the duties of the husband continue as before. The intimate sexual tie, the one new factor, is not permitted to disrupt the family which is prepared to incorporate her, and to which he belongs. Only with the passing of years and the birth and growth of her children, does the daughter-in-law become more emancipated from in-law control, and the husband-wife relationship itself branches out into many interdependent activities and joint responsibilities.

A young Hindu daughter-in-law is expected to be docile, gentle tongued, industrious and helpful, willing to perform all the hard domestic chores without complaint, to give deference to her mother-in-law, and avoid direct contact with male in-laws. Each

category of in-laws, interested in the success of the marriage as a family affair, exerts appropriate influence on her behaviour.

A text on kinship includes the following passage:—

"If a husband tramps the foot of his wife accidentally, he need not make any gesture of apology—should he be polite and attempt to do so, his wife must stop him immediately. If, however, the wife tramps the foot of her husband, she must immediately bring her two hands together and beg forgiveness. She must do the same for her mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law and sister-in-law, whereas should they be offenders and be polite enough to beg forgiveness, it is her duty to stop them."

When discussing in-law relationship, the main emphasis is placed on the mother-in-law. A Tamil woman said:—

Athe tells me what to do, what not to do, and I must listen and respect; I stay home, she goes shopping. She chooses saris for all daughters-in-law. Only when the bagman (i.e. pedlar) comes to the door we choose for ourselves.

A Hindustani woman said:—

When I speak to my *saas*, I don't look her in her face, and she does not look me in my face.

An old Hindi speaking mother-in-law said proudly:—

It is not for my sons' wives to argue with me. They know that if they move their mouths too much they will get it from me.

The control should be, and usually is, indirect.

"My *Athe* doesn't say 'Do this' but 'my son likes this'; she's a good lady, not like others; others are very bad and hit the wife."

The mother-in-law daughter-in-law relationship is superficially courteous and formal, but the delicacy of the relationship, the basic rivalry for the same man (the son-husband), is understood by both. Social distance is enjoined; they are never equals. Among the Hindi speaking, the mother-in-law never addresses her by name, but by rank in the family structure:— *Budki* (literally 'big one', i.e. wife of the oldest son), *Majli* (wife of second son), etc.

The daughter-in-law is aware that the mother-in-law's approval is important because of the strong attachment between the husband and his mother.

"If a husband wants to take out his wife to bioscope she first asks *Athe*. If she says no, you say O.K. You cry by yourself; if you open your mouth your husband is cross for you and you are very sad."

An educated woman health educator said:—

"It's never worth your while arguing with a mother-in-law. The only thing to do is to keep your temper and try and please your husband and hope that in the end you will be able to move away to your own house. The Indian man is always so fond of his mother because she spoilt him when he was young, and he has never grown up. A wife has a hard time trying to make him independent."

A qualified teacher with a university degree said:—

"Until a Hindu man marries, his major emotional attachment is to his mother; on marriage the relationship between his mother and wife is most complicated. It is the classical Oedipus complex."

A man said:—

"Even in more emancipated homes a daughter-in-law will not go out without informing her mother-in-law 'where' and 'why'. That is one of the main reasons why I decided to take my wife into a separate house. She was very suppressed by the joint family life."

The wife is obliged to have close personal relationships with her female in-laws who share the same roof, and perform the same domestic tasks. Tension between them is usually controlled, but occasionally erupts; and the disturbance is often over the upbringing of children. The daughter-in-law attempts to bring up her own children in her own way; the mother-in-law thinks she knows best. The situation is more complicated when several daughters-in-law live in the same house, and if their children quarrel. A woman should not hit her husband's brother's children, though she considers them—or their mothers—the cause of the trouble.

Temperament, recognised as the incalculable factor affecting the general norms of behaviour, is most dangerous in the in-law context. In some cases the daughters-in-law are unable to get on

with each other, and the mother-in-law keeps the peace; sometimes the daughters-in-law league together and discuss the in-laws, sometimes one daughter-in-law is the obvious favourite of the mother-in-law. But all the variations are within a limited framework in which the mother-in-law, who has the support of her husband and son, is the dominating personality in the home. Complaints are often heard that modern daughters-in-law show less respect than the parent generation. Typical is the following conversation of two old mothers-in-law.

A. "Modern daughters-in-law are no longer prepared to wash their mother-in-law's feet."

B. "They do not even bother to sit lower than the mother-in-law "

A. "It is all this freedom talk. They think they are our equals."

Should a girl of her own accord seek asylum with her parents because of maltreatment by her husband or in-laws, her parents have no legal right to keep her and should send her back to them. If the marriage has never been registered, her husband may take a 'legal' wife with impunity, and the deserted wife has no claim on him, nor does she stand any chance of being taken in marriage by someone else. In such cases, the girl's parents are particularly anxious for her to resume her role as wife, and will try their utmost to effect a reconciliation. They are usually prepared to have the son-in-law make his home with them, if necessary, but this is against custom, and, particularly among the Hindi speaking, only a man deeply in love with his wife is prepared to break with custom and withstand the pressure of his kin and the criticism of the community.

By no means unusual is the case of the girl from an orthodox Hindi speaking family who fell in love with a Tamil boy; on discovering this, her parents married her to a man of their own choice. From the begininng the girl was most unhappy with her in-laws, and after one of her frequent visits home she threatened to commit suicide if forced to return to them. The marriage had not been registered, and the husband said he would register it 'when he registered his first child'—a common procedure. As the girl was not even pregnant her parents were in a dilemma but they kept her for several

months on the grounds of illness. The husband came and stayed with her for a while, and her parents, who had no son, begged him to make his home with them. But his own parents persuaded him—'shamed him'—into coming away, and eventually he married another girl. The first wife has never remarried, and the people who know what happened are not sympathetic, blaming her for being unwomanly and wayward.

Once a marriage is registered, the girl's parents are safer in taking a more positive stand if they feel their daughter is being exploited or badly treated; whether they actually do so depends of course on their personal character.

A well educated and much loved Tamil girl was married to an educated man, a Bachelor of Arts, of conservative family, who registered the marriage before his wife came to live in his parents' home. After she had been there a few weeks, her father-in-law told her to wash his feet. At first she thought he was joking, but when he persisted, her husband said sadly that she had better do so, as his older brother's wife had never objected. The girl obeyed but wrote to her family, and her mother immediately came from Durban to Pietermaritzburg ready for battle. Her mother is a tiny active woman and her father-in-law is a very big man, but she threatened him (and this part of the story is always related with gusto) that if he made her daughter wash his feet again, she would make him drink the water. She stayed on for a week 'to see that he did not try any such nonsense again'. He never did.

A woman distinguishes in language and behaviour between the sisters of her husband and the wives of his brothers. His loyalty being greater to his own sisters, she must be particularly careful in her behaviour towards them. She is 'watchdog' over the unmarried sisters-in-law, and is expected to report any affair or indiscretion, a role which, if conscientiously performed, may lay her open to accusations of jealousy, and, if neglected, may bring down on her the censure of the rest of her in-laws. Women often complain of "the very fast jaws" of the husband's sisters, their possessive attitude toward their brothers, and the favouritism

shown them by their own mother, who makes the daughters-in-law do all the work and get all the nagging.

The daughter-in-law must avoid physical intimacy with male in-laws. Among the Hindustani, the husband's older brothers are placed in the relationship of father to daughter and among the Tamil, of brother to sister, and in both cases sexual intimacy between them would be the most terrible sin (*paap*). In the orthodox South African Hindustani marriage ceremony there is a special rite, the *thagpaat*, in which the husband's older brother (her *jet*) ties round her neck a necklace known as *thagpaat*, symbolising that henceforth they must not touch (*choona*) each other. She should not sit in front of him unless called by him, nor speak to him except when necessary, and unless serving his needs she should cover her head with her sari in his presence. Towards her young brother-in-law (*dhewar*), she has a mild joking relationship, and should he ask her for food she may give it to him in his hand. There have been cases where, on the death of the husband, a younger brother, real or classificatory, has married the widow with his parents' and her parents' consent, but among South African Hindu in general, the levirate is not institutionalised, and not approved. Harmonious in-law relationship required avoidance of possible sexual rivalry for the sisters-in-law, who, under joint living, share the same roof.

The girl's family must avoid being indebted to her in-laws. Among the Hindi—not among the Tamil—they must not even eat in her husband's home. "We have given him our daughter, so we cannot eat his salt". To avoid this embarrassment, the son-in-law usually asks neighbours to cook for them during their visits. Parents of the groom and of the bride address each other by reciprocal terms (*samdhi* for the male, *samdheen* for the female) and between those of the same sex, there are formal demonstrations of affection (fathers-in-law place their arms around each other and press their chests together, and mothers-in-law embrace each other five times, neck to neck); parents-in-law of the opposite sex practise the strictest avoidance. Beneath the overt gesture of friendship are undercurrents of tension, expressed in jibes and family jokes. The boy's parents are conscious of having the upper hand, and, though they do not show direct aggression, convey by their manner a sense of their importance. They only visit the girl's

people on formal occasions, such as the birth of a child, or a marriage or death in the girl's family, and then they are customarily honoured by a small token—a piece of silver (one shilling) is sufficient to show that the girl's parents want nothing from them, and were able to look after their daughter before she married. Among the clearly defined obligations of Tamil speakers, is the necessity to invite *sammandi* to attend family functions: they must be the first guests invited to a marriage and must be invited in person; at the marriage, they contribute special gifts; at funerals they help provide food, contribute to expenses, and give the sons-in-law a shirt or other article of new clothing for purification.

Thus there is built up in the Hindu family in Durban a complex network of relationships between different sets of kin with more or less defined obligations, many of which are based not on any written law of the land, but on the strength of moral and religious ties. In the urban context the Indian joint family continues as a coherent unit largely because of the role of the women in the *kutum* structure. They act as the cement that binds together the different domestic units into which the *kutum* is divided. The women, by their enforced attachment to the home, their constant influence over the children, and their adherence to the traditional rituals retain the family as the emotional and social anchor of Indian life.

CHAPTER VIII

Kinship Ritual
From Conception to Puberty

THE VALUES OF A CULTURE are crystallised in the rituals of its religion, rituals which are universally performed to mark stages in an individual's development and events of public importance. The actual occasions, or social timing, the words, and concrete symbols vary, and in South Africa, distinguish Hindu from Moslem, Christian, Jewish or other religious group.

Many South African Hindu rituals are formulated in sacred Sanskrit literature, others are orally transmitted village practices which are being steadily assimilated to a Sanskritic idiom.

Traditional Hindu writings proclaim that each son of the "twice born castes" should go through four orders (*asrama*). The first is that of the *Brahmacharya*, or student in which chastity is so essential that the term *Brahmacharya* is often translated as 'chastity'. In this period the scholar is indoctrinated into ethical or virtuous conduct (*dharma*), and his potentials for wealth (*artha*) and for physical desires (*kama*) are curbed. In the second order of *Grihastha*, the order of married householder, he should develop *kama* and *artha* as well as fulfil his responsibilities of begetting children and acquiring property. After this worldly order he should, at the age of 45-50, move into *Vanaprastha*, contemplation in retirement, in preparation for the final state of *Sannyasa* (renunciation). Sudras and outcastes fall outside the 'twice born' castes and do not go through the *asrama*.

In contemporary South African Hindu society, I have heard this social philosophy expounded by religious and social leaders on several public platforms[1], but usually without reference to caste and with emphasis on the third order for service rather than contemplation.

[1] e.g. Meetings of the Hindu Maha Sabha, Rama Krishna Centre and various other association meetings.

Domes of a Hindu Temple *[Photo by Mickey Padayachee*

South Indian musicians *[Photo by Mickey Padayachee*

The marriage ritual of the "virgin gift" [*Photo by Mickey Padayachee*

Tamil groom ties a *tali* round the neck of his bride [*Photo by Mickey Padayachee*

The ordinary Hindu divides the stages of growth into infancy, childhood to puberty, youth, marriage and maturity, old age, and for each period there are everyday non-Sanskritic terms in which distinction is also drawn on the basis of sex.

Within these broad stages, and separating one from the other, are a series of rituals (*sanskara*) which vary in number and detail with linguistic-cultural origins and with orthodoxy within the Hindu group, but which share a common ritual idiom.

The main traditional *sanskara* known to South African Hindu scholars include:

(1) *Garbhadhan*, or rite to favour conception;

(2) *Punsuwanum*, performed in about the third month of pregnancy to govern the sex so that the child may be a boy;

(3) *Anavalobhan* of the seventh month related to the child's growth.

(4) *Simantonnayan* observed in the eighth month to ensure a perfect, complete, child.

(5) *Jatkaram*, birth ceremony when the navel cord is cut and the horoscope is consulted.

(6) *Naamkaran*, naming on or about the 12th day.

(7) *Suryalokan* (also known as *Nishkaran*) at which the child is shown to the sun in about the third month.

(8) *Upaveshan*, performed in about the fifth month when the child is first allowed to sit on the ground.

(9) *Anaprasna*, in about the sixth month when the child is first fed on solids.

(10) *Chaula*, shaving of the first hair before the 5th year.

(11) *Karanvedkharma*, when the child's ears are pierced.

(12) *Upanyana*, initiation into the life of the student.

(13) *Samavartan*, return of the student preparatory for *vivaha*, or marriage.

(14) *Vivaha*, characterised by marriage and marking the entry of the individual into the order of householders.

(15) *Vanasprastha*, renunciation of worldly life in later middle age.

(16) *Sanyassa*, initiation into the life of ascetism.

(17) *Anthestu*, the mortuary rituals.

The most widely practised are the *sanskara* at birth (5), naming (6), hair cutting (10), marriage (14) and death (17). Less widely practised are the rites for conception (1), male making (2), showing the child to the sun (7), ear piercing (11), initiation (12), return from initiation (13) and renunciation of worldly life (15). I could find no families practising rites for growth (3), completion (4), the first sitting (8) and the first eating of solid foods (9).[1]

There are also numerous ceremonies practised by sections of the community which belong to the category of special *sanskara*, or are survivals of non-Brahminic village practices. In some homes, depending largely on economic conditions, the ceremonies are performed on a small scale, in others many guests are invited; it is customary to have bigger celebrations for the first child and the first son than for other children.

In this chapter I will summarise the main practices and beliefs of South African Hindu as they enter into the rearing of a child from before it is even conceived until it reaches maturity. The traditional *sanskara* provide a core of consistent values from infancy to maturity, but the extent to which these values are accepted varies, and, as in every society there is often a gulf between ideal and actual behaviour depending on social, economic and educational levels. Families that conform most closely to the ideal are the devout and traditionally well educated, interested in maintaining the respect of the community. Many of the values they express are challenged by the South African milieu, in which individualism is encouraged, material possessions are the main measure of success, there is a different attitude towards sexual morality, and less rigid adherence to religious ritual. To describe each ritual in detail would be boringly repetitious, so I will merely mention some of the main features.

[1] These findings were corroborated by a questionnaire set by B. Rambiritch to 229 Hindu families of the four linguistic groups. (Unpublished manuscript, 1957.)

The avowed aim of Hindu marriage ritual is the production of children who are not only legitimate but also healthy and virtuous, and informants state explicitly that to produce such a child parents should be in harmony with each other, their kin, the community and the universe, and for that purpose, the physical and mental traits of the young couple should be carefully "matched" in all respects—family background, religion, education, appearance, and time of birth as reflected by the almanac (*panchangum*). The almanac serves as a superior system of eugenics and is consulted for the auspicious time of marriage, and cohabitation, as well as other landmarks of individual growth. Marriages are restricted to "lucky months" and the position of planetary bodies is related to the character of the child and the destiny of the family.

The widespread assumption of cosmic and individual interaction underlies the rites practised at conception. Thus South African Tamil believe that children conceived in the month of *Adi(massum)* (mid-July to mid-August) will be thieves or rogues, bringing misfortune on themselves and their families; to prevent this, no marriage may take place in that month and young daughters-in-law who are not yet pregnant are sent away from their husbands to their parental home till the danger period is past.[1] Hindustani do not hold exactly the same belief, but they too associate each month with particular qualities and consider certain times inauspicious for mating.

Research by Drs Kark and Chesler[2] has shown that the mortality rate of Indian infants in the first months of life is lower than in other non-European groups of comparable income, and I would suggest that this is partly because of the traditional ante-natal and post-natal treatment.

Pregnancy is recognised as a condition of psychological as well as physical changes, involving most South African Hindu

[1] Another explanation offered for this custom is that in South India, the month of Chitray is the hottest of the year, and a girl who conceives in Adi would confine in Chitray. The prohobition was introduced to save women from facing the ordeal of the first labour at this period, and it was then buttressed by a moral sanction.

[2] Kark, Sidney L. and Julia Chesler. "Survival in Infancy. A Comparative Study of Stillbirths and Infant Mortality in Certain Zulu and Hindu Communities in Natal". *South African Journal of Laboratory and Clinical Medicine*, 1956, No. 2.

in traditional treatment, and, if difficult, requiring ritual safeguards. The woman continues with most of her normal domestic duties, and should in fact be more than usually industrious in order to 'loosen the muscles' and 'help keep the baby small', so that labour will be easy.[1] She should be massaged with special ingredients, and bathe in water scented with gumtree leaves, cloves or other sweet smelling substances, for hygiene. She should be given nourishing food, but must not overeat, and her husband should try to satisfy her desires for anything special lest the child itself suffer—it may be disfigured by a birthmark resembling the food she desired, or develop 'bad ears' or other malady. She must take special care not to catch 'cold touch' which, if neglected, may cause either a miscarriage or *janni*, a dangerous fever sometimes leading to madness, to which a woman is susceptible during pregnancy and for some forty days after giving birth.[2] For this reason she must not stand in cold water and the washing of clothes in cold water on a slab of stone in the yard, is one of the few tasks the poorer Hindu woman is discouraged from performing.

Discomfort and nausea in early pregnancy are regarded as normal, but if she suffers acute sickness she receives special medical attention and/or special devotions are made to one or several deities. Among those specially selected for this by Tamil are *Katteri* and *Munisvaran* to whom the woman will vow to make stereotyped sacrifices of a black hen for Katteri and a rooster for Munisvaran once the child is born safely. The performance of these rites usually depends on the customs of the husband's family, though in exceptional cases a woman may be committed by her own parents to carry on devotions to their own house god.

> Typical is the case of Mrs. C. P. who made a *pooja* to *Katteri* because her own mother had 'got caught' when she, Mrs. C. P. was about to be born, and the priest whom her father had called in, said that it was because his wife had failed to continue the devotions to *Katteri*, performed by his mother. Soon after his wife promised that she would make this devotion, she was safely delivered of the baby. She carried out the *pooja* for all subsequent children, and made a further vow that the child, now Mrs. C. P., would do the same when she was pregnant.

[1] The birthweight of Indian babies is in fact significantly lower than that of European or African babies in South Africa. See Salber, E. J. and E. S. Bradshaw, 'Birthweight of South African Babies', *S.A. Medical Journal*, Vol. 27, 1953, pp. 317-320.

[2] 'Cold touch' is not the ordinary physical cold, but something more psychological.

Much of the ante-natal care is psychologically oriented, reflecting the anxiety of the family. A pregnant woman should keep tranquil and even-tempered for the sake of the unborn child. She is believed to be particularly vulnerable to cosmic changes. Thus the eclipse (which is recorded in all Hindu calendars) is considered a time of danger, and during this 'dark turning point', there should be no intimacy between husband and wife; the woman should rest in a calm frame of mind, and should avoid handling any sharp instrument. If the child is born with a harelip, misshapen hand, clubfoot or other abnormality the mother is believed to have used a knife, scissors or hoe at the forbidden hour.

> At a meeting of a cultural society, most of whose members are teachers, I was asked if I believed in the 'eclipse theory'. I was non-committal whereupon one of the men, a very intelligent high school teacher, pointed out a jagged scar on the head of his fourteen year old son as 'proof'. The scar had been there at birth and his wife remembered that she had used a knife during the eclipse.
>
> In another case, a baby was born with fingers webbed with a thin membrane and the mother recounted with guilt that she had been stringing beans at the time of the eclipse when she was carrying him. Examples could be multiplied.

Things normally neutral are interpreted as omens for a woman with child—the sight of a green toad, a chameleon, an accident, are all believed to have adverse effect on the child's appearance; to cross a rope or chain to which an animal is tied, is believed by conservatives to cause the umbilical cord to strangle the baby. These beliefs are widely known but are taken more seriously by some than by others.

Conservative South African Hindus consider it 'unlucky' to prepare new clothes for a child before it is born, and new clothes must only be put on after the baby is 5 or 6 days old,

and goes through the first purification rite. A purely practical reason has been offered by pandits for the restriction: if the child died at birth or soon after (and many did die), the money expended on the clothing would be wasted. Many modern couples, not aware of the economic motive behind the custom, still will not put the baby into new clothes until the purification ritual is performed.

Though the traditional Brahminic rites of *punsuwanum* (son making), *anavalobhan* (growth), and *simantonnayan* (completion) are seldom practised in South Africa, the same underlying outlook is evident in popular customs and beliefs. Interest in the sex of the child is constantly shown; diagnoses may be made by throwing a coconut and seeing which way it breaks, or by the position in which the child lies, or by interpreting the period of gestation—it being widely accepted that it is eight to nine months for a boy and as long as ten months for a girl. Scientific knowledge varies with the standard of education; In India, doctors since ancient times have studied embryology[1] and in South Africa at the present time, medical practitioners and the teaching of biology in the schools have extended knowledge of the purely physical aspects of pregnancy, but the ultimate questions of creation, and of sex determination, remain unanswered, and are filled in by particular cultural beliefs.

Birth is considered a dangerous ordeal, and either a doctor or a midwife is called in for the delivery. The midwife (*dhayi* in Hindi, *martavachi* or *murtisvalla* in Tamil) is a woman well versed in traditional folk remedies and trained by experience.[2] Among the Hindi-speaking the *dhayi* is usually of the Sudra caste; among the Tamils her caste is not considered relevant. In theory every midwife must at present be supervised by the local health department, and it is illegal for her to practise professionally unless registered. But even if a doctor has delivered the baby there are many homes that still engage the *dhayi* to look after the mother and baby for the first ten days.

[1] Castiglioni, A. *A History of Medicine*, 1947.

[2] Formerly, some of the best traditional midwives assisted the woman, if birth was difficult, by holding her hands and at the same time exercising gentle pressure with the feet on the inside of the woman's thighs as she squatted on the ground. According to the European in charge of Durban Municipal Nursing Services, this method prevented tearing, though if not carried out hygienically it increased the risk of puerperal sepsis.

Apart from the skilled help of professionals, devoted kinswomen of the woman, particularly her own mother, are required to help by their presence and sympathy. (I was struck by the sharp contrast between the attitude to labour of the Hindu and of the South African tribal Bantu: the latter face birth with a matter-of-fact realism, on the physiological level as it were, the former stress the religious and emotional aspects.)

If birth is proving difficult, additional doctors or the specialist may be brought in, or the woman may be taken to hospital, and, in addition, the relatives may also pray in the home or in the temple, or take a special vow to be fulfilled after a safe delivery, or bring specially sanctified ashes or limes to the patient in the hospital, or consult a man with a knowledge of powerful *mantra* which he incants over a bowl of water, then given to the woman to drink.

In the homes of rich and poor, literate and illiterate, birth is a highly ritualised event involving purification of the people and the home. Actual customs vary in detail, indicative of the varied cultural background of the people, and many old customs have been deliberately abandoned and Sanskritic customs adopted. The selection made by modern Hindu is formulated in terms of concepts of health and/or religion. Thus village rituals for disposing of the navel cord[1] and the afterbirth[2] are described by scholars as "superstitions" and by the more westernised as "nonsense", while the older and less literate adhere strictly to them in order to "keep the child healthy".

The process of adaptation is, however, not always self-

[1] The umbilicus is rubbed with oil, and special ingredients are used to make it wither off quickly. The protruding navel so common among Africans is very rare; great care is taken to see that the umbilicus is 'properly placed'. When the cord drops off, it may be buried in damp earth where reeds are growing, or put in a spot on to which milk is poured; or irrespective of caste and language group, it may be turned into a talisman by being put in a metal case, made by a jeweller and worn by the mother. The modern educated families have discarded these customs.

[2] The afterbirth was kept in the birth room, in a pot of sand on which a tiny lamp burnt, till the ninth day when the contents were ceremonially buried outside in a 'clean spot'. Nowadays, there is little ceremony attached to it; if the child is born at home and not in hospital, the afterbirth is immediately buried outside, in a deep hole. (There is a belief that if it were accidentally dug up by a dog or taken by an evil person or spirit, the mother would not be able to have any more children or the child would suffer.)

conscious, nor are current practices always rationalised by people with western education in western terms.

> Thus a highly educated woman explained: "The weakest point to trick a person is the placenta. This was the cushion of the baby without which it could not live, or grow while in the womb, but it must die after the child is born to let the child itself grow. You must respect it and give it a decent burial, almost like a funeral."

Abnormal births are religiously interpreted and ritually counteracted. A baby born with a "crown" (caul) or "garland" (umbilical cord round its neck) is generally believed to be a cause of family friction unless set rituals, varying in detail with sectional groupings, are performed. The maternal uncle, and sometimes the father, may not see the baby until completion of these rituals, lasting among the Hindustani for as many as forty days; he then sees the child for the first time in a mirror. Among the conservative Tamil, before the maternal uncle may see the child, a rooster is sacrificed and he must be shown its entrails, which are then placed round the baby's neck. These customs are related to episodes in the lives of deities, more especially the beloved Krishna.

> In a well known myth, Mother Earth was no longer prepared to tolerate the tyranny of King Kansa, and, appearing in the form of a cow before Brahma, sought his protection. Brahma consulted with Siva and both appealed to Vishnu, who, as they reminded him, had granted Kansa special power and assured him that his destruction could only be brought about by his nephew. So Vishnu entered the womb of Devaki, sister of Kansa, and was born as Krishna, who then destroyed Kansa (his maternal uncle) and brought peace to Earth.

Similarly the explanations for deformities are never physical, but religious, psychological and philosophical. It is "God's will" or "Karma", or punishment for a sin committed in a previous life or a deed performed in the present life contrary to the cosmic order. Infanticide is regarded as wicked and abhorrent.

A baby is the focus of considerable care and devotion. Even its appearance is given special attention, and in Tamil and Hindustani homes, the midwife or other old woman will, "if

she knows how", "shape" its head with firm pressure of the palms to make it "round" if it is considered too flat or long, and will pinch up the bridge of the nose to the desired formation. To make the limbs strong, elaborate massage with olive or mustard oil is given regularly until the child is able to walk.

The following is a description of such a massage recorded in my notebook:

> Govinda, seven weeks old, is being bathed in a little outside room by his maternal grandmother. Room has sloping floor for water to run off. Mother in attendance. Granny sitting on small stool, legs stretched out, baby lying on them head upwards. Granny drops oil and rubs it in firmly, pressing together fontanelle. Rubs ears close to head and massages down chin line. Baby's face, hands, legs and body massaged in turn. A little castor oil is dropped in both eyes. A little warmed mustard oil (coconut oil in summer) in ears. Baby exercised. Quite remarkable. Right hand brought up to left leg, left hand to right leg, hands pulled across chest, legs crossed and uncrossed. Holding baby by its arms, granny swings him, head downwards, then back again. Mother brings warm water and soap. Thorough wash. Water poured over baby by mother. Granny cleans out mouth and throat with finger, blows lightly in the ears to clean out soap. Baby eventually dried with brisk rubbing in towel and sprinkled with Johnson's baby powder. Taken into bedroom and held head down over small fire, in which scented powder is poured, to "dry the hair quickly and so prevent chills or other illness". Whole process took fifty minutes. Baby left glowing and "ready for a long sleep". (See Plate.)

It is generally agreed that a woman and her new baby are physically and ritually unclean or untouchable (*a-chooth*, in Hindi, *a-sutumar* in Tamil), and must be cleansed and purified before they engage in normal contacts. The colostrum, believed to be dirty and to cause diarrhoea, must be expressed, and the mother may not nurse the baby until the 3rd day. Till then, a conservative woman drinks hot beverages without milk[1] and

[1] The most usual foods are black coffee and dried or toasted bread or *roti*. The belief is that lots of food prevents the womb's returning to shape.

eats very little, and never meat or fish nor spices nor food cooked with oil or ghee. On the third day she is given a ritual bath and re-introduced to spiced food with a specially prepared good curry (generally chicken or mutton). The midwife then expresses a little of the mother's milk, mixes it with different traditional ingredients, finely ground, and strains the mixture through a fine cloth; the mother dips in her finger and gives it to the baby to suck, and having thus "prepared the baby for the breast", she is permitted to nurse it. From the third day the mother is also given special *masala*, prepared from traditional ingredients, to induce warmth, strength and health; and her diet is dictated by traditional rules.

The baby shares the defilement through the "dirt"[1] and "heat" which it collected while in the womb, and to cleanse it of impurity it may be given small quantities of castor oil[2] and honey as its first food from the first day. Despite criticism of this ancient custom, which is practised by both Tamil and Hindi speaking Hindus in South Africa, it has persisted in many homes:[3] even where it has been abandoned under pressure of western ideas, and the mother nurses the baby from the beginning, there is dubious approval of the change.

The mother and child are still "unclean" in relation to other members of the family until on a stipulated day (the sixth among the Hindustani, the fifth or ninth or sixteenth among the Tamil) further purification ceremonies, known as *chuttee* by the Hindustani and *theettu-kalikkam* by the Tamil are performed. This ritual, according to my pandit informants, is the South African equivalent of the *jatkaram.*[4] when, having carefully recorded the exact time of birth, the horoscope is consulted to

[1] Throughout pregnancy a woman takes small regular doses of castor oil, not as a purgative, but so that the food she eats does not make the layer of "dirt" on the child difficult to remove.

[2] In India, the honey castor oil custom appears to be limited to castes practising Brahminic Hinduism. In South Africa many families now give sugar water, or condensed milk in water for the first days until the mother has "clean" milk.

[3] Of 124 mothers in contact with western trained doctors, 97 had given their babies honey and castor oil, the remainder had suckled them from the first day. Old people believe that as a result of this and other innovations, children get sick more easily and require medical attention more frequently.

[4] For a description of the Brahmin *jatkaram* see du Bois, J. A., Hindu Manners and Customs, p. 155. (Du Bois uses the term *jat-karma.*)

see if all is "auspicious" and to warn against future dangers. Part of the ceremony is performed in the birth room, and part outside where formerly the placenta was buried; among the Hindustani a little milk is poured on the ground to cool Mother Earth, and offerings of special food are made to the house gods. In the Tamil ceremony an essential ritual is the protective circling of the baby with "red water" (water tinted with turmeric and lime) by close relatives. The ceremony also involves a complete ritual bath (including the washing of the hair) and the donning of new clothes by both mother and baby. The baby receives its first new clothes from the maternal kin, its first piece of golden jewelry is usually given by the paternal aunt, and the mother is given clothes from her 'husband's side'. Her old clothes go to the midwife, who on that day receives her payment, which includes a new sari, vegetables and groceries. (There is among the illiterate a fear that if the midwife is not satisfied with her payment she will curse the baby.)

The "naming ceremony" (*naamsamskar* in Hindi, *per vikramo* or *padhinar*—16th day ceremony—in Tamil) may be held at the same time but usually takes place a few days after the "birth cleansing" ceremony. Relatives are invited and the house is purified. On the naming day the child, oiled, bathed and in its best clothes, is placed in a cradle, (formerly it was cradled in the mother's wedding sari) and the grandparents of both sides and any aunts that can attend rock the baby and sing special lullabies. Among the Tamil, a priest or elderly educated man then lights a camphor, circles it round the child, reciting a mantra and sprinkling water on the child as he calls its name thrice. Then one by one the relatives take a brass bowl containing turmeric water and lime, flowers, a piece of charcoal, a few dry chillies and a lighted camphor. The tray is passed thrice round the child, to ward off evil spirits and the evil eye and each person present drops a small coin into the bowl, which money goes to the midwife or any old woman in need. In poor families, the mother sits with the baby in her lap and the name is given with little ceremony, but this is generally recognised as the occasion when relatives and friends give gifts of clothing and small jewellery. Among the Hindi speaking the *havan* (sacred fire ritual), is generally performed, and a Brahmin bestows the name which in all groups

is derived from the almanac (*panchangum*). This is the star (*raas*) name, distinct from and more important than the 'calling name' and it was formerly never, and still is rarely, used, for for fear that "if someone wanted to harm, it could take effect more quickly if done on the name having affinity with the child's star". The *raas* name is the important reference in "matching" for a suitable spouse.

After thirty to forty days, the mother and baby are permitted, after a ritual bath, to go outside the home and mingle with the rest of the community. Among the Tamil her first visit is usually to a temple, to which she makes an offering. Mothers must continue with foods considered beneficial for the baby, and must avoid contact with people or things that are regarded as defiling.

The baby is not purified of the uncleanness of birth till it has its hair cut off for the first time in the ritual known as *moondan* or *choodakarma* in Hindi and *tale mayir* in Tamil, which takes place at different times and with varying ritual[1]. It is usually held in the third, fifth, seventh, ninth or eleventh month or if the first year passes, in the third year.[2] Among the South African Hindustani, the baby's head is shaved by a *nao* (barber) in the presence of the child's *phuwa* (father's sister), who holds a lump of dough into which she puts the so-called 'stomach hair' together with a penny, and while the barber cuts, the women present sing special songs to the accompaniment of a drum. The dough and its contents are then thrown into running water. The Tamil have a more simple ceremony, but they too must collect the hair and throw it into running water and if a vow has been taken to Munesvaran or Katteri, the hair-cutting is performed at the same time as the vow is fulfilled.

The risks of childhood are heavily underwritten in numerous protective devices. The Hindu mother is an anxious mother. Her child is liable to illness and harm from many sources—hunger, evil beings, bad dreams, unclean contacts, visitation of the deities. The baby's main food, the mother's milk, may be

[1] For a detailed description of the traditional ritual, see du Bois, *ibid.*, pp. 158-159.
[2] The reasons for the delay may be purely personal as in the case of one mother who wanted to have a photo of her son with long hair, so waited till he was in his third year.

inadequate in quantity and wrong in quality, and numerous treatments are canvassed to try to retain or improve the supply. The child must also be guarded from evil spirits, and there are talismen and incantations available to those who are in need. Thus a dot of soot from the holy oil lamp may be written on the infant's forehead or, among the Tamil, a tiny knife may be placed under its pillow or pinned on its clothing, or it is given some other protective amulet. The importance of boys is indicated by the special precautions taken for them; thus each boy baby has a band of black beads or a black cord tied round his waist to prevent his becoming ill (with skin irritations, inflamed eyes, or swollen face) through being touched by something defiling.

One of the greatest fears is the evil eye, or jealous eye, spoken of as *najar* or *hayi* by the Hindustani and *kandistikalikkam* by the Tamil. The evil may not be deliberately inflicted, but because of it a child will suddenly lose its appetite or cry for no apparent reason, or the mother's milk will dry up suddenly. It is for this reason that a nursing mother is careful not to expose her breasts in public when suckling her baby, and if the baby is on a bottle, the bottle is usually concealed in a cloth. Despite precautions, *najar* is frequent and many routine home cures are current.[1]

Many of the diseases of children—measles, chickenpox, mumps—are accepted as visitations of a mother goddess (*Amma*, *Matha*) and to prevent the illness from becoming serious the patient must be kept in a condition of ritual as well as physical purity, and the treatment ends with an offering in thanks for the recovery. Western medical practices such as inoculations against smallpox and diphtheria are incorporated into the extensive routine care of the child so long as they are not in conflict with the conditions required for ritual purity.

[1] Among the Tamil, the mother or granny performs *drishti*, using in this case such ingredients as strong chillies, salt, bits of a broom, bits of grass, sand from cross roads and holding the tray in the left (unclean) hand, she circles it round the child three times; if the child has the evil eye, it is unaffected, if it has not, it will cough and splutter. The mother then throws the contents, which have taken away the evil, onto the fire. If a mother thinks her milk is being taken by *najar*, she may squeeze a little on a spoon, circle this round the child, and then give the milk to a dog or cat to drink.

A baby is said to "grow in its sleep" and long spells of sleep are encouraged. (The devout say the gods speak to the babies in their sleep.) In most South African Hindu homes the bath and massage are followed by a mixture (*ghoti*) of nutmeg, warmed turmeric and other traditional ingredients rubbed fine in a special mortar and strained with a little breastmilk, given to the baby specifically to improve its digestion and induce unbroken sleep. Should the baby appear restless at other times of the day, it is gently rocked asleep in the arms or cradled in a sari on the lap. The baby sleeps in the bed with the mother at night, except in the most Westernised homes, and conservative women are very critical of the idea of a baby being deprived of this maternal comfort. While sleep is encouraged, it should not be forced; a child sleeps when sleepy, and there is no struggling with him if he is not. Nor should he be rudely awoken because adults consider he has slept enough. Waking is psychologically important, and since it is a stated belief that the first person one sees will influence the rest of the day, a mother should be smiling when her baby opens its eyes.

Until the baby is able to walk, it is very seldom left alone, and while awake it is generally either carried in the arms or cradled across the knees. In several homes a home-made hammock (*jhula*) is strung from the rafters and the baby is rocked in it while the mother is working; the expensive and impersonal pram is seldom used, even in wealthy homes. Not until the baby is able to sit up on its own, is it allowed on to the ground.

Considerable interest is shown in the feeding of the child, though the orthodox *sanskara* for weaning and introducing the child to solid foods (*anaprasna sanskara*) is not generally practised. When about five months old, the mother may "try out" a morsel of mashed *roti* or root vegetable, and if enjoyed without ill effect, the amount may be increased and the variety extended. By about nine months, fish and meat have generally been added to the diet though sometimes a mother will wait until the infant has cut the first teeth. The appearance of a child's first tooth is widely celebrated; thus among many of the Hindustani, the first person to discover its appearance cooks special sweet foods for the mother and the Tamil make special rice cakes and offer prayers to God.

A child is given its food in a separate little dish, and told to sit and eat; one of the women or older children will give occasional instruction on how to hold the fingers so that the food does not drop on clothes or on the floor. The child is taught to wash before and after eating, and to eat only with the right (the "clean") hand. Once the child has cut its teeth, it is also 'taught not to cry loudly or it will bring bad luck'. Thus we have heard a child rebuked and made to feel guilty 'Your mother is ill because you cried too loud'; 'You have your teeth and can eat by yourself so shut up with that noise or we'll all get sick'. (This type of remark, I need hardly mention, is by no means unique to Indians; it illustrates the emphasis on a child's restraining its emotions in the interest of others, but the age from which restraint is expected is relatively early.)

In many modern Hindu homes the traditional rituals are not all carried out but birthdays are celebrated with considerable ceremony. Sometimes they are on the pattern of the western party, with the difference that parents as well as children are always invited. In more orthodox Hindi speaking families, the birthday may have as a central feature the reading of a *katha*, moral story, by a priest who also performs the sacred fire ritual. The completely secular party, in which children are encouraged to play games and make much noise is still a rarity.

The child grows up in a world of adults, interpreted mainly through women, and the adult world is one of discipline, self denial, conflict, frustration and contrast. Material success is admired, yet austerities win the blessings of the gods. Gentleness is an ideal but the gods themselves are portrayed as fierce as well as tender.

Sex is stressed, but its natural expression is surrounded by a series of prohibitions. Adults impress on the children that it is "wrong", "bad" and "dirty" to expose themselves or handle themselves publicly. Even in babies, nakedness is considered an embarrassment, and there is constant emphasis on modesty. One of the few sentences I learnt through hearing it constantly repeated was "*Nanga rahana bura hey*" (to be naked is bad).

Behind this early inhibition appears to be the religious attitude to chastity, and the belief that immodesty will "spoil" the individual for marriage, and make him, or her, unable to produce the ideal child. A Hindu child is trained to anticipate retribution both for unknown sins committed in a former existence and for those committed in this life which will affect its rebirth.

From the time a child can understand, he is conditioned to responsible social participation limited by the mental and physical capacity of his age. The tasks that he is given are essentially useful, and his efforts are critically appraised. For the average South African Indian child there is no period of irresponsible play, no world of toys, no fairy make believe. Little girls in particular are little ladies whose feminine charms are encouraged and developed. They usually have their ears pierced at 5-7 years for earrings and the presents they receive from kin are jewellery and clothing. They are trained to speak quietly, and to walk lightly. In recently formed pre-school 'play-groups' started by Europeans, it was initially difficult to get the children to behave freely; they were willing to sit, bright-eyed, docile and attentive, quick to perform any task required of them, but they could not "let themselves go"; they treated the toys with the care bestowed on important household possessions, and tidied them up as a matter of course; when called for the school meal, a very important part of their diet, there was no scramble, and no noise. The "play groups" may indirectly challenge the values of the Indian home, but they only touch a small percentage of the population, and rearing the child remains mainly a family affair.

By the age of six or seven the South African Indian child is ready for formal schooling, and traditionally this was the beginning of *brahmacharya*, the order (*asrama*) of the student, inaugurated among Brahmin castes by the important ritual of the "sacred cord" known as *upnayana* in Sanskrit, *janao* in Hindi and *punul* in Tamil. After the ritual, the boy was placed under the tutelage of a *guru* (teacher) in whose home he remained for many years. Other "twice born" castes were also entitled to wear the cord, but it was bestowed on them later. In Durban, the ceremony is performed any time before marriage for Brahmins and usually as part of marriage for other "upper castes"; the ritual is thus more a preliminary to marriage than an introduction to sacred scholarship. Several boys, of different ages, may go through the ceremony at the same time. The ceremony as performed in Durban, and which I witnessed on three separate occasions for unmarried Brahmins and at numerous weddings of other castes, is compressed in time from four days to a few hours and the ritual is correspondingly condensed.[1] It includes the erection of a *pandal* (pavilion) with a small altar of cowdung in the centre at which *pooja* (devotions) are made by the Brahmin in charge, first to Vinaiga (the elephant headed god, and remover of obstacles) represented by a small conical heap of turmeric, and then to the planets, the house gods and tutelary deity (*ishta deva*). The deities are represented by specially decorated earthenware vessels. The ritual ingredients include rice, butter milk, sandalwood, turmeric, betel leaf, areca nuts, mango leaves, special grain and a little of all the dishes (entirely vegetarian) prepared for the feast. The neophyte, oiled and perfumed and dressed in a new white *dhoti*, sat between his parents for the investiture, and the Brahmin tied across the boy's left shoulder a thin "triple cord" of special cotton, letting it fall to the right hip. He accompanied the investiture with the chanting of Sanskrit mantras, designed to remove all sins committed in childhood ignorance, and to invoke virtuous conduct and an auspicious future. Thereafter he performed the sacred fire ritual (*havan*, or *homa*) with the boy and his father.

The traditional theory of education is to some extent carried on in vernacular schools,[2] which the children of the more conservative generally attend after their ordinary classes and for only a few years. In these schools the text books are mainly religious, and instruction is aimed both at teaching the language and inculcating "right" behaviour. As far as the language is concerned, the pupils are trained for examinations which are

[1] For a full description of the ritual see du Bois, *ibid.*, pp. 160-170.
In one ceremony which I observed five Brahmin boys (4 brothers and their youngest paternal uncle—an age range from 12 to 23) were initiated together.

[2] In 1956, there were in Natal between 35 and 40 Hindi schools, with between 3,000 and 3,500 pupils, approximately the same number of Tamil schools and pupils and a somewhat smaller number of Telugu and of Gujarati. The Gujarati are the most particular about sending their children to vernacular schools.

set and marked in India,[1] and in 1953 the first South African Indians were "shawled" and presented with the highest certificates, the Rashta Bhasha Kovid. This 'Hindi graduation' has become an annual and colourful celebration of the sponsoring organisation, the Hindi Shiksha Sangh, Natal. Emphasis on 'right' behaviour is explicit, and in the vernacular schools discipline is generally very strict and until a few years back punishment was often sadistically severe.[1] Though conditions have improved, there seems to be little doubt that vernacular schools not only introduce pupils to the traditional vernacular literature of Hindus but leave a deep impression of the traditional authority of the *guru*.

Entry into modern English speaking schools for Indians is competitive and the curriculum is mundane. Children are accepted from the age of six, and as we saw in Chapter IV, the number attending school is rapidly increasing though thousands are still unable to be accommodated. The curriculum for government and government-aided Indian schools is identical with that for European schools, except for religious instruction. Many families also perform *pooja* to Saraswati, goddess of learning, at the beginning of a child's school career, and again towards the end of each school year.

The period of schooling is usually longer for boys than for girls, since there is a tendency for parents to consider it more useful for boys to have higher academic qualifications—"No matter how many degrees a girl may have, she must still wash

[1] They write the examinations of the Rashtra Bhasha Prachar Samiti Wardha. There are 4 recognised examinations for which South African Hindi enter: Parambhik, Pravesh, Parichaya and Kovid, the last being of matriculation standard.

[2] Commenting on this statement, one of my friends (a man in the early thirties) wrote:

"In some of the schools it was customary for the *guru* to be told by the parent "Here is my son. I want him to learn. You can do what you like with him, only leave his eyes alone." Some teachers took that literally. Mine did."

Other informants have described the painful and humiliating penances to which they were subjected. The situation appears to have been like that in Dickens' days; fortunately it is changing in Durban—as it has in England.

pots and have babies"—and to remove girls, when they reach puberty, from co-educational schools.[1]

Puberty is recognised as a landmark in the life of a Hindu girl, the sign that thereafter she is able to consummate her womanhood in the role of mother. The average Hindu girl knows little of the physiology of sex, since extreme reticence on all such matters is the norm before marriage. When her breasts begin to develop, there have been instances where girls attempted to bind "the things" flat; a woman health educator confessed that at puberty she felt like committing suicide "for shame and embarrassment" and she had found this a common reaction. The menarche itself generally comes as a great shock to the girl who has had no preparation[2], but her family is pleased and treats her with special care.

Among people of South Indian origin there is a tradition of a special puberty ceremony for girls, but at the present period of acculturation, it is dying out.[3] The ceremony, which we witnessed in two homes and of which we have several descriptions, shows variations which appear to be the result of chance memories, but follows a basic pattern. The girl is secluded for nine to eleven days in a special room, which may or may not be ritually decorated, and during this time she is not allowed to see or be seen by any male, an avoidance rationalised by the belief that it would bring her bad luck and that she would get pimples. She has a ritual bath on the first day and alternate days thereafter, till the last day, and her face is anointed with turmeric.

[1] In 1956, there were in Natal, seven schools for girls, and 223 mixed schools in each of which the boys preponderated numerically.

Most primary schools are co-educational, and most secondary schools are for boys or girls only.

[2] Contrary to popular belief, Indian girls in Durban do not appear to have unusually early puberty. See Kark, Emily, "The Menarche in Indian Girls of Durban", *Journal of Clinical Science*, Vol. 4, No. 1, March, 1955, pp. 23-35. Her study of 1,259 Indian girls in Durban revealed that no girl under 12 years of age had commenced menstruating. The mean age at onset of a group of 251 during the study was 13.56 years, which is from 6 months to a year later than American White girls of the middle and upper socio-economic classes, and similar to three groups (one Negro and two Jewish) or orphan girls considered to be less privileged.

[3] We put the question to 24 Tamil women born between 1910 and 1925. 15 had been through a ceremony at their menarch, but only 8 had performed a ceremony for their own daughters. The usual reasons for abandoning the practice was "the husband thought it nonsense" or "these things are no longer necessary".

Rites are performed to remove evil influences, and should she have to go outside she carries a penknife and/or syringa leaves for protection against harmful spirits. She is given special food, which always includes a raw egg (forbidden prior to this stage) and oil of sesamum; meat and fish are usually prohibited.

On the last day there is general rejoicing and special rites. The girl, dressed for the first time in a sari given by her parents, sits with another girl ("like her bridesmaid") on a stool covered with a white cloth and receives presents of clothing, jewels and food from paternal and maternal relatives. Her mother garlands her, and then everyone partakes of special tasty dishes. The function is said to be "like a wedding", and some informants said it was her "first wedding" because in the past she was given at this ceremony to her maternal uncle or his son.

In homes where no ceremony is practised, there is still emphasis on special food, ritual ablutions, and specific avoidance. The girl is also given advice by her mother and other older female relatives on how to comport herself in the future; she must not go about alone but in the company of respectable women and girls; the only men with whom she may appear in public are her father and brothers; she must not talk loosely or behave indecorously; she must pay careful attention to her appearance and be strict in her personal hygiene.

While menstruation inaugurates an honoured and desirable potential status, the condition itself involves restrictions on normal behaviour; from menarche to menopause, a menstruating woman is prohibited from participating in ritual activities, including the lighting of the house prayer lamp or entry into the temple, and there is a generally held belief that she must not touch pickles or they will go mouldy nor work in the garden or the vegetables will wilt. There is as it were a public pronouncement of her condition by negative injunctions (in some homes she is not even allowed to cook or to hold another woman's baby during those days), and by conspicuous abstentions.

After puberty the South African Hindu adolescent girl has less freedom than she had before. She is expected, even if she continues with her schooling, to help with the domestic work and tending of the younger siblings. Even in modern homes where the wireless plays most of the day and the girls

are well up in the latest dance tunes, there is still strict supervision of their activities especially outside the home, and a sensitivity to "what the neighbours are saying". A bad reputation is easily acquired, and can effectively put a stop to negotiations for marriage.

No ceremony marks the entry of the boy into manhood, and theoretically his period of study and celibacy terminates on marriage. During his adolescence he has greater freedom than the girl, and, especially if in employment, more economic independence. But he too is expected to help in the home, and to hand over his earnings to his parents. His marriage does not automatically free him from their control; on the contrary, by bringing his wife into their house their influence over him is strengthened.

The rituals and training of childhood and adolescence culminate in marriage. In the following chapter we outline the marriage ritual of Durban Hindus, as well as death rituals, and interpret the underlying social values.

CHAPTER IX

Marriage and Death Rituals

MARRIAGE AND DEATH are the two situations most widely ritualised by South African Hindu, though, like other *sanskara*, they are celebrated with different degrees of elaboration according to the orthodoxy, status and wealth of the families concerned.[1]

We have shown, in Chapter VII, that orthodox Hindu follow the tradition of arranged marriages, though, as a concession to modern times, the young people are consulted and their personal wishes are taken into consideration. Romantic love is idealised in Hindu classics known in South Africa,[2] but is not accepted as a sound basis for marriage: "Love should come after marriage, not before." The circle of potential mates is defined by race, ethnic group, religion, caste and kinship, and within this circle a balance is sought between the individual qualities of the boy and girl by reference to character, reputation, education, health and physical appearance. The investigations are extremely painstaking—and among the orthodox the final verdict rests with the *panchangum* (almanac) to see if the stars of birth match (action described in Tamil as *porthum parthal*, compatible seeing); if not, the whole matter is dropped by mutual consent. It is generally considered easier to marry off a son than a daughter. Among the Hindi the parents of either girl or boy may take the initiative, and they seek the assistance (unpaid) if necessary of a matchmaker (*agwa*) who is a person with wide contact and a good reputation. Among the Tamil, the girl's parents must wait for the suitors and hope to receive indirect help from various kin, more especially the mother's brothers who should be willing to give their own sons as husbands.

[1] For a detailed ethnographic description of marriage ceremonies, see H. Kuper in *African Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1956, pp. 1-14; Vol. 15, No. 4, 1956, pp. 1-12; Vol. 16, No. 4, 1957, pp. 221-235.

[2] e.g. *Sakuntala* by Kalidasa, and various mythological romances associated with Krishna and other deities.

The series of investigations and visits between the two groups may finally lead to a formal proposal of marriage which, if acceptable, is publicised in an engagement-cum-betrothal (*nit-chium* in Tamil, *chekai* in Hindi). Mutual vows and gifts are exchanged between the future fathers-in-law, and the "promise" is consecrated by a priest reciting appropriate mantra. Among the Tamil, the gifts are brought to the bride's home by the groom's kin, among the Hindi it is the reverse.

An "auspicious" day and hour are decided upon, and invitations are taken to key relatives. But a wedding is also considered a matter of public interest and rejoicing, and many guests are invited. Among the Tamil, an open invitation is frequently taken to a temple. At some stage before or during the marriage some version of the sacred thread ceremony is performed for those boys whose parents claim that they belong to the 'twice born' castes, for the order of *brahmacharya* (student celibacy) must end before the order of the *grihastha* (house-holder) can be satisfactorily begun.

A few days before the wedding, the groom's or the bride's parents, depending on the group, erect at their home a bamboo pole, described in English as the "nuptial line pole" or "milk pole" to mark "the building up of a new family". The pole is anointed with unguents including honey, curds, turmeric water, rose water, special oils and other ingredients associated with Hindu rituals. The anointing is performed by fertile married women under the direction of a priest who invokes the blessings of god on the future married couple. Once the pole is raised, the young people are pledged "to purity" by a symbolic ring (*paiti*) or bangle (*kunkan*), and must stay in relative seclusion until after the wedding. In this period of seclusion, no flesh may be cooked in their homes which must also be kept ritually "clean".

The pole raising is followed by kinsmen anointing the couple with a paste in a special ritual (known as *nelengu* in Tamil, *huldee* in Hindi). The number of anointings is uneven, and the first and last are the most important. Anointings are performed separately for the boy and the girl at their respective homes, except for the last which among the Tamil, is a joint ritual on the wedding day itself. The ritual has three main aspects:

physical—strengthening and beautifying the young couple; social—preparing them for their future status and relationship by advice and suggestive remarks during the anointing; and pureficatory—bringing them into contact with ingredients which can never be used during any period of ritual defilement.

The place of marriage and the associated expenses vary with group backgrounds: among the Tamil the engagement is at the home of the girl and the wedding with its major expense is at the home of the boy or a hall hired by him. Among the Hindi the position is reversed. Ordinary working class families spend as much as £300 in gifts, food, ritual requirements and entertainment of the guests.

The departure of the boy or girl (as the case may be) from his or her home for the actual wedding ceremony is ritualised more especially among those sections of the South African Hindu which prohibit close kin marriage. Thus the Hindi practise *nechoo* and *imli gotai*, rituals which have no parallel in the South Indian groups, and which stress the separate identity of the two families, their opposition and their interaction.

> In *nechoo* the boy, together with six unmarried boys of his home partake of sweet rice prepared by his mother who, when he has eaten, asks him in stereotyped phraseology if his bachelorhood is over and then blesses him. When this symbolic separation with his former status is complete, his maternal uncle comes to perform *imli gotai* in which he, the boy and the mother bite ritually of a mango leaf and the uncle gives his sister and her son presents. The girl goes through similar ceremonies, but the water for her *nechoo* is mixed with that used by the boy and brought by his folk to her home.

The bridal party receives a stereotyped welcome, designed both to remove any evil influences and to promote harmony. Where the girl comes to the groom's home for the wedding her father is honoured, and when, as among the Hindi, the girl's kin are host it is the groom who receives the honours from them. In the Hindi ceremony of *dwar pooja* (door prayer) the groom's future father-in-law offers him a seat, symbol of "throne in the home" and hands him three urns of water, the first to bathe his feet, the second his face and the third to quench his thirst. He then receives a sacrament of food, the *madhu pak* (honey-milk) which he touches with his lips before sprinkling a little to the north, east, south, west and heavenwards. The "gift" of greatest importance is the girl herself and her parents symbolically transfer their authority over her to the groom. In the Hindi rite of *kanya dhan* (gift of the girl) the bride's father and mother lay their hands on top of the hands of the groom, who holds a lump of rice containing betel nut, money and a piece of sacred runner grass (*kus*) while one of the bride's male kin pours water over the hands and the brahmin priest recites appropriate mantra. The Tamil *thare vako* (girl vow) is functionally equivalent to the *kanya dhan*.

The marriage is celebrated at an altar made sacred with prayers and ritual objects and decorated with flowers and lights. The objects, placed on the altar in relation to each other and to the movements of the sun, are numerous and include a pestle and mortar, grinding stone, special clay pot, candelabras, camphor, foodstuffs; their symbolism can be explained by the priests, while to the more ignorant laymen they have the sanctity of the traditional and esoteric.

The rituals of marriage are numerous, complicated and variable but the sacred fire ritual (*homa* or *havan* in Hindi, *egium* or *jagnam* in Tamil) which is performed on all major ceremonies is considered essential, and the bride and groom jointly throw sacred offerings of grain and clarified butter onto the flames while the priest says the marriage prayers.

The ideals of marital conduct are openly expressed in the exchange of mutual stylised vows, in Sanskrit or in the vernacular, reinforced by accompanying gestures: the couple pledge lifelong union and mutual devotion, and are also "bound together" and "made one" by a variety of symbolic acts such as the knotting of the groom's sash to the end of the bride's sari, and the exchange of garlands; the husband promises to support his wife and his authority is demonstrated when the two of them circle the fire with the bride leading in the first few rounds, then as the priest and chorus proclaim that the husband has taken over the responsibility from her parents, he takes the lead; the bride affirms her undying fidelity by resting her foot on a stone under the canopy in the rite of *asma rohana* or *shila rohana* (stone mounting) while

the priest recites a prayer enjoining her to be "firm as the stone in wifely duties"; to fulfil the desires for married life, the couple take seven steps (*saptapadi*): the first is for children, the second for health, and the others for prosperity, happiness, virtue, knowledge, friendship and peace.

Fertility is a recurrent theme in the marriage ritual, and the blessing of children is sought verbally through prayer and dramatically through the use of such symbols as rice, bananas, water, earth, seeds—universal symbols with which the student of psychology is well familiar. The dramatisation appears perhaps in its most simple and direct form in the Tamil rite of "seed planting", performed after the main ceremony, when the young husband digs a hole in the ground in the presence of relatives and asks the bride for seed; she gives him a mixture of seeds sanctified at the wedding, and as he plants them those present make sexually suggestive remarks and someone imitates the crying of a baby. The actual physical union of the young couple is presaged by a whole series of preliminary acts of increasing intimacy described as "making the couple used to each other": these acts include vows, hand-holding, eating of food from the same utensil, and rites involving touching of the other's person. Final consummation is delayed until an "auspicious" time, several days after the actual marriage.

The marriage ritual culminates with the husband bestowing on the wife a visible sign of her new status. The Tamil groom ties a necklace (*tali*) on the bride; the Hindi groom marks the central parting of his wife's hair with red powder (*sindhoor*) and her forehead with a red dot (*tika*). These specific signs of wifehood are ritually and permanently removed if she becomes a widow.

Once the climax of the ritual is over, the two young people are deliberately and often explicitly introduced into their new roles and instructed in behaviour appropriate to their in-laws, and to their changed position vis-a-vis their own kin. It is in this complex context that the constant giving of gifts (clothing, jewellery, money, food, ritual ingredients) gains meaning. Among the Hindi, the bride's father must give a gift (*neg*) to the groom and his close friends before they will eat in his home, the groom must give *neg* to the bride's sister before he may enter

the bride's parents' house; immediate relatives of the girl bring presents of *thari* and *lota* (traditional brass tray and vessel), clothing, money and coconuts to her to buy (*mol*) the favour of eating in her husband's home. Comparable gifts express the kinship network of the Tamil: while the couple are under the canopy gifts known as *varse* are carried to them on trays (*tathoo*) and the priest publicly announces the name of the donor and the relationship to the boy or girl. Money gifts (*nawtha* in Hindi, *moyi* in Tamil) are usually taken by the parents to defray the wedding expenses, but are carefully noted and described as "credit without interest": the recipients are socially bound to return at least the equivalent when any affair takes place in the donor's circle of close kin.

A Hindu woman may go through the full religious ceremony only once in her life, hence marriage of a widow or of an unmarried mother is distinct from ordinary orthodox marriages. The ritual, verbally distinct from an ordinary marriage, is very simple, but the woman is permitted to wear the outward signs of marriage—the *tali* if Tamil, *sindhoor* and *tika* if Hindi.

It is usual among South African Hindu to marry first by religious rites, and then to register the marriage, but mainly out of poverty, some Hindu enter into civil marriage, and later, when they can afford it, they perform a (much abbreviated) religious ritual. There are not many people who call themselves Hindu who have not gone through any marriage ceremony.

The following chart indicates the main variations between orthodox and reform marriages in both Tamil and Hindi speaking groups of Hindu in Natal.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ORTHODOX TAMIL	ORTHODOX HINDUSTANI	REFORM TAMIL	REFORM HINDUS-TANI
	I. PREPARATION AND INTRODUCTION.		
Initiative: By boy's family.	By girl's family.	(3) and (4) by individuals.	
Greater initial importance of maternal uncle whose consent is essential.	Importance of paternal line. Maternal uncle active in ritual.	Emphasis on maternal less marked in (3) and emphasis on paternal less marked in (4).	

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ORTHODOX TAMIL	ORTHODOX HINDUSTANI	REFORM TAMIL	REFORM HINDUSTANI
Choice: Caste endogamy where possible, but other factors also considered.	As in (1).	(3) and (4) Caste endogamy relatively unimportant.	
Preferential marriages with specified kin, especially mother's brother's son.	Marriage with kinsmen, on paternal and maternal side, prohibited up to specified degree.	Marriage with outside families preferred.	
Time of Marriage Ceremonies: Depend at almost every stage on almanac, and no marriages take place during certain months. Parents exchange children's horoscopes.	As in (1)	(3) and (4) consultation of almanac and astrologers not necessary though certain months are not accepted as wedding months.	
Officiator: Not necessarily of Brahmin caste.	Always of Brahmin caste. Assisted by a Nao, of Nao caste.	(3) and (4) not necessarily of Brahmin caste.	
Proposal: Boy's family comes to girl's home.	Girl's party comes to boy's home.	(3) and (4) consider this not necessary.	
Invitations: Same cards for both families, and reference to maternal uncle.	Different cards sent from each side.	(3) as in (1). (4) as in (2).	
Engagement: *Nitchium* at girl's home.	*Chekai* at boy's home.	(3) and (4) engagement rites considered not necessary.	
Betrothal: Passing of gifts (*parsum*) mainly from boy's to girl's family. Honouring of girl—her father's feet symbolically washed.	Passing of gifts (*thiluk*) from girl's family to boy's. Honouring of boy—his feet are symbolically washed.	(3) and (4) consider betrothal rites not necessary.	

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ORTHODOX TAMIL	ORTHODOX HINDUSTANI	REFORM TAMIL	REFORM HINDUSTANI
Anointing and Bathing: Number of anointings (*nelengu*) fixed at 3 or 5. Last time jointly on marriage day. Greater social emphasis.	7 *Huldee*, no joint anointing; greater religious emphasis.	(3) and (4) consider anointing not necessary.	
Not known.	*Lawa* performed. (Ceremony of *Laja Homa*).	(3) as (1). (4) *Laja Homa* important.	
II. INTEGRATION: (*a*) ESTABLISHING THE BOND BETWEEN MAN AND WIFE.			
Marriage Ceremony: *Tiramanum* held at boy's home or hall hired by him.	*Vivasankar* held at girl's home or hall hired by her kin.	(3) and (4) usually hold ceremony in hall, expenses following corresponding orthodox patterns.	
Departure: Minor ceremonies before departure of girl for groom's home.	*Nechoo* and elaborate ceremonies before departure of boy for girl's home.	No ceremonies on departure.	
Arrival: Minor ceremonies for girl. No *dwar pooja* etc. Less emphasis on offerings. No *thagpaat* and less avoidance between girl's and boy's husband's brothers.	Elaborate welcome (*dwar pooja* and offerings) with girl's family representing the girl and honouring the groom. *Kanya dhan* (Virgin Giving) and Godhan very important. *Pau Poojee*. *Thagpaat* symbolising avoidance between girl and husband's elder brothers.	(3) girl given prominence. (4) Emphasis on sacred fire; ritual simplified. No *thagpaat*.	
Canopy Ceremony: Booth (*pandal*) with elaborate altar. Ritual objects include 7 clay pots, coconuts, different grains, pestle and mortar. Deities represented.	Booth (*janwas*) with elaborate altar. Ritual objects much the same as in (1) but greatest emphasis attached to *Kalsa*. Deities also represented. Importance of marriage fire.	(3) and (4) simplified version of (1) and (2). Main emphasis on sacred fire, water and grain. Deities not represented in image because belief that Divinity is abstract.	

(1) ORTHODOX TAMIL	(2) ORTHODOX HINDUSTANI	(3) REFORM TAMIL / (4) REFORM HINDUSTANI
Binding Ceremony.	Slightly different.	(3) Bindingc eremony later. (4) Reform Hindus have this as climax.
Less emphasis on vows.	Emphasis on circling the holy fire in *bhawar;* on bride placing her foot on grinding stone in *asma rohana*, on offering of *lawa* to sacred flame and on vows.	(3) and (4) Vows very important.
Climax: *Tali* necklace tied by groom.	*Sindhoor* (red lead powder) on head of bride, and *tika* on her forehead, put by groom.	(3) *Tali* and tying of knot, but not as elaborate. (4) Reform Hindustani omit the spilling of the red powder altogether. Nuptial garlanding is important.
Gifts: *Varse* by specific relatives.	*Neg* and *samkalpa* by some different relatives.	(3) and (4) Gift giving is not as formal or stereotyped.
Seedplanting: By bride and groom.	Not done.	Not done.
III. ASSIMILATION TO MARRIED STATUS:		
Couple generally go to bride's home for few days. Breaking down of barrier between girl's and boy's family by food, gifts, etc.	Couple generally go to groom's home, then bride returns to own home for few days, then finally fetched to her husband's home.	Not as formal.
Girl returns for special ritual to mother's home after 3 months.	Breaking down of barriers between boy's and girl's family by food, gifts, etc.	Not as formal.
First baby always born at bride's mother's home.	First baby should be born at bride's mother's home.	Not as rigid. Readier acceptance of hospital.

The religious rites considered essential for a Brahminic wedding can be isolated:

(1) The girl is given by her father or guardian to the groom in a rite of *kanya dhan* (virgin gift);

(2) The sacred marriage fire (*vivaha havan*) is lit, and under the Brahmin's direction, special prayers are said. The fire is described as a "universal witness".

(3) The groom holds the girl's hand in the rite of *pani grahana*, and recites special vows of loyalty and fidelity.

(4) The couple throw fried grain (*lawa*) on the sacred fire in the *laja homa* ritual and the Brahmin recites mantra.

(5) The couple circles the fire and a sacred water vessel in *agni parinayana* (fire circling), also known as *bhawa*, and the bride mounts the millstone in the rite of *asma rohana* (stone mounting) while the groom recites a prayer enjoining her to be 'firm like a stone' in her wifely duties.

(6) The groom leads the bride for 7 steps (*saptapadi*) invoking seven stereotyped blessings.

The following points emerging from the above summaries need to be re-emphasised:

(i) There is a basic ritual pattern characteristic of Hindu marriages in Durban.

(ii) This pattern is derived from their origin in India.

(iii) Between linguistic groups of Hindus in South Africa there is considerable variation both in social regulations and in ritual detail, e.g.

(*a*) Marriages between certain kin are permitted by Tamil and prohibited by Hindustani.

(*b*) Initiative is taken by the boy's kin among conservative South African Tamil, and by the girl's kin among the conservative Hindustani.

(*c*) Maternal kin, more especially the mother's brothers, receive greater legal prominence among the Tamil, than among the Hindustani.

(*d*) The engagement takes place in the girl's home among the Tamil, in the boy's among the Hindustani, and the place of marriage ceremony is correspondingly reversed.

(*e*) Caste specialisation is limited in both groups, but among the Tamil even the priest need not be of Brahmin caste.

(iv) Between orthodox and reform there are also significant differences, e.g.: In reform marriages:

(1) Greater weight is attached to the two individuals primarily involved;

(2) Caste is theoretically irrelevant;

(3) There is a marked trend towards simplicity of ritual;

(4) Marriages among so-called 'Reform' Tamil and 'Reform' Hindi resemble each other more closely than among 'Orthodox' Tamil and 'Orthodox' Hindustani.

(5) The so-called 'reform' marriages of both groups appear to be based on a simplified Sanskritic pattern.

The last personal *sanskar* is at death; death is conceived as the end of the body, not of the spirit which, unless sufficiently virtuous, will be born again in another bodily form.

The average South African Hindu does not contemplate death as a frightening or horrible experience. Survivors may shed tears of pity for themselves, and their loss, not for the deceased. I was told with approval of a man who, after tending a beloved wife with the utmost devotion was very cheerful after he had buried her. "She was such a good woman that I know she will be happy now" he is reported to have said to someone who commented on his behaviour. There is a small sect whose members carry their dead with happy songs to their burial, stating "We rejoice that they have left this world of suffering, particularly if they have been good people". The Hindu belief in *karma*, in reincarnation and in ultimate spiritual liberation

puts death and life in a perspective different from that held by people who believe there is but one life, one death, one heaven and one hell.

The suicide rate of Indians in South Africa is relatively high. From the official figures of "self inflicted deaths" published for Durban, the number of Indians who took their own lives is roughly the same as of Europeans, both being proportionately higher than the number of Africans and Coloureds; but when to these figures is added deaths in the category of "accidental burning"—and burning is the traditional method of committing suicide among Hindus—the Indians outnumber all other racial groups.[1]

A suicide is given the same burial as people who die a natural death; informants seemed shocked when told that in some cultures, suicides could not be buried in the ordinary cemeteries nor given a religious burial service.

Death rituals do not vary with the mode of dying—but, as in most societies, they do vary with the age, sex and marital status of the deceased. They are more elaborate for adults than for children, for married than for unmarried, and for a married man than for a married woman. The period and overt intensity of mourning are an index of the social importance of the deceased. I will describe briefly the main features of death ritual of an adult among conservative South African Hindu.[2]

When a person is "very sick" or "going" (the word "dying" is generally carefully avoided), relatives are informed and try to come to show their concern and affection. Everything is done to make the "going" happy. The room is sweetened with incense and camphor is lit on a tray. Since it is believed that a person's last thoughts will influence his next life, he is encouraged to concentrate on the Divine, and a picture of Vishnu or one of the deities of the home may be brought into the room, and a priest or scholar may be asked to read aloud extracts from the Ramayana or Gita or other holy book. The closest kin—spouse, children, siblings and grandchildren—are told to drop a little milk or water consecrated with tolsi leaf or other

[1] An article on suicide, with special reference to recent cases, is in preparation.
[2] It will be indicated when the ritual differs for a man and woman.

sacred ingredients into his mouth. Even very small children may be told to do this for a parent or grandparent in the home.

When death occurs those who are most close are clasped and comforted by friends. After a while the readings from sacred books may be resumed, and also the singing of traditional hymns.

The main mourners—parents, surviving spouse and offspring —are selected for special attention. A son is particularly important in the death ceremonies of a father; among the Hindi it is the eldest, termed *kriyaputra* and among the Tamil it is the youngest, termed *koleepotum pulla* who takes the lead in the father's death rites. In both groups the oldest son becomes principal mourner for the mother if the father is already dead. Among the Tamil if an adult man or woman dies unmarried, a symbolic "marriage" is performed by the parents before the burial, "that they may escape punishment in the next life for omission of their duty in this". I have not witnessed the ceremony but am told that a banana branch, preferably with fruit, is cut and brought to the home. If the deceased is a man, the banana symbolises the wife in the ritual. If the deceased is a woman, it stands for fertility. The priest ties round the woman or woman symbol "something like a tali" and says prayers establishing the rights of the deceased as a mature adult. A somewhat similar ceremony is performed for a woman with children but who died without having been through a religious ceremony of marriage. Once these preliminaries are fulfilled the normal rites for the married are performed.

The corpse is prepared for burial with elaborate care by close relatives of the same sex as the deceased. Having bathed, scented, robed and garlanded the body, the kin set it in the right position for burial with toes bound together and thumbs together; they mark the sign of Vishnu or Siva on the forehead and may place a piece of turmeric or gold in the mouth. A person who dies in hospital is not given the traditional treatment, but the body is generally brought to the home before it is taken to the cemetery.

If it is the husband who has died, the widow is subjected to a ritual poignantly reminiscent of her marriage. She has a ritual bath and puts on her finest raiment after which the signs

of marriage are ritually removed. Among the conservative Hindi she is adorned for the last time with the red powder in her hair and on her forehead, and then sitting beside her dead husband this is wiped off by someone holding the hand of the deceased. Among the conservative Tamil, the widow is anointed with *nelengu* as before her marriage, then, dressed in her wedding sari and jewels, and with flowers in her hair and a garland round her neck, she is brought to the deceased; while the priest recites a prayer, kinsfolk exchange her garland with that of the dead man. She again receives gifts as at the wedding, and the garlands are later thrown on the coffin. The *tali* will be removed at a subsequent ritual.

From the day of death until after the funeral, the close relatives and the home of the dead are considered to be in a state of ritual uncleanliness; no fire may be made; and no food may be cooked. The little children are fed by neighbours, adults and older children take nothing but tea. Provisions for the first meal are brought by in-laws, the main obligation falling on the parents of the daughters-in-law of the deceased, and they do the actual cooking.

The disposal of the body is largely controlled by local regulations. Cremation on the river banks and traditional funeral processions (practised by the first immigrants) are prohibited, and there are separate crematoria and cemeteries for Indians (segregation is extended to the ultimate end). Funeral notices of the more important families are sent to the daily English press informing friends and relatives when and from where the cortege will leave; private firms of undertakers are licensed to serve the Indian community. Cremation of adult men is widely practised by the Hindi and Gujarati; earth burial is more usual among the Tamil and Telugu. The unmarried may be, but seldom are, cremated. Funerals of ordinary working class people cost their families from £20 to £30 and are among the main occasions when relatives give each other assistance. Burial Societies, one of the main types of association supported by urban Africans, are rare among Indians, who consider that the obligation rests with kin. Relatives consult the almanac for a propitious time for burial, and also see from it whether or not death took place at a time which requires special services.

Before the body leaves the home, the face is exposed for a last farewell by the weeping relatives and friends. In many instances a symbolic cremation is practised; the male mourner, and other close male kin, circle the body with a lighted lamp; in front, sprinkling water from an urn, walks his wife, and behind comes the widow throwing flowers, and followed by the grandchildren with lighted torches. Offerings of various kinds, including coconut, betel leaf, betel nut, and rice, are made near another lamp placed at the foot of the deceased.

The body is then transferred to the graveyard. Formerly it was carried on a bamboo stretcher covered with sacred grass; and people still remember the various halts and special rituals performed on the way. Today the coffin is driven slowly in the hearse direct to the graveyard, at the entrance of which the kinsmen seek acceptance for the deceased. Among the Tamil, they place the coffin at the temple of Harischandra, represented by a stone, and with prayer and offering seek permission to enter his domain. The story of Harischandra is as well known to Hindus as the Book of Job to Christians; it is interesting to note that while Job was rewarded in the end with material benefits as a sign of God's grace, the virtuous and tragic Harischandra was blessed at last with death. Among the Hindi, the offerings and prayers are directed to Siva Rudra—god of destruction and creation, or to Yama, who presides over the temporary world of the dead.

The grave is dug by non-related men, of low occupational caste, who receive payment for their services. Obituary speeches for people of importance are usually made before the body is lowered, the chief mourner places the first sod, and then must leave the grave without looking back, for the soul may be lonely and desire the company of those most close and dear.

The friends return to their own homes, the close mourners to the home of the deceased where they purify themselves with water and ash from contact with the dead body. They are then able to enter the home and again they pray.

The living are interested in the future of the spirit, the 'self' of the deceased, and in conservative homes the closest kin may try and see what form it will take in the next incarnation. A senior member will spread sifted ash or sand in a tray or a corner

of the room of death, and near it will put offerings of rice and water. The next morning the family elders will interpret any marks; they will not, however, discuss their findings with outsiders.

There is a general belief that the "soul", "life", "self" or "spirit"—it is called by as many names in the vernacular as in English—does not immediately return in a new corporeal body. For a period of 10 to 16 days (depending on the group) it remains near the home, and then it journeys to *Yama loka*, the land of the dead, where it fares according to its deeds on earth until it is reincarnated. About a year after death, offerings to the dead continue to be made at a set period each year, though the dead are believed to be reincarnated. As in all religions, consistency in beliefs is not necessary as long as the beliefs do not create a direct emotional conflict through being simultaneously challenged.

For ten to sixteen days the chief mourners are in a state of ritual impurity. The closest male mourners have their hair cut by a barber, and must not shave; the women deliberately neglect their appearance; sexual intercourse is taboo; no "flesh" (meat, or fish) may be cooked in the home, and spices are left out of the dishes. (The extent to which restrictions are observed depends on occupation as well as orthodoxy, working men finding it difficult to observe the conspicuous signs of mourning.) If a body has been cremated, the close kin should collect the remains and dispose of them in "sweet" running water—a river, not the salt sea. Among the Tamil, on the third day after the body has been buried, close kin take foods and a clay pot with milk to the grave itself and, making a hole in the pot, let the milk drop onto the grave while they pray and give their offerings. The Hindi perform a comparable rite at the home, but the deceased is represented by a piece of knotted sacred runner grass and the ingredients are different. Each day offerings of specially prepared white rice are placed outside for the deceased. In the home itself rituals are performed over the material possessions. Clothes, books, and other personal intimate belongings are piled neatly together and usually an enlarged photograph of the deceased is put on the top. Flowers, water, a lamp and incense sanctify the place and sweetmeats, brought by relatives, are laid on banana leaves on the ground. Prayers are said

(among the Tamil a priest is not necessary) and the relatives in turn circle the photograph with a lighted camphor, sprinkle water on the ground, and prostrate themselves in their devotions. The close mourners weep bitterly as they recount the virtues of the deceased.

The Tamil re-enact this ritual on a small scale every night, on a larger scale on the 8th night (known as *yetandukum*) and on a major scale on the 16th night (known as *ootharakeiya*), when it is believed that the stars (*tithi*) ruling at the time of death are repeated in the stellar system. Among the Hindi, the second special *sradda* (mourning ceremony) is held on the 10th day (*duskaram*), and the next *sradda*, between the 12th and 30th and most frequently on the 13th day, hence it is spoken of as *therai*. (Traditionally the day of this *sradda* varied with caste, and was held on the 12th day for a Brahmin, the 13th for a Kshatriya, the 16th for a Vaisya and the 30th for a Sudra, on the assumption that it takes different times according to caste "for a soul to reach the land of Yama".) For convenience, the *therai* is usually held on a Sunday, the actual number of days being of secondary concern.

After the last day of purification the mourners are accepted into normal life, and changes in status are made evident and stabilised. At the Tamil *ootharakeiya* (also known as *karma tharum* and as *kaliyo*), all the immediate relatives, close friends and a priest assemble in the home towards evening. In some families, a special band may be hired, and large quantities of vegetable food are prepared, kin of the deceased contributing towards the heavy expense. In the room of the dead, the priest places a *kalsa* (a ritual urn) containing such ingredients as milk, water, and honey, and tied round with a cloth and ornamented with turmeric and red powder, and the opening closed with mango leaves, a coconut, special grass and flowers. Near it are placed other ritual materials, including three small washed stones described as the *trimurthigal* (trinity), representing Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, and a design is made on the ground to represent the planets.

Towards midnight, an elder versed in Tamil sings a sacred song (*sarmakavi* or *mangila yadithal*) mentioning the virtues of the deceased and of each of his immediate kin, and asks that they be blessed. The singer is rewarded with money contributed by the audience.

Past midnight the Tamil widow goes through her main ritual ordeal, the symbolic termination of her existence as a wife. A few other widows accompany her to the room of the dead where three of her companions put on her head three different oils and mark her forehead with a red dot. Then they cut the *tali* from her neck and drop it into a vessel with milk and leave it near the house lamp. They try to calm her anguished weeping[1] before she returns to the gathering. From that time onwards she may not wear any of the bright adornments of the married, and should replace her colourful saris with a garment of white.

Early the next morning the priest, having performed the *egium* (sacred fire ritual) with the sons of the deceased, leads them to the seashore for their final purification. With them go close male relatives and the barber who again shaves the chief mourners. On a sanctified place prayers are said to the planets and to Surya the Sun, and special balls of rice (*pinda*) are prepared for offerings. Later the *pinda*, the three stones (which have been ritually anointed) and other offerings are put into the sea. The chief mourners, bathed and dressed in new clothes, given by the in-laws, again perform the sacred fire ritual before returning home. They take back with them the *kalsa* (ritual pot) and the ash from the sacred fire; the *kalsa* is put in the room of the deceased, the coconut on it is broken and eaten by close kin as a sacrament and water is sprinkled in purification. The ash is kept for special commemorative occasions, when it is placed on the forehead of the kin of the deceased. For his services, the priest receives from the chief mourner the "great gift" of traditionally stereotyped objects: clothes, brassware, money, sandals, an umbrella and food. The visiting mourners are fed once more on carefully prepared vegetarian dishes, and then return to their own homes.

The 10th and "13th" day ceremonies of the Hindi-speaking Hindu are basically similar to the ceremonies of the Tamil: they too have a purification of males at the river or sea as well

[1] The ordeal is so great that some of the enlightened Tamil have abandoned it altogether and the widow simply throws her *tali* into the coffin and undergoes none of the 'marriage ritual to the dead'.

as at the home; a barber and a priest are employed; special offerings of food are placed outside and inside the house; prayers are made to selected deities; stereotyped techniques are used to comfort the bereaved and help the liberation of the spirit of the deceased.

The actual details of ritual vary considerably though the values they express are common. Thus the three symbolic stones which are so important in the Tamil ritual, do not appear among the Hindi; the deities they represent are, however, mentioned. Again, though the Hindi speaking group also makes rice balls, they make the rice into 9 *pinda* which are then moulded into one, then divided into 4 by sacred grass and these four are again "united", and only then are they put together with other offerings, into running water. The aim of this rite, however, is not unique: according to a leading priest "it represents the bringing together of various parts of the body for the rebirth".

On the 10th day, very conservative Hindi speaking families invite a special Brahmin, known as the *Mahapatar*, in addition to the main officiant. The *Mahapatar* takes part in ceremonies outside but not inside the house, and for his services is also given a "great gift" of traditional items, and some of the best food prepared for the occasion. Only after he has eaten of the food and drunk a goblet of milk, is the home considered purified.

The Hindi *therai* is presided over by at least one Brahmin and like the Tamil *ootharekeiya* is comprehensive and elaborate. A Hindi widow, however, does not go through the same visible ordeal as her Tamil co-religionist.

In both groups additional commemorative ceremonies are held after the thirteenth or sixteenth day: the Tamil hold them in the third month, at the end of the first year and sometimes at the end of the second and third year; the Hindi at the end of six months and at the end of a year. In both groups the ceremony at the end of the first year is the most important, and close friends as well as relatives are often invited, and afterwards fed.

For at least a year no public ceremonies such as Diwali and no domestic events such as a marriage are celebrated by members of the bereaved family. They describe the home as "in 'darkness' ". "Memory of the dead overrides the fleeing joys of the living" explained pandit B. J. Maharaj. Life is temporarily slowed down. No important changes may be made, no major enterprises undertaken. A widow must remain with her children in the family of the deceased till the ceremony of purification at the end of a year; afterwards she may, if she is young and childless, return, if she wishes, to her own people for her position in her late husband's home is not easy. At the same time, she will never be able to make the devotions to her own dead parents —"it is not her 'privilege' to give or their 'right' to accept"— her duty is to her husband's kin.

The majority of South African Hindu (as the majority in most societies) ritualise more than they philosophise, justifying their practices when necessary by the age-old and world-wide rationalisation of 'the customs of our fathers'. There are also a growing number who dismiss traditional ritual as "nonsense" or "waste of time". But it was interesting to notice, how, when pressed by the anthropologist, informants speculated on the meaning of various symbols in what I describe as 'the Hindu cultural idiom'. This can be seen by quoting informants on the meaning of a few of the more common ritual ingredients: fire, water, earth, flowers, rice, bananas, coconuts, the 'products of the cow'.

Each isolated symbol evoked specific cultural associations, and made fuller impact within the total culture. 'Fire stands for knowledge, progress and warmth', 'the day there is no light in the world, there will be an end to mankind and growth'. "Just as Christians say—'give us this day our daily bread', we Hindus say 'give us light for from light emerges bread, water and everything'." 'Fire is the sun', 'fire burns the gross material substance in the brilliant purifying flame', 'the lighted lamp or camphor is dispeller of darkness, the light of the 3 worlds'. 'When we burn the house lamp to Lakshmi (goddess of prosperity) we dispel darkness, and we must be clean to approach her.' 'At marriage, the sacred fire is the essential witness. When a person dies the house lamp burns in the room of death and may not go out, denoting that the light within the body has departed and has become one with the universal light of the world; so no other fire may be lit and no food may be cooked in a house till after the funeral'.

'Water is the essence of creation', 'without water no-one can live', 'our lives are from water', 'water cools our thirst', 'water cleanses', 'the earth is cooled by water', 'water is the power of creation', 'moving water is more effective than standing water, where dirt, leaves and insects can collect. So we use rivers and the sea for ceremonies, sometimes it must be sweet moving water from rivers and in death we use the salt sea'. 'Fire and water, like all aspects of the universe, can be both harmful and beneficial, good and bad, destructive as well as creative.'

'Earth is the mother. It gives everything. You plant one grain of rice in the earth, but she doesn't count and gives you countless back.' Hindu children are instructed 'not to stamp on mother earth, but to tread her gently'; 'in orthodox homes a mother should lie on the earth and not on her bed to give birth to her child.' 'If people are not cremated but buried, the closest relatives throw soil into the grave, not because of the belief of 'dust unto dust, ashes to ashes', but it is the last time that the soul *in this body* traverses the earth and the body goes back to the mother.' 'Man and the world (of which earth is an element) are one.'

Flowers are necessary; they 'please God because of their scent and colour. Like incense they make the air sweet.' '*Agabatti* (incense sticks) burn slowly and leave a clean smell for a long time. If you want to make an offering to a god, you should do him that honour.'

'Rice comes up from water (creation) and has close packed grains on one stalk'; 'rice is our most nutritious food; it is used in different ways for nearly all ceremonies'. 'It can last an indefinite time without going bad.' Bananas 'spread new runners each year' and 'carry clusters of fruits'. 'Grain gives food and nourishment.'

'Coconuts are hard and ugly on the outside but are pure white within.' 'Outside is hardness, inside water.' When coconuts were unobtainable, pineapples were substituted, for they had 'some of the right qualities'—the harsh exterior and the sweet bright interior. But as soon as coconuts were again on the market, pineapples were no longer used, 'they are without water' and 'they are without void'.

'We (Hindu) only use clean things, like milk and curds, and other products of the cow for purifying.' (The products of the cow used in ritual are milk, ghee, curds, dung and urine.) 'We call the cow *gau-mata*, (cow mother) and we venerate her, and what she gives we accept with gratitude.' 'We use her products in weddings because they are from her and purify.' '*Gau-raksha* (cow protection) is part of orthodox Hindusim. We preach *ahimsa* (non-violence) and believe that to kill a cow is murder. No true Hindu will eat beef.'

In all *sanskara* the average Hindu stresses the concept of *pavitra* (cleanness, purity) and its opposite, *apavitra* (pollution). From the viewpoint of orthodox Hindu, the aim of *sanskara* is purification. Things, and people who are 'unclean' must be avoided or their influence neutralised or their condition changed. There are taboos on contact with people who are *achooth* (untouchable)—(e.g. menstruating women, women immediately after childbirth, widows) and there are corresponding acts of purification (the '3 oil' bath, the special massage, the elaborate anointings, the removal of evil by lighted camphor and other 'pure' substances). Considerable importance is attached to food as a symbol of purity. Such foods as honey, sugar, rice, milk, fruits, betel leaf and nut, are said specifically to be 'pure'.

From the point of view of the sociologist, *sanskara* mark important changes in a person's social personality, indicating his development from birth to rebirth. The idea of pollution buttresses the social structure. Traditionally it emphasised the distance between persons separated by caste; at present it still reinforces the status relationships of individuals.

Through the influence of Westernised intellectuals and of Sanskritic scholars of Reform groups, there is a general and deliberate tendency among South African Hindu to simplify rituals. Differences between orthodox and reform, however, remain and neither has achieved uniformity among its own adherents. There are also individuals who do not call themselves orthodox or reform but simply "modern" Hindu who perform rituals for a few personally selected occasions, and, even at marriages and funerals, themselves decide which rites may be included or omitted. It has been made evident that

the various rites express a single cultural idiom, though all are not equally important.

The priests themselves receive no standardised instruction, but acquire their knowledge through informal apprenticeship to practising officiants and there are quite often arguments and discussions by onlookers during the ceremony as to the correct procedure. Sanskrit is generally considered the language of ritual, but particularly among the Tamil there are people who officiate only in the vernacular. Few South African Hindu, even in the priesthood, are really competent Sanskrit scholars. The books, however, from which they derive their knowledge are limited in number and deviations fall within a recognisable framework.

Since the emphasis in anthropology is on the general rather than the singular, there is always a tendency to make rituals appear more rigid and stereotyped than they are in practice. But it is necessary to remember that, even where the personal emotions must be glossed over in public behaviour, a clash between the expressed and the felt may appear within the inner circle.[1]

Sanskara sanctify the complex pattern of kinship rights and obligations described in previous pages and express the basic concepts of *dharma* and *karma*. *Dharma* extends from correct performance of ritual to the ultimate search for self, *karma* is considered the effect of actions, good and bad, in the cycle of existence, past, present and future. All *sanskara* also include invocations to one or several deities, representing the different aspects of the all embracing Divine, and the use of ordinary objects (bamboo poles, clay pots, stones, etc.) which, by devotions, become transmuted into images of the Divine.

[1] Well do I remember the case of Mrs. Chetty whose husband had been killed by a passing car as he jumped off the bus on his way home. The couple had been married for many years and had no children. They lived with Mr Chetty's mother, but at the time of the accident the wife was staying with her own people. The old Mrs. Chetty, who adored her son, blamed his death on his wife, who, she said, had made him so unhappy by her childlessness and by her frequent visits to her own people, that he did not know what he was doing. At the funeral ceremonies, held of course in the mother's home, his relatives showed the widow the most perfunctory sympathy and she sat virtually isolated with a few of her own folk. The mother was the centre of all the attention, except when ritual necessitated that the widow take the lead. Immediately after the year of mourning and the final ceremony, she returned to her own home and her association with her in-laws has virtually ceased.

Through the rationale of reincarnation, the ritual is also a technique of adjusting an individual to his daily conditions, and offers promise of a better life to come. By serving as a safeguard for the already privileged, the rationale helps to ensure the stability of the existing order; and by providing an incentive for traditional virtue among the underprivileged, it helps to direct the process of change along familiar lines.

PART III

RELIGION and HEALTH

CHAPTER X

Hindu Religion in Natal

AN OUTSTANDING FEATURE of contemporary South African Hindu life is the emphasis on religion. Hinduism is a deep and complex system of behaviour and beliefs and obviously we can deal with it but briefly and superficially, selecting for comment those features that are relevant for our general theme of the adaptation of Indians to South Africa.

The external signs of Hinduism in Durban are strikingly obvious in the many public temples and domestic shrines, the frequency of religious processions, the array of ritual objects (holy ash, incense sticks, camphor squares, coconuts, limes) in shops and market stalls, the large number of religious books (in English and in the vernaculars) advertised in the Indian press and sold in the book shops, and the extent to which religious themes are used in pictures sent out from India and shown in local Indian cinemas.

South African Hinduism diverges in many respects from classical Hinduism, reflecting different social conditions and individual opportunities, but, as we indicated in the analysis of *sanskara*, many of the basic rituals and beliefs persist. As Srinivas has so ably shown,[1] classical Hindusim—"all India Hinduism"—provides a background perspective for the study of

[1] M. N. Srinivas, Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India, pp. 212-240.

Hinduism in any particular region and locality. This is partly because Hinduism is not a narrow formal religion, but rather an approach to life, a weltanschauung, that developed over many thousands of years and was able to synthesise many different ideas and practices. Though it drew its original inspiration from two main streams of cilivisation—the Vedic and the Dravidian—which became fused in Brahminic (or Puranic) Hinduism, it incorporated in turn a vast range of village cults as well as certain aspects of Christianity. The more democratic and personal religions of Buddhism and Jainism which developed as a reaction against the authoritarianism of Brahminic Hinduism have also left their imprint on the vast system of religious ideas described as Hinduism. In South Africa, with its conglomeration of peoples of different cultural background, Hinduism has again responded not by closing its doors, but by extending both its dogma and its ritual. Men who claim to be Hindus may worship one god, many gods or no god, and they can approach their concept of the Divine through meditation or sacrifice. The emphasis throughout is on man's inner being rather than on the external world; the outer phenomena are perceived through the inmost self and the process of perception is by revelation as well as by reason.

In South Africa, as in India, Hindus refer their actions to a wide range of sacred writings. It is significant that, especially compared with the west, Hindus have a relatively narrow range of fiction and even this has frequently a religious or mythological theme. In South Africa, Hindu writers are few, and nearly all their writings are religiously oriented. Indian bookshops always stock a large number of vernacular prayer books and extracts from classical Hindu writings.

Naturally knowledge of Hindu theology varies. Priests and scholars in Durban have referred to the Vedas,[1] Upanishads,[2]

[1] The Vedas are generally accepted as revealed wisdom. There are four Vedas (Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda) each consisting in the main of mantras or holy invocations addressed to various powers and aspects of the universe, e.g. *Agni* (fire), *Indra* (rain).

[2] The Upanishads or Vedanta (end of the Veda which word itself means knowledge) represent the highest expressions of Hindu philosophy.

Brahmanas,[1] Puranas,[2] Agamas,[3] Smritis,[4] the two great epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana,[5] the Bhagavad Gita,[6] various devotional liturgies[7] and theological philosophical treatises.[8]

The average Hindu is relatively ignorant; like the majority in most societies the masses "act their religion and don't think it." But dogma and ritual are mutually inter-acting, ritual giving rise to dogma as well as dogma to ritual, and by the very fact of participation under the direction of the more educated, considerable, albeit piecemeal, knowledge of the rich literature of Hinduism has seeped through to the illiterate.

Traditionally an antithesis existed between priestly and popular religion, perpetuated by the injunction in the Code of Manu that only the "twice born" be permitted to study the Vedas; today this basis for discrimination is no longer considered valid, though the difference in knowledge between various social strata may be, and often is, immense. The gulf is widest between the exponent of the Vedantic philosophy and associated

[1] The Brahmanas contain detailed instructions for priests in carrying out devotions.

[2] There are eighteen recognised Puranas developed from Vedic writings and dealing with history, cosmogony, beliefs and rituals. Unlike the Vedas, they are not regarded as of divine origin but as the writings of different *rishis* (holy men) who expounded in elaborate detail religion and social life for the masses.

[3] The Agamas are distinct from Vedic literature; and were developed by the Dravidians. The Sakti Agama is the basis of many cult practices in Durban.

[4] Smriti and Sutri are the works of learned men, and relate to marriage, morals, economics, government and various other social relationships. The Smriti include the Institutes of Manu (roughly of the same period as the Puranas), which, though not legally recognised in South Africa, are used as religious sanctions of social behaviour by conservatives.

[5] These two epics (written circa 500-300 B.C.) bring the teaching of the Vedas to the lay masses, provide them with a comprehensive pantheon and ethic, and identify culture heroes with the divinity.

[6] The Bhagavad Gita or Song of God is the quintessence of the teaching of the Upanishads, and forms part of the Mahabharata.

[7] An immense body of religious literature has been written in Tamil. The earliest Tamil writings consists of devotional songs of the saints collected together in Tiru-murai. In Durban, the best known are Tiru-vacakam by Manika Vasagar, Tevaram by Sri Agpar, Sri Gnana Sambandar and Sri Sundara Murti, and Aruppa by Ramalinga Swamigal.

[8] The best known locally are by Sankya, Vaiseshika and Patanjali of the early writers; the modern writers, most frequently quoted to me, were Radhakrishnan, Swami Dayanand of the Arya Samaj movement whose book "The Light of Truth" is regarded as the bible of his followers, and Swami Sivananda of the Divine Life Society.

Vedic rites, and the illiterate worker who performs a variety of Tantric[1] *poojas* without any effort at understanding the meaning of the words or actions.

The different schools of Vedanta (the Dvait, Advait and Trait) can be discussed with Hindu intellectual leaders in Durban,[2] but they are more interested in extending a general monistic approach than in confusing people with subtle philosophic distinctions. The same is true of Saivism, the doctrine of Saiva Siddhanta, as preached by various Tamil scholars and groups in Durban.[3]

Fundamental to Hinduism is the concept of Divinity (Parmatma) not as a personal being but as something eternal, formless, omniscient, indivisible. It may be spoken of by of a hundred different names, and because of the limitation of the minds of ordinary men, it may be conceived in various forms. Pandit Vedalankar pointed out to me that it is because of the doctrine

[1] The main idea of the Tantras, derived from the Agamas, is the deification of the objects of the senses so as to overcome attachment to those objects, but in the hands of some of the followers the Tantric cult degenerated into orgiastic rituals.

[2] I have discussed this with Pandits Nardev Vedalankar, Varadacharyulu and Nayanarajh, Swami Nischalanananda, Messrs. Joshi, B. J. Maharaj and S. Chotai. To the Advait, Brahma (Divinity) is only one (Ad-Vait) not two; to the Dvait He is two (Brahma and Prakriti—Divinity and Nature) and to the Trait, He is three (Brahma, Prakriti and Jeeva—separate soul substance). The Advaita worships Nirguna Brahma—Divinity without attributes. "He is all that is and in Him alone you are yourself." "All things in the world are of Brahma and the Atman (individual self) is part of the universal soul." The apparent diversity of substance and quality in the universe around is an illusion (maya) of ignorance (avidya) but without the real there can be no illusion. Thus the aim of life is realisation of Self which is one with Brahma. This absolute monism is recognised as too bold and intellectual a philosophy for the general run of mankind and hence the Dvait and Trait school teach a qualified monism. They do not teach that when maya is gone, the individual soul becomes the Divinity: the aim of life is not realisation of Self, but of God. Man fulfils himself in service to others as well as by perfection of Self and to the qualified monists (generally known as Visishta Advait) Self and God are distinct. The Arya Samajists believe in the Vedic Trinity of God (Ishwar or Parmatma), Soul (Atma) and Matter (Prakriti) as three separate entities, co-existent, co-eval, and co-eternal. God cannot destroy the other two, nor are they submerged in Him. Thus the Trinity of the Arya Samajists is distinct from the Vedantic concept of God.

[3] The main exponents of Siddhanta are: the Divine Life Society, the Tamil Vedic Society, the Tamil Education and Religious Mission. Their main book is Siva Jnana Bodhan (teachings to the path of salvation as taught by Siva), but they also receive other writings from India, e.g. Talks on Saiva Siddhanta by Sri S. Satchidanandam Pillai, 1954, dedicated to 'The Holy Lotus Feet of Sat-Guru Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj'.

of *ishta devata*[1]—individual preference—which gives everyone freedom to worship with the attributes of his own choice, that there has arisen the misconception that Hinduism is either naturism or polytheism or both. There can thus be as many forms of Divinity as there are believers—each perceiving God within the limitations of his own mind—but the underlying unity in all the multiplicity of imagery is a basic concept of Hinduism. Illustrating this, is the following well known parable:

> A number of blind men came across an elephant, and having been told its name were asked by a sage to describe it. The first felt its leg and said "The elephant is like a column." The second felt its ear and said "The elephant is like a winnowing fan." So each in turn described the animal differently. The sage drew the lesson that "Each man finds God as his own perception allows, but God is the whole."

A completely unsophisticated man made the point in his own way when he showed me a brick, marked with red dots, in his yard and said "Since God (Mahadevu) is everywhere, when I worship a stone I worship Him."

The Divine spirit is believed to be everywhere and to reveal itself in a special degree in things which are splendid. Rishis, Buddhas, Saints and Great Men are intense revelations of the Divine. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna speaks: "Whenever virtue decays and unrighteousness prospers, I will be born again to uphold goodness on earth."

Most of the deities represented in ritual in Durban are well known in Brahminic Hinduism: the Trimurthi (Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva), Hanuman, Ganessa, Subrahmanya, Rama, Krishna, and a range of female deities, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Kali, Durga and Draupadi, representing Sakti, the female principle, or creativity, or motherhood. Brahma as Creator is seldom directly worshipped, but is generally portrayed in lithographs and temple images with majestic mien and eight arms embracing other deities; Saraswati, his beautiful female counterpart symbolising learning and the creative arts, generally appears rising

[1] By the doctrine of *ishta devata*, God is conceived as father, mother, *guru* (teacher), friend, and in any of the infinite range of forms. Thus many who worship the supreme as Krishna, think of him as a playful child, others as the *guru*.

gracefully from a lotus or seated on a peacock. Vishnu the Preserver is usually represented as a four armed deity riding his charger Garuda, the man-bird; his wife Lakshmi, goddess of prosperity and happiness, has her lamp in every home. Vishnu has appeared in the world in various *avatar* (incarnations) animal and human. In the form of Rama, he performed the heroic deeds recounted in the Ramayana, in the form of Krishna he represented the power of virtue described in the Mahabharata. Krishna is generally regarded by informants as the ideal child, the ideal lover, the ideal youth, and the ideal man. Hanuman, the 'Monkey God', who assisted Rama, symbolises friendship and security.

Siva is both destruction and regeneration. He has been described as "three-eyed, and his middle eye, which is usually closed, has the power of annihilation". He is shown as the personification of divine movement or activity, nearly every temple is also hallowed with his trident and his sign, the *lingam*, a phallic symbol in stone. His steed is the bull, Nandi. From Siva sprang Ganessa (also known as Vinaiga), the elephant headed god of sagacity with the power to overcome obstacles, who is the first to be propitiated in most ceremonies. From Siva too came Subrahmanya, also known as Kartikeya, the god of war, who defeated evil, represented by the *Asuras*. Kali, as Sakti of Siva, is often depicted as standing on the body of an evil giant, and round her neck hangs a garland of the skulls of his offspring; she has four arms and in the lower left hand is the terrible head dripping blood and in the upper the sword of vengeance; the lower right hand offers fruits and the upper is raised in a gesture of protection.

A number of non-Brahminic deities, some probably of village origin, have been brought into the orbit of the Puranic pantheon in Durban. These are labelled as *devta*, *munis*, *paris*. The *devta* include the Seven Sisters, who are worshipped collectively and individually and have become identified with the Sakti and may be called Amma. The *munis* were once powerful *rishis* (holy men), but some used their knowledge for destructive purposes and became evil spirits able to possess people and make them ill. These include Jeva muni, Tani muni and Munisvaran. The *pari*, translated often as "fairies", are believed to cross

over the earth at certain times of the day and cast shadows which, if they fall on children or pregnant women, cause illness. Deities which were restricted to villages in India extend their influence through contact with new groups in South Africa.

Emanating from the central Puranic deities are various recognised sects[1] of which the Vaishnavas (devotees of Vishnu), Saivas (of Siva) and Saktas (of the Sakti) are the most widely known in Durban. Each in turn is an agglomeration of sub-cults, with their own philosophies and rituals, some worshippers believing that knowledge (*jnana*) is a surer way to salvation than devotion (*bhakti*), and others the reverse. The practices range from the most serene form of personal behaviour to horrifying excesses but as Sirkari Naidoo stated: "These very excesses have, no doubt, often served to advertise the cult and to secure a great vogue for it among the masses, to whom religion means an indifference to the good things of life and an infinite capacity for mortification."[2]

A Tamil scholar quoted to me from a verse in the Siva Purana: "The highest state of worship is the natural realisation of god's presence, the second is meditation and contemplation, the third is the worship of symbols which are reminders of the Supreme and the fourth is the performance of ritual and pilgrimages to sacred places." These approaches are not mutually exclusive or contradictory. Other informants did not rate them from high to low, but simply as different techniques according to personal preference.

In Durban, the most abstract ritual is practised by members of organisations expounding the Vedantic philosophy, some of whom are also students of Yoga.[3] As such, their training involves physical, intellectual and moral discipline, in an effort to

[1] Six orthodox sects are distinguished by the scholars: Vaishnavas, emphasising Vishnu as dominant; Saivas, Siva; Saktas, Sakti; Ganapatyas, Ganesha; Saurapaths, Surya; Smarthas, all deities.

[2] V. Sirkari Naidoo. "Religion among Indians in South Africa", in *Handbook of Race Relations*, ed. Ellen Hellman, 1952, p. 575.

[3] Obviously it is not possible to discuss the systems of Yoga (literally 'union') in this book. The final authority of Yogi (people practising Yoga) in Durban is still the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali; articles on Yoga appear in local religious papers, and a book on Hatha Yoga has been written by Swami Nischalananda of the Local Rama Krishna Centre whose weekly classes on Yoga are attended by over 1,000 people, mainly children.

attain the deepest level of concentration—the state of *samadhi*—a state of harmony beyond ordinary mortal experience.

Concentration on the names and qualities of the Divinity is a generally recognised virtue. Worshippers should perform regular prayers, particularly the *gayatri mantra*, involving meditation on the meaning of Aum (Oneness, Divinity), prolonged control of breath, and recitation of invocations.

One of the main rites of Hindus of all groups is the sacred fire ritual (*homa* or *havan* in Hindi, *jagnam* or *egium* in Tamil) in which the priest chants invocations (mantras) to the elements and deities while he burns ritually prescribed ingredients such as grain and ghee; and offers cardoman and areca nut, flowers and incense, honey and sugar; and round the sacred flame he sprinkles water in the rite of *achmania*. Behind the symbols are religious values of the society: plenty, health, fertility, prosperity, universality, the emphasis in interpretation varying with the level of knowledge and sophistication of informants. Explaining *havan*, one pandit said: "*Havan* is an offering, and the belief underlying it is that the words, together with the smoke, rise upwards purifying the air and promoting health and happiness. The smoke should rise straight, and the fuel should not splutter." Another informant, and educated Reform teacher interpreted *havan* as "primordial reincarnation, a sublime act of destruction and transmutation." A third, a business man with religious background said "the ceremony ends with 'Shanti Paat', the word 'Shanti' means peace and is repeated three times. The aim of *havan* is to link people in harmony with each other and the world around".

The most regular domestic rite is the lighting of the house lamp (*kamatchi velekoo* in Tamil, *cherag* in Hindi) which is usually stamped with the images of Ganessa, the Wise, or Lakshmi, Goddess of Prosperity, and which is interpreted by most informants as standing for the life and prosperity of the home. It is always highly polished and decorated with *koongam* (red lead powder) or turmeric, both of which are used for numerous rituals of purification, and deep rooted superstitions have developed around it: once lit, a family will not lend out salt ("life") nor money ("key to security") nor strong chillies ("spice of life").

Many homes have small temples in the yard, consisting of

a single room with small images and polychrome prints of the deities, brass urns with offerings of water and milk, bells, shells, incense, flowers and other "holy things". The women in the house are in charge and see that everything is kept clean and fresh. In some homes, the shrine may be simply a few bricks which the worshipper anoints with oil and daubs with vermilion or saffron and here he or she lays the offerings. These offerings occasionally include animal sacrifice, and/or—equally disapproved of by many orthodox Hindu—cane spirit or brandy. Families who worship in this way are decreasing in number under the influence of both western civilisation and Sanskritic teaching. Many Hindu homes are distinguished by a *jhunda* (ritual flag pole) marking the performance of certain Brahminic rites—*janao sanskara*, or the reading of a legend or sacred story (*katha*). Homes usually have special shrines if any member gets 'the trance', an aspect of religion more fully discussed in Chapter XII.

Orthodox Hindu in Durban dedicate one or two days a week (usually Mondays and Fridays among Tamil, Tuesdays and Fridays among the Hindi group) to specific 'house gods'. On these days, described as Fast days, the whole house is thoroughly cleaned, each person has a ritual bath, only vegetarian food is eaten and then only a little, and offerings of fruit and milk are placed before the image to whom they pray. Some read from a sacred book, others "speak the heart". No one is forced to go, no one is told what to say. When the simple ritual is over, part of the offerings are distributed amongst the participants and neighbours' children are always called in to receive a share.

Public worship in temples varies with orthodoxy. The Vedic groups have no elaborate temples. no images, and no sacrifices. They hold public services in halls which may be used for other occasions, and have regular sermons based on holy writings. Among the Puranic sects, public temples are pivotal centres for worship. The temples are usually named after the main deity or deities within (e.g. Siva Subrahmanya Koval, Laxmi Narayan Mandir, Mariamma Kovil, Shree Vaithianatha Vishnu Kovil)[1] and people associate themselves with particular temples because of the deities. Since the range of deities varies,

[1] Outsiders generally refer to the temples by the locality, road or district in which they are situated.

devotees may make pilgrimages to several temples, some far from their own homes. (The outstanding illustration is the annual pilgrimage to the Mariamma temple at Isipingo near Durban every Easter).

South African Hindu may call themselves Saivists, Vaishnavas or Saktas but the distinction between them is not very clear, and images of deities of all groups are frequently enshrined in the same temple. Thus in one of the main temples in Durban, the main section is devoted to Vishnu, and in it are three recessed shrines with images of Vishnu, Rama and Sita, and Krishna respectively; then there are separate shrines for other deities—Durga representing the Sakti, Siva (with a carving of Nandi the Bull on the outside), and Subrahmanya. In October, 1956, when Krishna Asthmee was celebrated in a special "Gita Week", an epidemic of 'Asian Flu' was at its peak, and at the opening day, marked by prayers at the sea, special ceremonies were also dedicated to the Sakti, representing 'the Mother', for her protection. Hindu temple deities are never considered to be exclusive, but particular emphasis is generally given to one or other according to the occasion.

Public temples are generally more colourful and more substantial than domestic temples in private gardens, and are conspicuous through their distinctive architecture (domes and minarets) derived from memories and pictures of traditional Indian styles. Every Hindu temple is adorned by and enshrines images or pictures of the Hindu pantheon, human or animal. The main entrance should, and nearly always does, face east, and consists of a porch or verandah, on which especially in South Indian temples, there are generally *kavali* (guards), mythological sons or brothers in stone, of the specific deities within. The verandah leads into a hall known as *mandabalum* in South African Tamil, where the devotees stand to gaze at recessed shrines (*mulastanum*) dedicated to specific god-images. The floors are generally of cement, the walls of brick or stone, surmounted by domes or towers (*sigilum*, *gobra*) of different shapes elaborately carved on the outside. At the top of the dome, as its "crown", is the most important symbol, the *Kalsa*, a ritual urn, this time made of metals—brass and gold. The use of a *Kalsa* in wedding and funeral ceremonies has already been seen:

it is interpreted as 'symbol of life'. The images are generally imported from India, but the outside carvings are by local craftsmen, except for one Temple, the Second River Temple, for which sculptors were specially brought from Madras.

Sacred trees are generally cultivated in temple grounds and gardens of private homes to provide clean (i.e. pure) places where certain ceremonies may be performed. Hindi temples as well as private homes may be marked by *jhunda* (ritual flag sticks) and every temple yard has water where devotees should perform a symbolic ablution before entering.

When a temple is complete, it must be consecrated and once consecrated it should never be deliberately destroyed. To do so is desecration, inviting retribution. To illustrate this, informants point to the ill fated "Umbilo Road Temple" which stood on land requisitioned by the Municipal Council for industrial development. Despite protests and warnings from the trustees of the temple, the purchasers decided to demolish it. The result was a series of terrible accidents, details of which vary with informants, but a common version of the story is that the first person to raise the axe struck himself a violent and fatal blow; the second fell down dead with a heart attack; and after the walls were down, the area, which is low lying, was flooded, and a third intruder was drowned. Even then, the "domes" could not be destroyed and there they remain, mute witnesses of the power of god over man, and people still come there to pray and place garlands of bright marigolds on the ruins. The images had been carefully removed, to be reconsecrated in a new temple recently built. It was for the new temple that the sculptors from India were brought; unfortunately, their permits expired before their work was complete, and as the South African Nationalist government refused to renew them, the temple has not been finished and so cannot be used.

There is always someone in charge of a temple, but that person may be a semi-literate "caretaker", or a priest with considerable knowledge of sacred literature, and his duties range from the simple ritual of keeping the place clean and reading the almanac, to the performance of important public ceremonies. Few things are more fascinating than to watch the elaborate love which some of the priests shower on the images,

how they wash them, robe them, garland them with flowers, and treat them as having in them the spirit of divinity.[1] They prepare each article for the deity with minute care and there are moments of sacred triumph when in the name of Brahma they blow the conch and ring the bell in the empty temple. On holy days, devotees come with trays of fruit and milk and sweetmeats and incense, and the priest blesses the offerings, retaining a little for the temple gods, and returning the rest. To each devotee he usually gives, according to the festival, a small packet of holy ash, or a packet of *persadh* (holy food).

Where the temple priest is of the Brahmin caste, knows Sanskrit mantras, and practises Brahminic ritual (as in the Laxmi Narayan Temple), animal sacrifices are forbidden. Where the priest is of non-Brahmin caste but the deities include Brahminic deities, he will accept and require animal sacrifices for certain deities, but not for others. Thus in the Isipingo temple, animal sacrifice may not be made to Subrahmanya, but is considered appropriate for Mariamma. The deity, not the priest, determines the choice.

Public temples are built by contributions collected mainly from people in the area, though "anyone anywhere can be approached for a donation since anyone can worship there". In a few instances, the local Ratepayers Associations erected the temples and saw to their maintenance. The temple property is controlled by 'trustees' who are generally men of good reputation in the district; if other than local residents have contributed, the trustees may be selected from outside. For particular festivals, the trustees appoint 'temple committees', and since help in religious work is considered both to confer a privilege and bestow merit, there appear always to be people eager to perform the necessary tasks. A committee of women assists with temple collections of food and such ritual tasks as making of garlands for the festivals. Occasionally a temple or shrine is built by a private individual, or more correctly, a member of a family; and it may be donated for public use and maintained by the public or it may remain in private control though the public contributes offerings in cash and kind.

[1] This attitude is in accord with the stories told of many great devotees (*sadhus*) for whom the image became imbued with life.

No sharp distinction can be drawn between public and domestic temples (both are known as *mandir* in Hindi, *kovil* in Tamil), and the ceremonies performed in the public temples are all rooted in family life. Devotees of a particular deity, or of a particular temple, cannot be regarded as forming a congregation like members of a church. Ceremonies which are performed by some at public temples are performed by others in the home. In both cases the worshippers are groups of kinsmen who may make their devotions at any number of temples and through any number of deities.

CHAPTER XI

Hindu Religion (continued)

SOUTH AFRICAN HINDU scholars accept the view, common to all orthodox forms of Hindu thought, that life involves suffering, but they refute the allegation that Hinduism is necessarily a religion of inaction and negation; they quote from the Bhagavad Gita and the Smriti to show that, from ancient times, the concept of *dharma* (ethical action), has been opposed to complete withdrawal. Dharma has been defined by three main qualities—giving of alms and service, purity of behaviour, and moral self discipline. In the Gita, Krishna enjoins Arjuna to take part in the battle for right, even though it means killing his close kin on the other side. Again, the Smriti, which describes the traditional system of education through the four orders (*asramas*) prescribed for the 'twice born' castes, lays down that a person should accept the full social responsibilities of the householder before he enters the order of world-renunciation.

None of the recognised leaders of Hinduism in South Africa preach total renunciation; on the contrary they quote the example of the great men of modern India—Mahatma Gandhi, Aurobindo Ghose, Radhakrishan—to show that social responsibility is part of the religious outlook, and they also stress the wide range of welfare work carried out by various local religious associations.[1]

The most characteristic personal religious experience of orthodox Hindu in South Africa is the taking of a vow (*vrath* in Hindi, *vaaku* in Tamil). If a married woman fails to conceive; or if anyone is ill, unable to find employment, confronted with any misfortune or difficulty, the sufferer, either in person or

[1] e.g. the Arya Yuvuk Sabha, the Rama Krishna Centre, the Gujarati Hindu Mahila Mandir (Women's Section). The Hindu Maha Sabha states that among its objects is "the establishment of libraries, charitable and philantrophic institutions and schools, clinics, dispensaries, hospitals, and similar institutions".

through a representative, takes a vow that if the outcome be satisfactory, a devotion (*pooja*) will be made to a selected deity. The vow is a form of penance, similar in many ways to the penance of Catholics, but in theory it is more difficult for a Hindu to receive absolution. His god is within, not outside; few, if any, South African Hindu priests claim the authority of a Father Confessor, or god.[1] Orthodox Hindu believe that misfortune is usually the result of one's own doings (*karma*) which must if necessary be atoned for by further suffering. Confession and penance are not enough; there is always the element of uncertainty of absolution flowing from the belief in *Karma.* Each deed carries a load of potential guilt which must be expiated, but there is no guarantee that this expiation is adequate.

There need be no external witness to the vow, though sometimes a person ties a 'bangle', a cloth with a penny or piece of turmeric, round his or her wrist, and then leaves this near the house lamp till the vow is fulfilled. The fulfilment of a vow may be in one of several forms of offerings: fruits, flowers and sweetmeats given to a particular deity; among the Hindustani, the reading of a legend (*katha*) is frequently symbolised by the erection of a *jhunda* (flagpole); an image of the affected part of the body—eye, torso—in gold or silver may be given to a temple deity; an animal (fowl, cock or pig) may be sacrificed. During the vow a person may submit himself so entirely to the deity that he becomes identified with the deity, a condition expressed in the *murril* (trance) at one extreme and in *darshan* (divine ecstasy) at the other.

Selection of the deity to whom the vow is taken depends sometimes on the nature of the trouble (in specific illness Subrahmanya, Katteri and Mariamma are important; in building a home, Di and Hanuman; in examinations, Saraswati); sometimes on the associations of the particular family which attributes misfortune to neglect of deities (Brahminic and non-Brahminic) worshipped for generations past, and sometimes on the priest-cum-oracle who is consulted and who feels a special affinity for a particular deity.

Non-fulfilment of a vow is believed to lead to dire retribution,

[1] Theoretically, Brahmins by birth are "gods on earth", but in South Africa their power is regarded as limited.

and to account for many misfortunes.[1] Families will therefore do their utmost, often at heavy expense and great personal inconvenience, to meet their promise.

Much orthodox religion is conveyed to the people in allegory and drama. In any situation (moving to a new home, starting a business, celebrating the recovery from an illness, or an anniversary, etc.) Hindi speaking Hindu may hold a domestic or public reading of a legend (*katha*). There need be no overt link between the situation and the particular theme; the emphasis is on the general moral principle that 'truth should prevail over falsehood, and good over evil'. Man is usually portrayed as a being of conflicting emotions, and the paradox of human existence —the fulfilment of self through denial of self—is worked out in a series of dramatic episodes. The most intellectual Hindus tend to select the Katha Upanishad which relates how the King Vajasravas gives away all his property, and his son Nachiketa anxiously enquires: "Oh, father, to whom wilt thou give me?" This he repeats a second and a third time, until in rage his father answers: "To Death I will give thee." Then follows a long and philosophic discussion between Death and Nachiketa on the meaning of immortality and truth, in the course of which Death explains:

> When all desires cease which are cherished in his heart (the seat of intellect), then the mortal becomes immortal, then he obtains Brahma. When all the bonds of the heart are broken in this life, then the mortal becomes immortal.

Other intellectuals tend to select the Satyanarain Katha, which is one of the legends most frequently related in Durban.

In addition to the legends, public dramas (*natak*) based on the epics and lives of the saints are used both as entertainment and religious instruction. Some companies have performed the same plays for twenty years and attract hundreds of people each year. Among the more popular dramas are 'Sarwan Kumar', the virtuous son, and 'Krishna and Suddhama', the devoted friends. (See Appendix IV for descriptions of these productions.) The performances are in temple grounds or public halls or squares; the actors are traditionally men; and the words, often improvised, combine comedy with melodrama and subtle philosophy with bawdy comment.

[1] See next chapter.

Persistent in all ceremonies are the concepts of "uncleanness", "defilement" (*achooth, asutumar*) and the opposite "not unclean" i.e. "pure" (*chooth, sutumar*). Spiritual purity is associated with physical cleanliness. Home, shrine, hearth, images, persons and any objects may need to be made "pure". The ritual acts generally include the ritual bath, the sprinkling with special perfumed water, the anointing with unguents. The ingredients symbolise cleanness, fragrance, sweetness, goodness; the holy books provide the charter for selection.

Fire is used in *Homa* (the *Havan* or *Jagna*, i.e. sacred fire ritual), in lighted camphor blocks that 'burn brightly and leave nothing behind", in ash ('matter purified by flame') and in the light of the holy lamps. Honey and other 'sweet and pure' foods are consumed on most ritual occasions; banana leaves, palm leaves and clusters of fruit are used regularly for ritual decorations; rice and gay petals are 'blessings' showered on happy occasions in an atmosphere perfumed by incense and fragrant flowers; the coconut, which is described as 'hard and ugly outside but with purity and milk within', and the lime, 'which remains fresh and tasty', are conspicuous among offerings; and various pungent and powerful ingredients, including hot chillies, serve to dispel evil.

The frequency with which ritual acts of Puranic Hinduism are performed varies from family to family, but even in families which are unorthodox and Westernised, the underlying psychological ideas of purity (cleanness) and defilement appear to persist. When taking part in religious activities, a person must be ritually pure in himself, his food, his contacts and his attire. The physical body is a source of dirt or defilement[1]; birth, menstruation, sexual intercourse, death, excretion[2] are polluting in varying degrees, and contamination may be conveyed through touch, clothing or simply association, whereupon the individuals concerned, their homes and those in contact with them, require to be purified by stereotyped rites.

[1] The natural functions of the body are a great source of pollution, and this idea is at the bottom of the acseticism which is present in Hinduism (Srinivas, *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India*, p. 104).

[2] The Western style of bath and lavatory is being adopted in the homes of the modern generation of South African Hindus, but there are some who still consider them 'dirty', and who prefer to bath by pouring the water over the body and letting it flow away, and who will not sit on a lavatory seat.

Food and drink, the intake of substances from the outside world necessary to maintain physical existence, are regulated less directly by the physiological than by the religious viewpoint. Among the people recognised as 'highest', the choice of food should be determined by ritual, and not hedonistic, principles.[1] 'Flesh' is polluting, and in Durban it is not only practising Brahmins who are vegetarians (even to the extent of avoiding eggs), but other sections of the population also recognise vegetarianism as an ideal by abstaining from 'flesh' on days dedicated to Brahminic deities. There are, however, certain deities, mainly of non-Brahminic origin, or belonging particularly to the Sakti cult, who demand blood sacrifices of various kinds.

All groups of Indians know that, to the orthodox Hindu, beef and pork are ritually taboo, the cow because it is sacred and its 'five products' (milk, ghee, curds, urine and dung) purifying[2]; and the pig because it is a scavenger and hence 'dirty'. The taboo against beef is declining, partly because of Westernisation and partly for economic reasons, it being less expensive than mutton. The avoidance is observed to a lesser extent by Tamil than other Hindus. Most Indian butchers, including Moslems, do not sell beef (none of them sell pork), but in one area a Tamil, who will not allow beef in his own home, sells tinned beef in his shop because 'it is good for business' (he has many African customers); a Moslem butcher in the same area refuses to handle beef, raw or tinned, 'out of respect for Hinduism'. The nutritional value of mutton, fowl and fish is generally accepted, but poverty is one of the main factors limiting their consumption.

A person can be defiled by unclean contacts. The pure body must, for ceremonials, be arrayed in clean and often new and

[1] The orthodox Hindu's dietetic chart is still derived, according to my scholarly informants, from statements in the Vedas. They tell me that according to the Rigvedic hymns, the most essential human food is air; the second, water; the third, grain, vegetables and milk. The *Yajurveda* commands man not to kill, and the *Arthaveda* curses meat eaters.

[2] Milk, curds and ghee are used as offerings; dung is used to purify and sanctify a site as altar or shrine, and urine serves as holy for washing ritual objects. In the town of Durban, dung and urine are difficult to obtain and their use is falling away, though some people send specially to the nearest farms or stables to collect them.

special clothing, and golden jewellery is a suitable ornament. Leather is polluting, and shoes, belts, watchstraps, handbags, must be removed before entering any holy place, or touching ritual objects.[1] All association with possibly defiling things and people must be avoided for ritual to be effective. Not to do so may negate the purpose of the ritual and bring retribution. An interesting illustration of this occurred at a *Kavady* ceremony when one of the devotees during the process of being pierced with skewers in his back, began to wince with pain, and blood trickled from the wounds. It was discovered that during the preliminary ten-day period of imposed 'cleanness', he had eaten from plates in a house where beef was an accepted item of diet, and had also worn his sacred bangle (symbol of his vow to the deity) when he went to work.

No-one is immune from defilement, and because children are physically more vulnerable than adults, great precautions must be taken to protect them. Thus more rituals are devoted to children, and when they take part in general ceremonies, parents are strict in seeing that they observe the regulations of diet, clothing, physical contacts and ablutions.

> A Tamil child of about five 'who at that age should have known better', went to a neighbouring Moslem home in the 'Fast Month' of Purattasi, and on her return informed her parents that she had eaten a *samoosa* with meat; the child was harshly scolded, given a ritual bath, and made to scrub her tongue with the traditional toothbrush (a fragrant twig crushed at one end) before she was allowed to mix again with other members of the family.

Austerities, self-discipline and non-violence (described by a sophisticated Hindu friend as 'qualitative constituents of *dharma*') are manifest in religious ceremonies and in mundane routine. Thus the 'fast', the most regular ritual act, symbolises the control of physical appetite, and vegetarianism is a symbolic protest against the taking of life. The drinking of alcohol, obtainable

[1] There was nearly a fight at one ceremony because a band of youngsters came too near the sanctified ground where a man in a trance was dancing, and refused to take off their shoes.

Raising a ritual flag post
[Photo by Mickey Padayachee

by South African Indians under certain conditions,[1] is widely discouraged on religious and moral grounds. Brahmins in South Africa claim that it is against Brahminic Hinduism (though the *soma*, the sacred drink of ancient Vedic times, was praised in the hymns as a path to the gods), and it is generally agreed that strong drink weakens a man's self-control. For a well-bred Hindu woman to take alcohol in public invokes open criticism, no distinction being drawn between 'drinking' and drunkenness. Only 'lower Indian people' and Europeans, who are put in a different cultural category, can drink without being censured; and a drunkard in a good Hindu family is a terrible tribulation and tragedy.

Each major linguistic cultural group in South Africa has its own cycle of public ceremonies marked by its own astrological almanac (*panchang*). The timing of each ceremony is regulated by the remarkably accurate lunar and solar calendar developed in ancient India. The lunar calendar regulates public and private religious rites and festivals, and the solar year is correlated with the lunar cycle. Most almanacs in South Africa use the solar year, which is divided into twelve months in accordance with successive entrances of the sun into the twelve signs of the zodiac; the lunar year of twelve lunar months is named from the *nakshastras*—conspicuous stars and groups of stars lying more or less along the neighbourhood of the eclipse.

In the following sections we outline the main ceremonies punctuating the year for the Tamil and for the Hindi speaking sections. Because of the differences in modes of calculation, we have taken a particular year, 1957, and given the equivalent period in English.

On the whole, the South African Telugu celebrate the same ceremonies as the Tamil, and the Gujarati as the Hindi, but with their own selective emphasis. The Sakti cult appears to have many followers among Gujarati, one of their special female deities being Ambama. There is also one small group of Gujarati whose leader, a Thakor, is a Kali devotee and who takes

[1] There are a number of 'Indian Bars' which are well patronised by men (women are not admitted), the main drink being Cane Spirit. A restricted number of bottles of liquor are also obtainable by permit for home consumption.

A man in trance blessing people with holy ash
Photo by Mickey Padayachee

his followers to ceremonies of different sections including those at the Tamil Temples where they are always warmly welcomed and contribute *bhajan* and *kawali* (religious dance songs) and participate in the ritual.

The Tamil year begins with *Chitray massum* (*massum*, moon) (April 13th to May 13th, 1957) and is associated with the coming of spring. It is an auspicious month with many ceremonies performed by worshippers of Siva and Sakti. On the New Year day itself the house is purified and may be specially decorated with flowers; new clothes are bought and gifts exchanged within the family circle. Tamil business people usually draw up their balance sheets and close their books for the old year; it is also a good time to open a new business or new schools. On this day, too, people usually remember close relatives in their homes who have died, and sweetmeats and offerings are put before their photographs which are freshly garlanded. The oil lamp is lit in the home and prayers are said, and many people go to the temple with offerings.

On the day and night of the New Year, Siva is worshipped with prayers and vegetarian offerings. Some Tamil also make devotions to Subrahmanya (his mythological son) in the *Chitray Kavady*, by carrying special ritual burdens on their shoulders, and the more blessed may be possessed by the deity, in which state their bodies will be pierced with needles and yet will neither bleed nor suffer pain. Others will worship through Draupadi, sorely tried heroine of the Mahabharata, and some of her devotees will walk through a long pit of fire without any sign of being burned. While the time of these ceremonies is regulated by the Tamil lunar system and the seasons, there is also the annual ceremony at the Isipingo Temple scheduled for the Easter week-end, beginning on Good Friday and reaching its climax on Easter Monday.

Vaygasi (May 14th to June 14th) and *Ani* (June 15th to July 15th) are without general public ceremonies, but in certain districts and certain temples, more especially in rural and in peri-urban market-gardening areas, ceremonies are performed at the river for Gengema, one of the Seven Sisters, who represent the "Seven great rivers of India".

Adi or *Ardimassum* (July 16th to August 16th), which in

India marks the onslaught of summer, is still associated in South Africa with bad luck, epidemics and other dangers. South African Tamil Hindu will not marry, move house, undertake any new business or make any major purchase; and, as we saw in Chapter VIII, there is the fear that a child conceived in *Adi* will be a rogue, so a young wife is sent home to her parents, and in several homes husbands and wives sleep apart. The main deity to receive devotions is Mariamma, the mother goddess, to whom prayers, offerings and, by some, sacrifices, are made in the *Kulwutra* (Sour Porridge) ceremony. This month is associated with the various 'spot' diseases: measles, chickenpox, mumps, etc., and special ceremonies are carried out for the 'mother goddess', to whose visitations they are attributed. The more philosophical Tamil Saivist celebrates with prayers and hymn (*marai*) the great saint Manicavasakar who died in Ardimassu.

Avani (August 17th to September 16th), a month when marriages may again take place, is associated with the birth of Krishna (Krishna Jayanti) and special prayers are offered to him in many homes and temples. This is also a month when offerings are made in some homes to the Seven Sisters. Other families celebrate for Vinaiga, god of wisdom, with offerings of milk and sweet foods.

Purattasi (September 17th to October 16th) is a 'fasting month', widely observed by South African Tamil Hindu who, if devout, eat no meat or fish for the entire month, and keep special cooking utensils; some do not even use the ordinary stove but a special temporary hearth. On the last day the home is specially cleaned and sweetened with incense and other purificatory substances, and in the evening, after the family has bathed and dressed, all the members join in prayers and make offerings of fruit, milk, special cakes and white rice and other ritual (vegetarian) dishes. The special deities mentioned are Goinda (described as "one with Vishnu") and Perumulsami. Puratassi (compared by Catholic Indians to Lent) is a month of austerities. No marriages take place, and sexual relations are taboo. In extremely orthodox homes, if one of the women is menstruating on the main day, food is sent to her outside and she eats separately. In many Tamil vernacular schools,

prayers are recited to Sariswati, deity of education and the creative arts. Pathers who practise as goldsmiths make special prayers to Sariswati and purify their tools.

Aypasi (October 17th to November 15th) is a happy month, a month of marriages. It is also the month of Deepavali, the Festival of Lights, symbolising in varying myths the conquest of good over evil. At the same time a child born in this month (i.e. conceived in late Margashi) is considered unlucky and likely to be a rogue.

Karthigai (November 16th to December 15th) is more important than Deepavali to many Tamil who, in the ceremony of Kartegi Debum, place lighted lamps around the house and in the temples, and recite prayers and make offerings of fruits and sweetmeats to Siva, while priests read from the sacred books such as the Siva Agamas and the Puranas.

Margashi (December 16th to January 13th) has no traditional ceremony in South Africa, but Christmas is regarded as a general celebration. The last fortnight of Margashi is also associated with the winter solstice and marriages are avoided for that period.

In *Thai* (January 14th to February 11th), which is the beginning of the harvest season in India, marriages are encouraged, except for the period of *Thai pongal*, a three day 'harvest ceremony' on which, on the first day, there are prayers to Surya, the Sun, the second day is associated with the crops and cattle, and on the third day prayers and offerings are made to the dead. In urban areas in South Africa, very few families have cattle, and relatively few of those that have them paint and garland the cows, but there is general knowledge of the 'cow ceremony'. Thai is also associated with the carrying of *Thaipoosam kavady*, dedicated as the Chitray Kavady, to Subrahmanya and carried out in the same way.

Masi (12th February to March 13th) is not a good month for marriage, but it is permitted on certain days at certain hours. In it falls Sivarathree, the night of Siva, when in an all-night session Siva's powers and virtues are recounted through sacred tales and songs. According to the Arya Samaj section, it was on this night that their great leader, Swami Dayanand, gained enlightenment and for them too it is a night of prayer.

Panguni (March 14th to April 3rd) is also a month for marriages, and ceremonies to the Seven Sisters are performed in certain areas. It is the month of Panguni Uttaram.

The Hindi New Year begins approximately one moon before the Tamil. In 1957 the year began with *Chaitra* (16th March to 14th April). On New Year's day, which fell on the 1st April, there were special prayers and celebrations. New Year's day was preceded by the 'spring' festival of Holi (15th March), and followed by the very happy festival of Ram Naumee (birth of Rama—8th April). People make devotions in home and temple, and reading from the Ramayana is widespread. Marriages are popular. In fact, there is no month among the South African Hindi speaking in which marriages are actually prohibited. Before any specific event can, however, be celebrated, reference must be made to a reader of the Almanac, who will see which particular month, day and hour is auspicious for the particular person. During *Baisakh* (15th April to 13th May), a small section of Hindi celebrate the *Kali pooja*, though the majority wait until Navrathram. In 1957, April 30th was recorded as the annul eclipse of the sun visible in Asia, the Arctic and North America, and Hindu women in South Africa were also supposed, especially if pregnant, to observe it as a day of rest. The injunction was not as strict as on May the 13th, which was recorded as a total eclipse of the moon visible in South Africa, beginning at 10.45 p.m. and ending at 2.17 a.m. on the 14th.

Jestha (14th May to 12th June) and *Ashadh* (13th June to 11th July) are without any major celebrations. Domestic ceremonies are, however, generally regarded as propitious, and children born under the signs of Taurus (21st April to 22nd May), and Gemeni (23rd May to June 21st) are generally considered lucky. The 22nd of June to the 22nd July is, however, a more difficult period, and no new venture should be undertaken. This period coincides partly with the Tamil month of Adi, which is generally regarded as a bad month.

Shravan (12th July to 10th August) is partly governed by Leo, and is a month which is considered good for business and professions, but still not propitious for any new ventures. On the last day of Shravan, orthodox Hindustani celebrate Raksha-

bandhan with readings from the Mahabharata, and some people go on a vegetarian diet and tie a sacred thread round their wrists as a sign of devotions to be made to Shri Krishna ten days later in the month of Bhadrapad.

In the month of *Bhadrapad* (11th August to 9th September) Krishna Ashtmee, the birth of Krishna, is widely celebrated by devotions in the home and services in the temple. Episodes from the life of Krishna are read, and special foods are cooked for the celebration. In Hindi vernacular schools the children are often brought back for a special night celebration and the singing of holy songs, after which they receive small bundles of sweetmeats.

In *Ashivin* (10th September to 8th October) falls Pitra Paksha (the ancestor ceremony), when South African Hindi mourn their dead kinsfolk for two weeks, and offerings of cooked vegetables, fruits and sweetmeats are left on a specially "purified" place, usually outside each house. The offerings are to the man's parents or other of his close kin (a younger brother or even a sister); a woman after marriage cannot do Pitra Paksha for any of her blood relatives. A Brahmin is usually invited on the last day to say special prayers, in return for which he receives a material reward. After the prayers the family partakes of a special dinner.

Pitra Paksha is followed by the ceremony of Navrathree (Nine nights), and is devoted to the worship of Sakti in various forms, e.g. as Kali or Durga. Sweetmeats, fruits and other special foods are divided into seven lots, and offered to the goddess of the home on a purified site. Before she is propitiated, a ceremony is often first performed to Di 'the guardian', 'brother', the 'housegod'. Navrathree is a particularly important period for both orthodox and reformed Hindi, extending for nine nights and ten days. On the last day there is often a local ceremony —(described as a *panchayat pooja*)—organised by women of an area.

Kartik (9th October to 7th November) is also marked by several important ceremonies, of which the most important is Diwali (22nd October, 1957). This, as we shall see, is one of the most widely celebrated festivals among all South African Indians and is a particularly happy ceremony among the Hindi.

The night of Diwali must be completely moonless, the new moon emerging the following night, and the lights of the little lamps, which every Hindi woman places both inside and outside her house, shine clearly in the darkness. In 1957, the day following Diwali was recorded as a total eclipse of the sun, visible in South Africa as a partial eclipse at sunrise, and the last day of Kartik was marked by the total eclipse of the moon, visible in Asia and recorded in the almanac used in South Africa.

In *Margarshirsh* (8th November to 7th December) and *Paush* (8th December to 16th January), there are no public traditional ceremonies, but Christmas and New Year are widely celebrated as happy festivals in Hindi homes.

Towards the end of Paush falls *Makar Sankranti*, celebrated by a small section with readings from various holy books. This coincides with the month in which the Tamil commemorate their dead, and special prayers are said to Siva; but the main devotions to Siva by Hindi as well as Tamil are made in *Falgun* (15th February to 12th March) in which falls *Sivarathree*, the night of Siva, devoted to recounting his powers as symbols of good.

No Hindu priest urges people to attend his temple, and there is no congregation that exercises pressure on families to observe the festivals. The result is considerable variation even within an area occupied by people of the same linguistic and cultural section.

The main traditional ceremony celebrated by all South African Hindu, and the only Hindu holiday which is recognised as a public holiday in Indian schools by the Education Department, is Deepavali (in Tamil), Diwali (in Hindi). Yet even this is celebrated differently by various Hindu sections and individuals.

In most Hindi homes a lamp is lit first for Lakshmi, goddess of light and prosperity, then, in the orthodox homes, Havan is performed followed by the lighting of the little clay lamps which are placed in all rooms and along the path to the entrance. Friends bring each other gifts of sweetmeats, tasty and rich with ghee, and the parents try to give their children new clothes for the occasion, and brothers give sisters and their children presents. Members of the family visit in the day time, but in the evening once the lamps are lit, they must stay in their

own homes. The evening meal is elaborate and vegetarian. After it, there are generally displays of fireworks. The festival is carried out with much joy by most families, though some simply celebrate with a better meal than usual. (Should there be a death within the immediate family, or even in a neighbour's family, some people will not light lamps that year, as a sign of sympathy; but others, "not sociable", carry on irrespective of other peoples' bereavement.) Diwali cards of good wishes, with pictures ranging from beautiful reprints with religious subjects to gaudy photographs of film stars, are on sale, and are sent by some families to less intimate relations (especially members of a daughter-in-law's family) and friends.

The Tamil celebrate Deepavali more simply; many do not light the lamps, nor is there the same importance attached to the giving of gifts though it is usual to have new clothes. A Deepavali custom unique to the Tamil is that, on the morning of Deepavali, every member after having a ritual bath rubs three different oils into his/her head, and the mother blows a little oil into the ears of each person in the home. This is explained by some as commemorating the discovery of oil on that day, and by others as simply an act of purification, a similar rite being performed at the end of mourning for a close kinsman.

The South African Gujarati Hindu celebration of Deepavali is closer to that of the Hindi than of the Tamil, but for them the emphasis in on Lakshmi, described crudely as the "Banya's god". Business houses close their books for Diwali and Gujarati (and some Hindi) start their business New Year (*Naya Yarsh*) on the following day, unless, as occurred in 1957, it was an 'eclipse day' on which no auspicious event may take place, and the 'New Year', instead of falling on Wednesday the 23rd October, was counted from Thursday, the 24th.

Deepavali is also given various interpretations of which the main Hindi and Tamil versions are as follows:

(i) It commemorates the return of Rama after he had killed Ravana, King of Lanka (Ceylon), and fetched back his wife Sita. Therefore the Hindi speaking consider it a happy holiday. Many Tamil, however, say that it should not be regarded by them as a joyful celebration since, whereas the northerners regard Ravana as an evil king, they as southerners claim that he was their king and a good king who, though he took Sita to his kingdom, did not violate her honour. There are even some Tamil families who pray for the dead on that day, though others say that is wrong and, if done, must be before noon when *Amavasya* (the day of dark moon) begins. Amavasya is always regarded by Tamil as a period of danger; any children born at that time will 'turn out bad', probably be delinquents and bring bad luck.

(ii) Deepavali celebrates the return of a good man (Rama) after fourteen years of exile. (In these versions Rama stopped first at the south and the next day reached the north, hence the Tamil celebrate Deepavali a day before the Hindi.)

(iii) (*a*) It commemorates Narkasuram, a good king who took belongings from the rich to give to the poor. The rich by falsehood sought and obtained the assistance of Krishna who sent an arrow through Narkasuram, but before he died, he explained to Krishna the purpose of his actions. As a reward, one day each year is set aside in his honour—that is Deepavali. (Tamil informants.)

(*b*) Narkasuran is one with Harina Kus, a bad king. Once when he had built an oven for firing pots, a mother and her three children were enclosed in it. The mother of the woman pleaded for their release, but he refused. Through the help of Rama they were released and Narkasuran himself was killed in a miraculous fashion. (Hindi version.)

(iv) The more philosophical Tamil and Hindi scholars interpret the ceremony symbolically, as representing the conquest of goodness over evil, of light over darkness.

Within the same linguistic cultural group, there are also marked differences in the methods of celebrating the same occasions. This is most apparent among the Saivists, whose more

philosophic adherents (e.g. Saiva Siddhanta) are extremely critical of the ritualistic worshippers. A leading Siddhantist said contemptuously "Some of our people do all prayers—even to the devil." The range of differences need not be based on any explicit philosophical formulation; it may reflect personal and temperamental variations (which can be given a fuller expression in Hinduism than in more dogmatic religions). In Appendix V we illustrate the contrast in celebrating the *kulwutra* in two Tamil families of much the same educational, economic and social levels.

Two of my pandit informants stated that there is a Tantric element among the South African Hindu rooted in the Agamas. Its nature is twofold—White and Black; the White is represented by such *Sakti* as Parvati and Saraswati, the Black by Durga and Kali. The White are serene and calm, the Black are fierce. Behind this division is a definite philosophy—in everything there are the forces of preservation, destruction and creation, of male and female, good and evil. In Tantric worship, the fierce deities are selected—they both destroy the weakness within the self and recreate the self.

People frequently refer their particular way of observing certain rituals to a family tradition and they may if necessary adapt the details to local conditions and changes in outlook. Thus one family celebrated a *Devi pooja* to Kali with the slaughter of a goat (as a major rite) from the time they left India, until they moved, after twenty-five years in a rural area in Natal, to Durban. In the town they found it difficult to get a goat, and for several years abandoned the ceremony altogether. Then one of the children fell seriously ill, and the illness was diagnosed by a *poojari* (temple priest) to have resulted from the omission of the *Devi pooja*, whereupon a nutmeg was substituted for the goat and used together with all the other ritual substances including camphor, *dhar*, *halwa*, *roti* and cloves, and the recital of prayers. The *Devi pooja* is performed by some families annually, by others every three years; others say they have never done it and will not start. Some perform it with *Havan* (fire ritual) and after it is over distribute *Chana Amrith* (a special sweet mixture). Sometimes there are seven sets of offerings and the performer invites other married women and gives ritually

some of the special foods to each and this must be eaten by the recipient with her own children, and not, as is more usual, be shared with others. Similarly in the worship of Di, god of the home, some families slaughter a pig, while others take a pumpkin and other offerings to the temple, and yet others read a *katha* and perform the *Havan*, while some do nothing at all.

There is a definite trend towards abandoning non-Sanskritic village rites involving animal sacrifice, and substituting other rituals, or no rituals. The performance of rituals without understanding their meaning is being criticised not only by intellectuals, but by many of the lay people. Illustrating "the stupidity of people", a Tamil woman with Standard II education in English told us: "A man while praying noticed his cat drinking the milk left for prayer. He immediately tied the cat to a post and resumed his prayers. His son saw the cat, and thought it part of the ritual. After his father's death he had to perform the prayers, and so he brought a cat, tied it to a post and prayed to it. This was carried on from generation to generation; if necessary, the family bought a cat for the occasion. Likewise, we don't know what really happened before a ceremony was handed down."

The persistence of Hinduism in South Africa stems partly from the local milieu itself, in which Indians are discriminated against and excluded from many of the privileges of the dominant Whites. Religion is one field in which there has been no positive interference by Whites and Hinduism provides its adherents with an identity and a security denied them in other spheres. In their religion they are not only free but equal, and not only equal but can claim superiority. Philosophic Hindus claim as their heritage and the heritage of all men, the most ancient religious writings, the Vedas; the less philosophic claim identity with the gods themselves through the 'trance', described in the following chapter. In both cases Hinduism contradicts the values of the group from which they are excluded, affirming a sanction higher than man, a power beyond any government.

Christianity and Mahommedanism are possible alternatives for Hindus in South Africa. But in South Africa Christianity, as interpreted by state sanctioned churches, cannot provide

Indians with the sense of acceptance and belonging to the society as a whole. For some however, the church becomes an escape from their own identity: young people anxious to marry across a traditional barrier may be accepted by a church; people low in the social scale with ambitions to move upwards and outwards find a pathway of equality through Christianity; the sick who have lost faith in their own gods, may turn to others, and if healed, become converted.

There is less inducement for South African Hindus to adopt Mahommedanism. The rigidity of the Moslem doctrine expressed in the Koran is coupled with membership of an egalitarian society; but the "egalitarian society"—the brotherhood—is limited to the Moslem group and conversion to it would involve loss of security through established membership in the larger Hindu group, and no greater acceptance in South Africa's multi-racial society.

Hinduism has reacted to the South African situation by breaking through its caste restrictions and extending its ethical implications. The paradox of classical Hinduism—a tolerant, eclectic dogma coupled with an exclusive and divisive social system—is being resolved in South Africa by becoming socially as well as dogmatically inclusive. Sociologically the outstanding function of ritual is the development of solidarity at specific levels—the level of the family, the village, the tribe, the nation as a whole. In South Africa, the main rituals promote the unity of the family, the local areas, the various sects and, to a more limited extent, the unity of all Hindus.

CHAPTER XII

Sectional Ceremonies—and Trance

ASSOCIATED WITH HINDU RELIGION in South Africa are sectional ceremonies or cults in which a certain number of devotees become identified with a central deity. This identification is psychological and physical, and is known as *murril* in Tamil and *deota* in Hindi; it is translated into English as "the trance", or "god-possession". In this condition, a person possesses powers beyond those attributed to an ordinary mortal: he or she may dance on nailed shoes without pain or have skewers pierced through the flesh without bleeding, or walk through fire without being burnt, or carry unusual and heavy burdens without weariness; the possessed may also act as oracles and healers.

The trance is evaluated as "good" or "bad" according to the nature of the possessing deity and if "good" it is encouraged within certain limits and if "bad", it is itself treated as a disease that must be "driven out". The trance may follow from a vow taken by a sufferer from illness or misfortune, but while the vow is a devotion of all Hindus, the trance is desired by relatively few and attained by even fewer. As a religious experience it is, as we shall see, rated differently by various groups of South African Indians.

The main cult ceremonies in which the trance is a central feature are "*kavady*"[1] in honour of Subrahmanya, "firewalking" for Draupadi, *garo gum* for the 'Seven Sisters'[2] and "offerings and sacrifice" for Mariamma. We have also witnessed ceremonies

[1] The word *kavady* is applied specifically to special wooden frames carried on the shoulder by devotees but *kavady* carriers also take other burdens, e.g. urns of milk, needles, limes, coconuts and various sharp pointed instruments. For a detailed description of *kavady* see my article in African Studies, September 1959.

[2] *Garo gum* are special ritual brass urns used to represent divinity. They are entwined with special raw cotton and decorated on the outside; they are filled with milk, water and other sacred liquids, and the mouth is closed with mango leaves, coconut, and various symbols. The Seven Sisters are various female deities identified with the Sakti (female principle).

in which the trance, expressed in several forms, was encouraged at small temples devoted to the *Sakti* (Kali, Durga, Gengema, Dundamari, Angaalisperi), and to several male deities including Hanuman, Perumalsami and Madurai Veeran.

The organisation of the ceremony is in the hands of a temple committee which deals with finances, catering, preparation of ritual ingredients, publicity and employment of musicians and priests. The priests for these occasions are not Brahmins, but men described as *poojari* (Hindi) or *poosali* (Tamil), who are versed in those portions of the Puranas or Agamas related to the particular deity and experienced in the rituals.

Each ceremony is sanctioned by a rich mythology known to a few, but by no means all, the participants. There are often many versions of a myth, and the essential theme is the battle between the good deity and the wicked demons (*asuras* or *rakshas*) in which good eventually overcomes evil. The use of drama as a technique of teaching this moral has already been mentioned. An essential preliminary to every firewalking ceremony is a play described as "Six Foot Dance" or "Tarpole Dance" in which episodes from the Mahabharata revealing the virtues of Draupadi, virgin wife of the five Pandava brothers, and the battle between the Pandavas and Kauravas (their cousins) is acted on the first night in the temple yards.

The devotees in whom the god may manifest itself are sufferers from illness and misfortune most of whom have taken a vow, or had a vow taken on their behalf, to participate in a cult ceremony for a definite period of time—one year, three years, five years (an uneven number) or "for life" (*janmo*).

The following cases illustrate the reasons for taking part in cult ceremonies:

1. A little girl, Logi, fell from a tree and broke her leg. She was taken to hospital but her parents vowed that if she were cured she would carry *kavady* for three years.
2. A woman who had been married for seven years and had been under the care of a Health Centre for four years, took the vow that if she became pregnant she would carry *kavady* for five years. That year she found herself pregnant and has been carrying kavady for three years.

She does not get the trance, "but if it comes," she says, "I must accept it."

3. From childhood Nadas suffered from fits and his parents thought he had a "bad spirit". They took him to doctors, oracles, temples—"always paying, always in debt, but still there was no improvement." At twenty-four his parents got him married, but his attacks continued. Two years later he met a friend who asked him to go collecting and giving out invitations for *kavady*. He agreed but while on his mission he had an attack. His friend there and then burnt a camphor and vowed that if Nadas got better, he, Nadas, would take *kavady* for three years, but if not then he, the friend, would never again do anything for *kavady*. That year the fits ended. The following year Nadas took eighty needles in his body.
4. Sara's first boy after three girls nearly died at the age of two, so Sara's brother made a vow that if the child got better, he would walk through the fire. The child recovered, and Sara herself is carrying out the vow until the boy is old enough to do so himself.
5. When Govender, was "a boy" he took ill and his mother vowed that if he recovered he would walk through the fire; he was quite well after a couple of years, his mother forgot about the vow, and he fell ill again. He was married by then and his wife had to fulfil the vow for him. As soon as he recovered he "took over", and has been walking through the fire for sixteen years. He is now forty-eight years old.

These few cases, selected at random, also indicate that a vow can be both taken and fulfilled by either the invalid or someone closely attached by blood or marriage. The person is not as important as the promise.

An established cult opens with a 'flag hoisting' (*kodiatroom*) at the temple. The flag, distinguished for each deity by its colour and emblem, is tied to a pole which has been ritually anointed with sacred unguents. The ceremony is witnessed by members of the public, as well as the devotees, who bring offerings

and receive blessings from the priest. When the flag is up, and the sun has set, the musicians play traditional instruments—bells, small drums (*woodika*), conches and trumpets (*nagasoorum*)—the onlookers sing the praises of the deity, and the priest chants his prayers.

He then prepares the devotees in a ritual known as *kaapu katoorangu* (bangle tying). Round the wrist of each, he binds a bangle of *dharbar* grass or yellow string to signify that they are all under a vow to observe certain austerities. Once the bangles are tied, devotees are encouraged to get the trance, but since they have not yet undergone sufficient purification, they are not yet considered "pure" or "clean" enough to be able to "take" the hooks, needles or other mortifications of the flesh. They may however, go among the crowd bestowing blessings and marking the foreheads of other worshippers with holy ash.

The priest decides when the first night's activities should end, and may use various ritual techniques to remove the trance from those who still appear to be absorbed by it. All present are then served with sacred food (*persadh*) provided by the temple committee.

For the following thirteen to eighteen days, depending on the cult[1] devotees must lead 'clean' lives. The period is generally described as "fasting" for the devotees may eat only one cooked meal a day—and that vegetarian. If the temple is near enough, they break their fast there in the evening, otherwise their food is cooked for them in special pots at home; they may not eat out. They are also not allowed to mix indiscriminately with people, have sexual intercourse, or risk pollution through other contacts. In the evenings there are prayers, and people come to bring offerings. Any devotee who wishes may sleep in the temple "in the presence of god".

The day before the climax of the ceremony, images of the deity are taken round the area of each temple in special chariots or pagodas (*ther*)—wooden carts of many shapes and sizes brightly decorated with paintings, and adorned for the occasion. In front of the image are laid offerings, and a light lit from a lamp which burns in the temple throughout the ceremony. The

[1] Thus *kavady* extends over 13 days, and firewalking, based on the 18 day battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, lasts 18 days.

chariots are drawn by ardent supporters (not the devotees on this occasion) or are driven round on lorries, and all along the route people make offerings of fruit, camphor, and money, and in turn receive blessings.

On the morning of the main day, each devotee arrives at the temple accompanied by a few people, and the small group, composed mainly of relatives, is the conspicuous devotional unit. It includes someone who knows the routine, hymns and expectations of the particular candidate.

After suitable devotions, the priest, devotees, and assistants walk barefoot to the nearest river. The devotees go through a ritual bath, and on the bank the various utensils that will be required are purified with stereotyped ingredients; any error may cause a personal disaster instead of alleviating it. The assistants who do the work usually bind cloths over their mouths and noses to prevent spittle and breath from polluting the sacred objects.

The priest performs the fire ritual and/or, according to the cult, other rites of purification, and then gives the signal to the devotees to take up their burdens. He tells the musicians to strike up, and the sudden burst of sound has an immediate and startling effect. The following extract, written up from my notes of March, 1954, is typical of many cult trances at the river.

> 12.10 p.m. There is a loud blare from trumpets, conches and rattles. Almost at once Mrs. T. M. begins to sway. Her husband unbraids her hair. She sticks out her tongue and seems to bite hard on it. Her eyes are closed. Her face expressionless. Another man (husband's friend) chants from book. Her husband inserts long gold needle through her tongue. I look away. Young man, about 20, next to her stiffens up. Then jumps up and down. His father sprinkles him with ash. He sticks out his arms as though blind. A friend, also young, with book, takes his hand but he shakes loose. Mrs. T. M. dances past, eyes open now, unblinking. In addition to tongue needles, she has three needles in her forehead. She is carrying a brass tray with ash and lighted camphor. People press near and she blesses them.
>
> Mr. V. (bus driver) in yellow *dhoti* shakes his body

and beats his chest. He breathes peculiarly, panting. (He is an asthmatic.) His eyes turn. His older brother sings vigorously, without a book. His oldest son—schoolboy—looks on with strained expression. V. throws back his head and stands dead still. Silver fish hooks are dug into his bare chest . . . When I look again there are also limes and coconuts pinned into him.

Lutchmi (16 years old) moved forward. Stuck into a lime is a very ornate needle with green and white stones in fanshaped top end. Her father holds her face tenderly and asks if she wants the needle. She nods and sticks out her tongue. He drops on a little ash. Saliva drips from her mouth. Her eyes are wide open. He pierces the tongue . . . Within half an hour more than ten people (it is hard to count with all the crowd, noise and movement) are in trance.

The trance at the river is nearly always accompanied by the insertion of skewers, needles, hooks and other instruments, each devotee indicating if—and when—he or she is ready for what was described by one of the leading exponents as "the sublime act of dedication". The possessed stand quite still while the needles etcetera are inserted; it is accepted that during the trance no one winces, or resists, or shows any signs of pain. Only occasionally an attendant will hold the hands of a devotee during the actual operation. No blood should flow from the wounds. Some candidates stand by expectantly, waiting for someone who already has the trance to approach and 'pass it on', and kinsmen-cum-assistants pray on their behalf. The possessed walk or dance rhythmically through the crowd with containers of ash and onlookers bow their heads and supplicate benediction. No words are spoken, but over and above the sound of pipes, conches and drums comes the singing of prayers and hymns; the atmosphere is highly charged with religious fervour.

At a set time the procession returns to the temple, stopping every now and then for attendants to pour rose water on the tongues, and turmeric water at the feet, of the devotees, and to light camphor on the road. Chariots are dragged by men with chains hooked into the flesh of their backs. The people from the neighbourhood again bring offerings and sing hymns, and a

large crowd assembles in the temple yard. As the procession approaches, the noise and excitement become intense. Devotees circle the temple and light camphor at the corners and at the entrance. Those in the trance bless the public with ash or milk or other holy substance. If the possessed are to prove themselves in fire, the pit is ready waiting and they walk through, slowly. there is always one devotee, who takes the lead, and he (it seems always to be a man) and the men who drag the chariots, receive special recognition.

Within the temple, the priest removes the hooks and other decorations, and the assistants rub ash and sprinkle rose water on the bodies of the devotees. On coming out of the trance, they prostrate themselves before the deity, before whose image they leave their bangles, garlands and other special insignia. At the end of the day food is again served in the temple, and the devotees eat for the first time after a period of approximately twenty-four hours.

From the main day until the flag is taken down two or three days later there are minor ceremonies and on at least one night some of the devotees are again expected to get a trance. On this final occasion the deity may, through a leading devotee, pass judgment on the conduct of any particular participant or diagnose the cause of any ill effects. The devotees should have no scars or open wounds, and should be feeling calm and at peace. After prayers and a final ritual meal in the temple, the taboos that temporarily governed their behaviour are lifted and they return to their normal routine.

The emotional quality of the trance varies with the possessing deity. Sometimes the possessed appear serene, but more usually, especially in the Sakti cults, they exhibit a fierceness and aggression condemned in normal life. The priests justify this by reference to the complex nature of the deities as evident in mythology, and the need to overcome evil by strong measures. Worship of the fierce aspect of the Sakti is explained by the belief that in this way she destroys the evil in the self and regenerates the self. With few exceptions the lack of restraint is more marked among the people with little western or Sanskritic education;

perhaps among them the trance acts psychologically as a safety valve for feelings of insecurity and frustration.

A person may be possessed by more than one deity, each being active on different cult occasions. Nor is there any restriction on the age or sex of the possessed. People are particularly impressed if a child has a trance because "a child knows nothing and therefore only speaks what the spirit tells". Male deities may possess females, and female deities, males; behaviour will vary with the desires of the deity (as interpreted), and the sex of the participants. In the Sakti cults (where men are as numerous as women), men in trance may don saris and imitate feminine movements; no women may dress as men, and the suggestion that this might be done met with apparent astonishment and was regarded as almost obscene. From discussions with a group of health educators it seemed that it was quite all right for a man to dress like a woman since it involved no immodest exposure, but no South African Hindu woman could, even as a god, put on a *dhoti* and uncover her body. Yet the god 'must be free', and as soon as a woman gets the trance, her hair is unplaited and any tight garment or pin is unloosed.

The activities of the main day place a heavy physical strain on the devotees, who in addition to the central ordeal, often eat nothing till evening, have eaten very little for the preceding "fast" days, and have to walk to and from the river carrying heavy burdens. Yet when the day is over, they show no signs of unusual exhaustion and many have stated that on the contrary, they felt wonderfully refreshed and relaxed. During the actual trance they state that they are completely unaware of their surroundings. "I see blue. I don't see people or things." "I hear nothing and know nothing." "I take eighty needles and don't feel a thing." "I am surprised and sometimes ashamed to learn later how I danced about."

Yet to the onlooker the possessed appear conscious of what is happening, though unconscious of pain. They do not bump into other people (only occasionally someone runs amok and must be caught and held by those in attendance), and they appear to go deliberately to those devotees who are hoping to get the trance from them, and if their efforts fail, they shake

their heads or drop their hands in gestures of mingled pity and despair.

The following brief medical report was made by Dr Maureen Dale of the University of Natal, who attended a *kavady* ceremony in 1954:

> "During the ceremony, it was observed that there was no bleeding from any of the puncture wounds. This was particularly noteworthy in the case of the man who was pulling the cart with large hooks piercing the skin of the lumbar region of the back. The introduction of the hooks into the skin and the piercing of the tongue with thin metal stakes did not appear to be painful in any of the five or six individuals observed.
>
> "Two participants were examined again within five to six days of the ceremony. One individual had had three metal stakes driven through his tongue and had also had numerous hooks with limes hanging from them driven through the skin of his chest, back and upper arms. The puncture wounds in the skin were visible but showed no sign of inflammatory reaction and appeared to be healing. There were no puncture wounds detectable on cursory examination of the tongue. The second individual was the man who had drawn the cart by means of large hooks through the skin in the lumbar region of the back. The cart had been pulled for some distance over uneven ground and its jolting had exerted an uneven drag and frequent jerking on the hooks through the skin. On examination of this skin, only the healing puncture wounds were seen—there was no reaction round the wounds and no oedema or bruising of the tissue in the area."

The trance obviously does not give equal power to all nor the same immunities. Some devotees can take many needles, others only a few. "The god asks for as many needles as he requires. The person does not say how many. It is the will of the god alone." The immunity to injury is limited and specific, and there was no criticism of a man who walked across white hot logs without mishap but burnt his arm accidentally brushing against a lighted camphor on a tray.

In theory, devotions and purity are essential preliminary

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qualifications for the trance, but occasionally there are open violations. Thus a firewalker who arrived drunk at the temple boasted that though he had broken his vow of purity he would still walk through the flames in safety; and he did. Others present, however, said that he would undoubtedly suffer for this sin in the future and cited cases of people whose wounds festered or who took ill through similar dishonourable actions or through negligence. In 1954 when a *kavady* carrier collapsed after the climax, the deity announced through a devotee in the ceremony on the final day, that it was because he had gone visiting 'a dirty home' with his "bangle and one of his needles" in his pocket.

The relationship between a suppliant and the deity is extremely complex. In some cases there is fear and awe, in others intimacy and affection and sometimes there is anger and reproachfulness. On one occasion, the leading devotee got ill, and the temple oracle (*poosali*) diagnosed that he had been deliberately "tricked" by people hostile to the ceremony itself, and so the *poosali* called him and his wife into the temple and gave them sacred ash and chanted special curative mantras. The patient's mother, who was also present, exclaimed in anger: "If my son is to be punished in this way when carrying out God's work, I will not let him perform again." There was no effort to detect the alleged "tricksters" or to punish them in any way. On another occasion, a woman whose only child suffered from convulsions, despite frequent offerings to a mother god, said in desperation to the *poosali* in a trance: "If you want this child to be yours, then take her now and don't let her suffer, but if you mean her to be mine, I will make this offering to you regularly." The deity may also criticise a family through the trance, as in the case of a *poosali* who indicated that the quality of the needle provided for a particular devotee was not satisfactory and that next time the family should buy another and better needle.

The state of trance may last a short time or several hours, and either "goes off" on its own or else is "called off" by the priest. Observant assistants are aware when it is about to leave by the movements and changes in facial expression of the possessed, and if it is time for it to depart, they remove the instruments and rub on ash and rose water, but if it is "too early" they will do their utmost to prolong it by chanting and other devices, and devotees still in trance may be brought along to try and re-induce it by contact. In public ceremonies the trance should last from the time it comes on at the river till the instruments are removed inside the temple.

If the spirit departs prematurely, the reason must be sought. Occasionally the deity has been blamed, most often the fault is attributed to an erring devotee and atonement is required. Once the spirit has left, the process of extraction of any instruments embedded in the flesh is recognised as painful, and I am told that copious bleeding may take place. The trance gives prestige and power only when the person has the immunity to pain; when that has gone, the devotees are treated as ordinary members of society and reacted to in terms of other situations and character traits.

The trance in cult ceremonies is regarded as both a stereotyped devotion and an active demonstration of religious faith. By reaching out for help from, and identification with, the deity, mortal limitations and frustrations have been temporarily cast off. Individual weakness and guilt have been acknowledged and penance has been performed.

People quite often "blame an illness on the gods" and say they "fight with the gods", but the real guilt is admitted to be within the self. As a carrier of *kavady* explained: "People take *kavady* because it is a good action and helps them balance their accounts." The connection between it and illness lies in the fact that illness is a sin and it is to make up for the sin, not to ward off the illness, that people take the vow.

While some people get the trance in the course of fulfilling a vow, others get it direct from an illness and these are more frequently the people who will later become professional oracles or soothsayers, or healers, sometimes called *guri* or *mandragarin* in Tamil and *wojah* in Hindi. The symptoms of direct possession are various and vague: giddiness, or sudden lapses of memory, or peculiar mental symptoms without specific physical ailments,

or meaningless sounds instead of speech, or constant nightmares, or strange dreams, or self inflicted discomforts such as sleeping on the bare floor, or refusing food. "Those about to get the trance become very disinterested in life"; "they just go off in the middle of talking or eating"; "they are different".

The spirit must then be induced to express itself, to say who it is and what it wants. The diagnosis can only be made by one who is already a *poosali* who uses various means (such as beating of drums, reciting mantras, smearing with ash) to establish communication. It may take several visits but the spirit "must come out" or it is feared that the person will go mad and even die. The *poosali* will eventually announce who "got into" or "hit" the victim, or "sits on his head" and at a later stage he may confirm this for himself saying: "I am so-and-so". Sometimes he does not speak in words, but by gestures that only the *poosali* can interpret. If the spirit is considered acceptable, the devotee will take a vow to join an established cult or to begin a new one; if not acceptable, it must be beaten out from the body with special ropes kept by many *poosali* for that purpose or it may be "bound", to make it harmless or it may be exorcised in some other way.

To become a recognised oracle no training other than the trance is needed, but some state that this should culminate in 'taking the test of the tongue needle (*nahahur*)'—usually a golden skewer about 3 inches long pierced vertically through the middle of the tongue. This test is only required once and does not appear to have been required in all cases. When the spirit speaks for the first time, it is usual for the mother or other close relative to ask through the instructing *poosali* for it to come only for special occasions and in emergencies—a restriction known as *kathu podarangu* (bond putting). The usual reason given for this is that the restrictions on behaviour required by the deity interfere too much with ordinary domestic activities.

Generally, a person who is able, and prepared, to induce the trance when required is recognised as a family asset. There have even been cases of young girls whose marriages were delayed because their relatives did not want to be without somebody with the spirit to act as diagnostician and healer of family mis-

fortunes.[1] While it is an asset to have a person with a spirit in family, it is also a responsibility. Bad or casual treatment of such a person is dangerous. Moreover a girl is not considered a desirable wife or daughter-in-law while the spirit is very active in case it disturbs the husband's home. Knowing this, her own family either waits for the spirit to tire, or may "bind it" or exorcise it in the same way as if it were an undesirable spirit. This, however, is considered risky, and rarely attempted.

Superficially it would appear that the trance is essentially an individual physiological or psychological condition, but case histories indicated that there were families which for generations had a least one member identified with a particular deity and that any breach in continuity was considered a threat to family wellbeing. The trance is, unconsciously perhaps, a way of attracting, and receiving, attention. It gives power and prestige to persons who are without other opportunities of exercising either—more especially daughters-in-law and younger sons living in authoritarian homes and children lacking security. Those already in authority claim an additional sanction by the trance.

The reputation of a particular person in the role of oracle healer is not constant; the god may only stay active in him for a few years. The most ardent believers are also aware that there are impostors in their midst, eager for fame and/or fortune, and a few alarming exposures have taken place. It is generally agreed that a trance should not be used to make a person or his family wealthy, and most 'possessed' are in fact poor; this is in accord with the Hindu tradition that a sign of virtue is the willingness to accept poverty rather than to court wealth. The personal and almost casual economic aspect of 'divine healing' contrasts

[1] e.g. Meenal belonged to a large joint family in which there had been constant misfortunes and many illnesses. Her own mother had died when she was very small, and she had been cared for by her father's oldest brother's wife. At puberty Meenal began to "grow apart" and the aunt hinted continuously that she might have the spirit and took her to different *poosali* to have it "speak since it could not be left to wander about". After two years, the girl fulfilled her aunt's desire and began to diagnose all the family troubles. Now she is twenty and the aunt is attempting to get the spirit into one of her own daughters who has similar "symptoms" and who is now twelve years old. When she succeeds (and she is confident that she will) Meenal will be married.

with the impersonal code regulating fees for western trained medical practitioners.[1]

A professional oracle and healer deals with a wide range of human problems of which illness is but one. Below we describe a visit to Mr. M. T. M., a Hindi speaking *poojari-cum-wojha*, who is no better known than at least four other professional healers whom we visited. His approach is part of a recognised pattern of religious healing and his cases are fairly typical. He claims to become Hanuman, the monkey god hero of the Ramayana, on Tuesdays and Saturdays, and on the Tuesday that we arrived, at about 9.30 a.m. there were already 18 people waiting in the yard of his house.

We all took off our shoes and bathed our feet and at about 10.45 a.m. Mr M. T. M., a fine looking man, with deep shadowed eyes, and wearing a spotless white shirt and *dhoti* asked us to come into the temple. This was a large room about 15 feet square, with pictures of Hanuman in different poses on either side of an altar, and three statuettes of Hanuman draped in red silk in the centre. There were also lamps, several large strange looking shells, a tray of holy ash, and a bunch of peacock feathers. Small steps led up to the altar and on these devotees placed any offerings (money, fruits, flowers, betel nuts, sweetmeats).

The *wojha* knelt on a grass mat in front of the altar and the people sat on mats on either side. He put cloves on a lighted camphor in a tray and as the cloves burnt he crossed his legs, cupped his hands, and meditated. After a short time his breathing became strange and he emitted

[1] The variation in fees appears from the three following cases:

(*a*) Mrs M. T. P. states specifically that her deity does not desire money; the applicants may bring a pint of milk or a little fruit or a few flowers. She supplies the ash and camphor. Sometimes a wealthy patient gives a large present at the end of a satisfactory cure, but there is no obligation on him to do so unless instructed to make a specific *pooja*.

(*b*) Mr R. K. M. on the other hand said his spirit required money—2/6 for the drummers, and 2/6 "in the betel leaf" for the spirit, on each consultation. If a patient has no money, however, the spirit "will understand".

(*c*) Mrs S. K. had her own scale: a rooster for the first *pooja*, and for the final *pooja* seven kinds of groceries (rice, flour, etc.), seven vegetables and seven sweetmeats, and seven articles of clothing. There was no stipulation, however, as to quantity or quality.

queer snorts from his nose as he began to control his breath. Slowly he raised his hands above his head, twisted them around, and beat his chest first with one hand then the other. He clenched his fists and hit his forehead violently several times. He prostrated himself full length on the ground, uttering low guttural sounds and breathing in deep jerks, and he banged his forehead on the ground till the veins stood out. He turned to look at the door, opening his eyes very wide. His whole appearance became deliberately simian. The group sat dead still. He shuddered slightly, sat up and began to speak. He then spoke and behaved quite normally except that every now and again he twisted his body and threw his hands about and breathed heavily. The people now regarded him as Hanuman, embodiment of strength and loyalty.

We summarise six of the fifteen cases we watched him deal with that morning:

(1) The first patient to prostrate before him was his own sister. She spoke in a low voice, but he replied angrily, reproaching her for her behaviour during the week-end. He said she had no business to visit her daughter-in-law's mother's home to scandal about her daughter-in-law. He added that she was bringing a lot of trouble upon herself and that she should never come to him for help—he would even punish her further. He was angry too, that she was making her own grandchild suffer by making her daughter-in-law miserable. He told her to go away and not to come back till she made up with her daughter-in-law. Then he gave her some ash and she went away.

(2) A woman complained about her son, a married man with children, who had left home. He was also present. The *wojha* asked him to approach, and when the man knelt before him, he scolded him for leaving his wife to live 'in sin and drink' since these things were having a bad effect on his body. The man began to whimper and cry. The *wojha* commanded 'May the evil spirit leave your body'; then he made the man promise he

would go back to his wife. All this time the *wojha* was brushing the man with peacock feathers.

Then he told the man to lie on his back and lift up his shirt to bare his body and he felt the man all over his chest and stomach and waist, and pinched up the muscles, uttering strange noises the while. Suddenly he put his mouth to the man's side, sucked at the flesh and spat blood with saliva on a piece of paper. Then he asked the man's mother to see what bad blood her son had, and he rubbed the man's body with holy ash and gave him some to take away. The man was also told to apply a paste made of ground syringa leaves, turmeric powder and nutmeg to his sides and stomach. Every day he was to eat ground turmeric and dry ginger mixed with milk for the pains in his chest and stomach.

(3) A young girl sat before him weeping silently. The *wojha* asked her if what she came for was the right and respectable thing to do, for she had come to ask him to pray for her to marry a married man. He told her to go back and forget about it, since she would cause unhappiness both to the other woman and herself. She said she was very ashamed and would forget the man. He gave her some ash which he asked her to sprinkle on her front door as she entered; it would help her to forget the man. She was to pray to Hanuman before the ritual month of *pitra paksha* (prayers for the dead).

(4) A woman said her mother had taken seriously ill. The *wojha* denounced the mother who had vowed some time ago that she would erect a ceremonial pole to Hanuman which vow she did not carry out. It was Hanuman who was troubling her. He said the pole must be erected with due ceremony within a fortnight.

(5) A woman said before her marriage she prayed regularly at her home and after marriage she continued prayers to Hanuman at her in-laws, where she was the third and youngest daughter-in-law. But the two older did not pray at all and had stopped her from performing all her prayers. A year later she found she had one misfortune after the other and was very miserable indeed. She wanted help. He said no matter how they try to stop her she must continue her prayers as she had done before her marriage. 'Nothing else would save her.'

(6) A woman, with her baby in her arms, complained that her husband had left her and was living with another woman and whenever he did visit her he ill-treated her. The woman's sister (accompanying the supplicant) said he would hit his wife, give no money and food to her nor the children and 'tortured them considerably'. The *wojha* gave her some ash which was to be buried outside the window near the part of the room in which she slept. She also complained that she could not eat since her husband was so cruel, so the *poojari* prescribed ash in her milk.

In reply to questioning, we learnt that only the first woman had ever seen or spoken before to Mr. M. T. M.; the others came from different parts of Durban and had heard of him by repute. But it was immaterial to them whether or not he had known them in ordinary life—it was not the man but the god that talked during the session.

While the *wojha* functions rather like a spiritualist medium of Western society or an African diviner there are certain interesting cultural differences between them. Firstly, the spirit which is believed to enter is that of a divinity, not of a departed mortal or of a specific ancestor. Secondly, the diagnosis is typically Hindu—it rests on the assumption that physical misfortune, family quarrels, and other psychological and social problems, are basically due to unethical behaviour on the part of the individual, the self, and consequent disharmony with the surroundings. Thirdly, it follows that the cure requires a change in personal or social behaviour as well as physical treatment, and the physical treatment may be simply a symbolic reminder —in the form of ash—of the need for spiritual atonement.

The attitudes towards trance as a religious experience range from rejoicing and admiration to rejection and extreme dis-

approval. Those who accept the identification as genuine believe that the possessed radiate godliness, detect ungodliness and are able to effect various cures.

In the first stage the devotees are patients as well as worshippers, and in the second, they are gods themselves. Illness is associated with guilt, and treatment with devotion. The ability not to feel pain despite mortification of the flesh is the sign that the self has been rendered acceptable to god. Many people have turned in desperation to cult ceremonies and welcomed the trance after other treatments have failed.

Those who disapprove of the trance condemn it as 'shameful', 'an exhibition' and a 'mockery of religion'. South African students of Vedanta and Siddhanta take no part in the ritual aspect of sectarian cults. To them, the more anthropocentric the concept of god, the further it is from their philosophic idea of "god without attributes". The Hindu who talks of "absolute monism", obviously feels on a different spiritual level from the Tantric worshipper of a personified Sakti.

The exhibitionism of the trance is openly criticised, not only by Vedantists, but by many other Hindus who state that the performers are self-hypnotised and not inspired. By this self-hypnosis, they say the body becomes, for the time, numb and immune to pain, heat, nails or thorns, but immunity to pain is not necessarily a spiritual achievement, and according to these critics some of those 'addicted' to the trance are in fact, morally low. The state of trance is described as but a stage in body control, and to consider firewalking, needle piercing, etc., as an end indicates *arrested* development of the *Self* (Atman). The *murril* (trance) is not the divine state of *darshan* (ecstasy), or *samadhi* (god intoxication, or superconsciousness). In *darshan* and *samadhi*, the devotee is aware of his experience and is thereafter filled with bliss, while the person with the *murril* is completely unaware of what has happened.

All people with Western scholastic education do not necessarily discredit the trance cults; one of the main organisers is a professional (legal) man, and there are several teachers or members of their families who participate with or without getting the trance. The majority of participants, however, are drawn from the semi-educated, and the more tolerant philosophic non-

participants are prepared to concede that for them the trance cults are "attempts in the right direction", "steps in the ladder of spiritual liberation".

In many societies, individuals are compelled to master expressions of pain. Typical are initiation ceremonies at puberty in which the novitiates must endure physical torture without flinching in order to prove their manhood, and to indicate that they are able to face the responsibilities of adulthood. But the trance is different—the pain itself is not felt. The trance is not interpreted as an act of bravery and conscious self-control, it is a loss of personal identity and the acquisition of god-identity.

The trance cults are one of the many issues on which Indian opinion in South Africa is divided, and an issue periodically raised in the Indian press, but the dividing line between those who support and those who denounce is not as deep as it might be if it were reinforced by other, and major, cleavages in Indian society: though the trance is most widespread amongst Hindus of southern origin, it has amongst its most ardent supporters some Gujarati and Hindi speakers; though most of the devotees are semi-literate some of the leaders are highly educated; though the majority are poor, the temples which encourage their devotions are organised largely by the wealthy; though the worshippers as such take no part in politics, it is unlikely that any Indian politician, however radical, would risk stating in public that any religious devotions were the opium of his people.

From the point of view of the analytical outsider there is a distinction between the ordinary devotee and the devotee who gets the trance; there is also a distinction between the devotee whose trance follows from a vow and one whose trance follows directly from an illness; and finally there is a difference between the devotee who in trance bestows blessings in the course of a general cult ceremony, and the devotee who practises as a professional soothsayer and healer. But to a believer in trance these differences are not important: they are different manifestation of the same power.

This does not mean that a person who takes a vow to participate in a sectional cult necessarily consults a *wojha* in times of crisis; it does however, indicate that the range of potential relief extends from the vow to the oracle healer.

CHAPTER XIII

Health is Harmony

In every society the individual derives his concepts of health from the groups to which he belongs, and while in South Africa it may be true to state that only disease knows no colour bar, it is also true that cultural differences may give the same diseases a wide range of treatment and interpretation, and certain diseases may even be caused—and cured—by culturally ideological factors in this multi-racial country.

The health of Indians in Durban is affected by acute shortage of housing, gross overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions, widespread unemployment, and chronic poverty. We reiterate from previous chapters that the average number of occupants in sample working class areas is roughly 10 per house; the houses are frequently two or three roomed shacks shared by people from two, three or four different families (occasionally from different racial groups). Disposal of refuse—human and animal—is often conspicuously inadequate. Avenues of employment are limited; approximately one adult male in seven is without regular employment and the per capita income of Hindus is slightly over £36 per annum.

These conditions react on the standard of health. Research by doctors of the Institute of Family and Community Health indicates a high incidence of respiratory and skin infections, marked evidence of malnutrition, and a high frequency of bowel infestations. Reports from the Medical Officer of Health state that the main causes of death in Indian infants is broncho-pneumonia, gastroenteritis, and prematurity; and among adults, broncho-pneumonia and tuberculosis.

But health is related to social and psychological factors as well as to basic conditions of housing and income; we give a case to illustrate their interaction.

A scene at firewalking
[Photo by Mickey Padayachee

Muniamah, a Tamil woman aged thirty-seven years, had eight surviving children of whom the oldest, a boy, was twenty and Kano, the youngest, was three. The oldest daughter was married and living with her in-laws; the other children lived with their parents in a three-roomed wood and iron shack in Merebank.

The rooms were small (roughly 10′ x 10′) and poorly ventilated. In one room, the mother slept on a mattress with the two youngest children, and the two bigger girls, aged fifteen and sixteen, shared a bed. In the second room, the father and one boy slept "down" on a mattress, and the oldest son and the other brother on the bed. The third room was treated as a living room; in it was a table and four wooden chairs and if visitors came—particularly the new son-in-law and his kin—they were usually accommodated in this room. Cooking was done in a tin kitchen at the back on a hearth with three iron bars. There was no separate bathroom. Water was fetched from a tap in the yard, and near the tap was a slab for washing clothes. A few yards away was a pit latrine.

The husband, Moorgas, was a sickly man who was able to work only intermittently; when I met the family he had been employed for a week as a spinner in a clothing factory at £3. 10s. 0d. per week, after having been out of work for ten weeks. The oldest son was earning £10 per month as a "shop assistant", and gave all his wages to his mother. There was no other wage earner in the family—the mother refused to allow the two older unmarried girls to go out to work, the next two boys were "schooling" and the two other children were too young.

The family was in debt for £22 incurred by expenses for the wedding of the oldest daughter. Moorgas received occasional assistance from an older brother, a weaver, who lived a few streets away but who "had his own troubles" and his own large family of young children to support; Muniamah's kin were "too poor like ourselves".

After deducting from the total monthly income the money for "ground rent", travel, schooling, fuel and cleaning material, Muniamah had between £2. 17s. 6d. and £3 left

An image carried through a poor working-class district
Photo by Mickey Padayachee

for food, medical expenses and "extras" when both Moorgas and his son were in full employment. Every Saturday Muniamah, or Moorgas when out of work, went to the market in the city to do the weekly buying. The main food items were dried lentils, mealie rice (not as nourishing, nor as expensive, as ordinary rice), fresh vegetables, fish and the cheaper cuts of meat. The family had no method of storing fresh food, which in the humid heat of Durban quickly goes putrid. Nearly all food was curried; spices appear to act to some extent as a preservative. Like other families in the area, the diet was particularly low in calories and protein. The fish, preserved by tamarind, was sometimes made to last for two meals; the meat was usually a luxury on one day of the week. Fresh milk was too expensive for ordinary use, but one pint, bought each week as an offering to Subrahmanya the house god, was drunk by the children.

Muniamah was deeply religious. Every night she or one of the children lit the 'house lamp' and in a corner of the yard was a tiny temple dedicated to Subrahmanya; in it were the only luxuries the family possessed—brass ornaments and religious pictures. Every Tuesday Muniamah and her daughters scrubbed the whole house, swept the yard, polished the brass, bathed themselves ritually and made a small *pooja* of fruits and milk in honour of their god.

One day when I arrived, Muniamah was in a state of terrible anxiety. Kano, her youngest child, was ill. Kano, who had never been very strong, was the parents' "pet" and Muniamah, who had hoped he would be her last borne, had nursed him for twenty months, weaning him reluctantly only when she found herself pregnant again. In the seventh month of pregnancy she miscarried, and though she had done nothing deliberately to induce an abortion, it was obvious from what she said that she felt guilty. She lavished more affection than ever on Kano and would scarcely allow him out of her sight.

When he first took ill, she herself diagnosed *kulev katchel*—a chest complaint—and treated him with a well known home remedy—milk boiled with ginger and turmeric.

(*Kulev katchel* is described as a "cold illness" and, as we shall see later, "hot" foods are needed to neutralise it.) She also got, with some difficulty, leaves of a special plant to put on his head. When, however, after three days Kano did not improve, Muniamah went to the temple where the *poosali* gave her a *modi kavaru*—a special amulet of different coloured strings—over which he prayed and which she then tied round Kano's neck. But he still got no better. She called in Dr. M., a Western trained doctor who came and gave the child an injection—of what, she didn't know—nor did she approve of injections. She had to pay £1. 1s. 0d. in cash 'before Dr. M. looked at the child'.

That night Kano seemed worse and the mother vowed before the image of Subrahmanya that if he got well she would carry *kavady* for three years.

Moorgas' brother's wife, having heard of her trouble, came to comfort her and recommended another western trained doctor who had "good hands". Moorgas' brother agreed with her, and so Dr. D. was called in at 10 o'clock that night. He agreed that the child had a bad chest, but 'with God's help' would be well, and he gave the child medicine 'from his bag', and also wrote out a prescription which Moorgas had made up at the chemist the first thing the next morning.

Soon after Muniamah had given Kano the first dose, an old woman in the neighbourhood, well known for her knowledge of ancient remedies, diagnosed that the illness was caused by a dangerous influence—the shadow of Kanimar falling over the child at noon. Muniamah then recalled that at about midday of the day before he had taken ill, he had run outside and she had of course quickly called him back to her, but the harm had apparently been done. The old woman told her what she should do, and in desperation Muniamah agreed. The two women carried the child, who "could hardly open its eyes", to the nearby river where they made an offering of three waters—milk, water and sugar water—and three pennies. They circled the child with the offerings and sprinkled it with syringa leaves. All the ingredients were then cast into the river, and neither

woman looked back on the return home. At home Muniamah continued with the medicine. That night there was a slight, but marked improvement. Two days later Muniamah repeated the treatment at the river with five offerings; and the day later still the number was increased to seven. By that time the child was out of danger. The medicine had been finished on the fourth day. The successful treatments, which had already cost close on £4 had not released Muniamah from her vow: to complete her penance she had still to carry *kavady* for three years.

Moorgas and Muniamah have a country background, and belong to a generation which had little opportunity for education. They grew up in neighbouring villages on the north coast of Durban; their marriage was arranged when Muniamah was fifteen and Moorgas eighteen, and they came to town after the birth of their first son, at the request of Moorgas' oldest brother who had migrated earlier and had found a satisfactory job. Muniamah was almost illiterate; Moorgas, who passed standard II at "English school", can read and write. Their children are educationally more advanced: the oldest boy passed Standard VI, and the three older daughters passed Standard III. While Tamil is the language of the parents, the older children often speak to each other in English.

Family relationships appear to be harmonious; the children show great respect to their elders who describe them as "very good children". They all take part in religious devotions at home and go to the neighbouring temple for public occasions.

I tried to find out from Muniamah which of the varied treatments given to Kano she felt had achieved the cure but she simply said: "I had faith. It was the will of God." Moorgas echoed "God is great". When I asked why they had not taken the child to the Health Centre, about a mile from their home, Muniamah explained that they had quite often used the Centre for routine examinations and treatment, but that it was no good for emergencies since no doctor was available at night and during the day the doctors worked "by appointment only". It was clear that there was no

hesitation in using Western trained doctors, but they were regarded as simply one avenue which should be "tried".

The approach of South African Hindus to health is strongly influenced by their religion: it values tradition and is built on faith, it is distinct from, *but not hostile to*, the scientific approach that rejects hypotheses which cannot be objectively proven. To the Hindu, the religious and the scientific are not mutually exclusive or contradictory—both are ways of seeking to understand the nature of existence, and the scientific operates ultimately within the framework of religious faith. A basic premise is that God[1] gives health, good or ill, and doctors, priests and healers are but vehicles of the Divine power that affects each individual according to his deeds (*karma*). This does not mean that physics are unimportant or illness should be met with passive acceptance—on the contrary, it is ethically right to try to find remedies wherever possible; only if these fail, is it judged inevitable and said to be written in fate (*thalay vithy*).[2]

Some illnesses are superficially explicable by natural causes, but ultimately, illness, like all events in life, are the result of one's own deeds (*karma*) in the wider scheme of the universe. An illness therefore has an element of guilt, which can be expiated by religious devotions: vows, visits to the temples, frequent *pooja*, acts of self denial, and penance. An illiterate woman expressed it thus: "We Indians go a lot to temples and make a lot of *pooja*, for if we have sinned and the gods feel they are being forgotten then sickness and trouble fall on us." The same idea is expressed on a more abstract level by Swami Sivananda: "God is the one doctor for all sickness. Rely on Him alone. The names of God are the most potent, unfailing tonics, sure panaceas, well tried elixirs, sovereign specifics for all ills."[3] A philologically minded informant wrote: "*Rakshas* means devils, germs and sin; conquer the *raksha* of sin and you conquer the *raksha* of disease."

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[1] As conceived by the Hindu—i.e. non-personal, but personalised by some.

[2] *Thalay Vithy*—fate—refers to conditions which are inevitable, *Karma*—deeds—is based on the injunction that 'as ye sow, so shall ye reap'. (Comment by non-Christian informant.)

[3] Divine Life Society, Durban. 67th birthday celebration of Swami Sivananda, 1953.

Health itself has long been recognised by the Hindu as more than purely physical wellbeing. A well known doctor in Durban gave what seems to be a generally acceptable definition conveying the attitude of many of his fellow Hindu. "Health", he said, "is harmony." Elaborating on this he described harmony as being at peace with the Self, the community, God and 'the cosmos'. "If you achieve this, even physical pain becomes unimportant. The spirit is important. And by spirit" he continued, "I don't mean mind. It is not cerebral control that makes for harmony. In some ways the mind is the enemy of health—as of all progress. It is too limiting." This point of view, expressed with more or less sophistication, is rooted in a tradition which has persisted through the years.

South African Hindu show deep psychological insight into the importance of harmonious personal relationships in dealing with health. Every effort is made to "match" a young couple psychologically as well as physically in order to produce healthy children; a pregnant woman suffering from oedema may be diagnosed as having been frustrated by her husband in her desire for a particular food or article of clothing; it is also said that the child on birth may bear the mark of paternal deprivation; many cases of illness are interpreted as due to friction or negligence in carrying out family duties. Insanity (*sanuk*, in Hindi, *paithium* in Tamil) is generally regarded as the result of intense emotional disturbance between members of the family or of sin in the previous life, and the cure is believed to lie in appeal, penance and the intervention of God.

Harmonious interaction is extended beyond the realm of personal relationship to a wider cosmic order. At new moon illnesses are believed to reach their crisis; at noon pregnant women and children must be specially careful—if outside they may be caught by "bad winds" or, as in the case quoted, suffer from the shadow of certain deities passing across the sky; at the eclipse, a pregnant woman must not handle any sharp instrument; to begin a new venture—such as building a new home—at an "inauspicious time" is to court misfortune.

Despite all these precautions, it is recognised as difficult to attain or maintain health. Some intellectuals argue that everything—"a person, the whole world"—is influenced by the three

gunas (qualities) of *sattva* (equilibrium) *rajas* (energy) and *tamas* (grossness) and the desired quality of *sattva* is constantly threatened by *rajas* and *tamas*.

It is in the broad religious context that the dietary laws of Hindus in South Africa, as in India, are understandable. Typical is the following extract on "yogic diet" from the official journal of the Divine Life Society of South Africa:

> "Diet is of three kinds, viz. *Sattwic*, *Rajasic* and *Tamasic*. Milk, barley, dates, fruits, vegetables, wheat, butter, honey and almonds are all *Sattwic* foods and render the mind pure and calm. Fish, meat, chillies, asafoetida are *Rajasic* foods which excite passions. Beef, wine, garlic, onions, etc., are *Tamasic* foodstuffs and fill the mind with anger, darkness and inertia."[1]

People who aim at spiritual purity are rigorously restricted in their choice of food and the quantity should be limited.

> "Meat is not at all necessary for keeping up good health. Besides giving rise to tapeworm and diseases of the kidney, control of the mind is very difficult for those who eat meat. It will be observed that the meat eating tiger is ferocious while the small buck and huge elephant that live on vegetable matter are graceful and mild tempered. Take your food when the Pingala or Surya Nadi flows in the right nostril—Surya Nadi is heating and therefore digests the food well . . . He who lives to eat is far from Godhead, but he who eats to live is verily a saint or a Yogi."[2]

Ordinary people do not speak in these terms but use the same basic ideas. Even children are told to "eat a little short of the appetite", "don't eat food that is too strong and wakens anger", "learn to discipline yourself". Among the laymen, ingredients are commonly distinguished as 'hot' or 'cold' on the basis of presumed psychophysical effects, e.g. coffee is 'hot', tea is 'cold'; chicken and beef are 'hot', mutton is 'cold'. The quality is influenced by the combination of different ingredients, their method of preparation, and the organic changes that take place through time. Assessment of particular foodstuffs may vary with different linguistic cultural groups and informants, but

[1] Swami Sivananda, March, 1959, p. 2 cf. the Bhagavad Gita XVII.
[2] Ibid.

there is general agreement on the "hot-cold" principle. It underlies the selection of food for people in different conditions—the mother immediately after having given birth; the nursing mother; the menstruating girl; the newly wed; the bereaved; the god possessed.

Illnesses are similarly classified as "hot" or "cold" not by the body temperature as measured on a thermometer but by other symptoms. Coughs, pneumonias, fevers following what is commonly described as "cold touch" are "cold" illnesses; dysentery, diarrhoea, "burning in the stomach", dizziness are "hot". Cold illnesses must be treated with predominantly "hot" foods and "hot" illnesses with "cold" foods.

A religious, holistic emphasis influences interpretations of the functioning of the body. This was particularly evident in discussions on anatomy and physiology with students of Yoga. Thus, it was clear that they knew the organs involved in the respiratory system, but in describing the control of breath they attached no particular significance to the lungs. "Breath pervades the entire body, and any organ can be controlled by different levels of concentration." By the deepest level, they say, a Yogi can attain complete harmony in the highest form of *samadhi* (superconsciousness) in which physical aspects of normal life remain temporarily suspended. The actual physiological process of *samadhi* is related to the concept of the *kundalini sakti* described by a pandit as "the entire potentiality of a man, a sort of creative power, coiled at the lowest end of the spinal column"; *samadhi* is achieved when the *kundalini sakti* is raised by deepest concentration till it reaches "the thousand petalled lotus of the brain." Control of breath and meditation are part of the routine daily prayers (the *sandhya* and *gayatri mantra*) of many orthodox and reform Hindu. Many Hindu who are not trained in Yoga and are fairly illiterate are still influenced by some of the classical concepts of physiology in relation to individual health.

Most medicines are administered by mouth, but the mouth is only one of the recognised orifices of the body, each of which is a channel between the personal self and the outside world. "What goes in must be clean, what comes out is dirty." Excretions—spittle, mucous, wax, faeces, urine, semen—are regarded as polluting and dangerous to health in its broader sense. Neutralising pollution are many stereotyped pureficatory techniques. Very common are various ritual baths which may or may not be physically as thorough as the ordinary wash but are considered more cleansing spiritually. If someone has had a run of bad luck, or has been feeling generally off colour, it is common to suggest a "three oil bath" in which three different oils are rubbed into the head and then the patient bathes the whole body. This is also part of the ritual performed by South African Tamil at Deepavali "to make the person pure". In certain *sanskara* and at the end of certain illnesses, patients are bathed with water in which 3 different leaves—usually syringa, guava and eucalyptus—have been boiled. The ingredients 'cleanse' the person internally at the same time as they disinfect the body. Underlying these practices appear to be the idea that things that are purifying, heal, and things that heal become sacred. The orthodox ritualist stresses the physical as a means to the spiritual, and to him physical cleanness may become obsessional, but the philosopher regards the body as *maya*—illusion—and stresses the inner purity.

Medical "practitioners" serving Hindus in South Africa can be roughly classified into two groups: those trained through the laboratory, and those whose knowledge is largely derived from holy writings. This division is not new, nor is it very sharp except at the extremes: at the same time that Indians pioneered in various fields of medicine, more especially surgery, they did not discard their earliest book of medical lore—the Ayur Veda—which is of an inspirational character and deals with the properties of specific ingredients as well as with sacred formulae (*mantra*) for health. I am told that in modern India, Ayurvedic practitioners are officially recognised and encouraged parallel with doctors holding university medical degrees, and that the gulf between the two is being bridged by testing Ayurvedic medicines in modern laboratories. In Durban, the Western trained doctors, as we saw in Chapter III, are rated as the highest of the emerging elite; but the religious approach to medicine is widespread and there are many 'healers' who rely on inspiration alone.

The more successful Western doctors are said to have "good hands" or "the healing touch"—a gift beyond ordinary academic

qualifications. How else, it is argued, is it that the same treatment administered by two equally qualified men may have widely different results. And since the inner power is not mechanically derived, it can at times appear in people without university education and manmade degrees. Though the Doctor (the English term is in current use among Hindu in South Africa for the practitioners with university qualifications) advances his knowledge largely from work in the laboratory, not the temple, without the sanction of religion his knowledge is considered ineffective.

In Durban the Tamil term *vydiakareen* and the Hindi *vaid* are also applied occasionally to university trained doctors, but more often to people who fall more 'into the Ayurvedic category'; they base their practices on a knowledge of herbs and mantra. In Durban there are a few such practitioners—fewer than doctors —and those who were interviewed had been apprenticed for three to five years to *guru* (teachers) versed in different aspects of religion. Their training involved fasting, leading ascetic lives, practical apprenticeship and studying a wide range of books, which sometimes included Yoga. They regarded *mantra* as powerful knowledge and prescriptions for health. Some argued that the widely known *gayatri mantra* was a most efficacious potion, each syllable being significant and full of allusions to Divine power. Other *mantra* are known to a limited few and are composed of special sounds, meaningless to the uninitiated and useless unless said by someone imbued with faith and worthy of Divine response. Some *mantras* descend "from mouth to ear" within a family, others are written in holy books. *Mantras* should not be used for trifling ills. The discipline required of *vydiakareen* in the process of training is so hard that it should be completed before marriage. The herbal remedies which are used together with *mantra* are often those which we have mentioned in descriptions of religious ritual—honey, oils, cloves, ginger, garlic, milk, betel leaf, areca nut, etc. In Durban, there are a number of herbalist shops run by Indians who also stock African *umuti* (literally tree—i.e. medicinal root, bark, herb, etc.) but I am assured that few Indians buy them or use them. When the Indian traditional medicines are used, the names are not

spoken, for it is commonly believed that to reveal them would interfere with the efficacy of the treatment.

Vydiakareen are distinct from *poosali* and *guri* discussed in the previous chapter, who perform rituals in temples and may or may not identify themselves with particular deities in the trance.[1] *Poosali* are versed in the technical side of ritual (the word *poosay* signifies worship of the deities with appropriate ritual) and perform various protective rites, but they usually give no medicines other than ash, accompanied by instructions on its use: e.g. it may be eaten, drunk in milk, rubbed on the body or simply kept in a clean place (the efficacy is not in the ash itself but in its holy association).

An important feature distinguishing the Western trained doctor from the inspired healer, is that the former diagnoses by examination and questioning; the latter by insight. The people who consult the healer do not give detailed histories of their complaints nor are they expected to do so. The healer may diagnose by looking at or touching something quite separate from the patient, and the basic assumption is that physical pain is part of a wider context of feeling. This approach, which does not place responsibility on the patient is specifically stated to give more confidence than the long questioning required for a full "case history".

People who get the trance and act as soothsayers and healers are sometimes described as *mandragarin* and *wojha* respectively, but they generally resent being called by these names. Some claim to have learnt through apprenticeship and others by revelation—often through dreams. They not only effect cures, but also detect evil spirits and sorcery. Some diagnose by examining the movements of water in a special *lota* (urn), others burn camphor under a betel leaf and then interpret the marks, others read from the designs of ash in a tray. Their treatment is equally varied: some "beat out" the illness or misfortune from the body of a sufferer, others "call it out", others refer certain cases to a doctor.

Their status is lower than that of temple oracles, because they themselves are believed by some to resort on occasion to

[1] I use the Tamil terms. A similar distinction applies to the Hindi *vaid* and *poojari* and *wojha*.

sorcery—*sunya* in Tamil, *jadhu* in Hindi. The most feared professional sorcerers (*sunyagarin*) are not, however, Hindus but the "Zanzibar men", a group of Moslems (see ch. 1), alleged to be versed in stereotyped black magic. (They are accused of knowing "tricky" words instead of holy *mantra*, of making images of persons and sticking pins into them, of painting coconuts and poking out the eyes and burying the image in the name of the victim; of 'doping' people through food and drink.) Some of the "cures" of *wojha* and *mandragarin* are also suspect—for their treatments they demand roosters, cane spirits and other things not considered "pure", and to drive out an evil spirit, they may cut off a piece of hair from the top of the victim's head and tie it onto a tree or bury it at crossroads so that the next person who passes by will pick it up. *Wojha* are believed never to die painlessly or peacefully, and to become bad spirits after death.

Their clientele is mainly the semi-literate; educated Hindus dismiss them as "charlatans" or "bluffers", and it seems probable that, with the extension of western and Sanskritic influence, their following will fall away till they are no more influential than their counterparts in modern European society.

The distinction, however, between them and accepted healers is not as great as in Western society where the term 'charlatan' or 'quack' is often attached to anyone without recognised university medical degrees.

Herbalist, temple priest and oracle (the crude English equivalents for the Indian vernacular terms we have used) may all three be consulted by one and the same patient without any emotional conflict, for the values they represent are nor contradictory. They also underlie the approach of the traditional priests who carry out various rituals for general health, and who consult and interpret the almanac for all occasions.

In a different but compatible category are certain people who by the nature and time of their birth are considered to possess specific healing powers. For example, from an early age, twins or breech birth children are believed—mainly by the less literate—to be able to cure backaches, stiff necks and sprains, by massaging the affected parts with their feet. They are credited with this quality because of the interpretation put on their relationship with the cosmos at the time of their birth.

The aetiology of diseases suffered by South African Hindu inevitably reflects the religious outlook. At the most mundane level are certain ailments, considered non-serious, and often described as being "in the blood" or "in the body". They include worms, colds, headaches, dysentery, styes and boils, and they are generally treated in the first place by home remedies (*gharke devai* or *turka* in Hindi, *vaethium* in Tamil). Women of different households discuss their different treatments, especially when they foregather at the house of a sick friend—and it is their duty to visit friends when sick—and the various suggestions are often tried out especially if recommended by an old woman.

Below, we list some of the more common ailments, and their treatment:

Some of the medicines are purchased from a chemist or grocer; certain traditional ingredients are sold only in Indian shops; certain herbs are cultivated in the gardens. (Unlike the African, and the rural Afrikaner, the South African Hindu use few wild plants of Africa for medicinal purposes.)

(*a*) Worms, a common affliction of children in Durban, are widely believed to be caused by eating bad food or too many sweets, and the child is given large doses of castor oil, or crushed syringa leaves with water, or a vermifuge bought from a chemist—all medicines to be administered when the moon is new or full, never when it is on the wane.

(*b*) Headache is a 'hot' illness, sometimes treated by massaging the top of the head and forehead with a "cold" oil—e.g. castor oil or coconut oil. (Some oils, e.g. mustard seed oil and *vapana* (syringa oil) are "hot"). Aspirin, A.P.C.'s and other pain killers are also in common use.

(*c*) Coughs, colds and 'fevers' (*sardi* in Hindi, *jaliupua*, or if serious *kulev katchel* in Tamil) are treated with a wide range of remedies: e.g. white onion crushed and the juice mixed with honey; ginger ground and mixed with honey; patent cough mixtures; special leaves e.g. the *tulsi* crushed in water.

(*d*) Dysentery is attributed to 'heat' in the stomach and it must therefore be treated with 'cold' foods—e.g. grilled green bananas, mango ground with salt, castor oil, and special drinks, e.g. sour milk, flour mixed with water and a little sugar, wattle bark boiled in water (or ground and eaten), pomegranate skins ground with salt or boiled in water.

(*e*) Styes (*bilni* in Hindi, *kun-kuttie*, litterally eye-boil in Tamil.) *Bilni* is literally "wasps", the Hindi belief being that styes result from a person breaking a wasp's nest, or seeing or touching something 'unclean'. Some people are specially skilled in treating styes—they rub a gold ring on the stye seven times repeating after each application "Wasp-sore be destroyed". Another well known treatment is to take seven mango leaves and touch the spot seven times with the milky end. The leaves are then left to dry and as they dry so will the sore.

(*f*) Boils are divided into 'blind boils' and 'blood boils'. The blood boil, which is especially painful, is believed to be acquired only by the rich. Treatment is directed to making the boil open on its own and various poultices are used.

(*g*) *Piari* (translated from the Hindi as "yellow fever") has as its symptoms anorexia, bright yellow urine and 'clay coloured stools'. The treatment is varied: In one case we witnessed an old woman who "specialised" in *piari* was asked to treat a child who had already had home remedies, four injections and a bottle of medicine from a private doctor. The old woman's treatment was to mix oil and water in a tray, and with a bunch of special grass she brushed the child's hair with the mixture and chanted special *mantra*. As the illness decreased, the oil and water "would separate from each other"; at the height of the sickness they formed a thick paste when they touched the child's skin. After each treatment the mixture was thrown on a clean place where no other child would trample (and so pick it up). The diet of the child was to be "clean" and "cold"; but sour foods—including pickles, lemons, sour milk (though cold)—were to be avoided. A doctor from the Institute of Family and Community Health whom I took with me to see this patient, thought the symptoms indicated infective jaundice but that the treatment of the old lady was doing no harm.

(*h*) There are also home remedies for a few ailments based on somewhat different concepts of physiology, e.g. the Hindi word *Nara* is described as "the rising" or "displacing" of the intestines; this is believed to cause violent stomach pains and dysentery and the patient is treated by special massage and manipulation.

(*i*) A stiff neck is said to be cured by someone giving a sharp tug to the hair growing from the exact crown of the head (*witshi* in Tamil, *taru* in Hindi) which sharp upward action "breaks the stiff neck off". Similar treatment is applied if the uvula ('small tongue') is considered to be elongated in illness.

In the second category are a number of illnesses attributed to specific deities. The outstanding examples are the so-called "spot diseases"—measles, chickenpox, smallpox and scarlet fever —each of which is regarded as the visitation of a different Mother goddess, generically described as *Matha* or *Amma* (i.e. Mother). The mother deity responsible is sometimes differentiated as "big Mother" or "little Mother" according to the severity of the illness; each "Mother" may also have a particular name.

When the goddess visits a home with measles, the entire family goes through a period of isolation and special treatment. The patient is rubbed with turmeric water and placed on a layer of fresh syringa leaves in a room which has been carefully cleaned and swept. A solemn religious atmosphere prevails through the house which people say "Has a knot tied around it" and which visitors may not enter. Workers of the home must bathe on their return and at night men sleep apart from their wives. The patient's diet is milk, fruit and 'cold' vegetables, and the family may eat no flesh 'for no life must be let out or taken away', or the patient

will become worse 'because the goddess will be angry that the people are not afraid of her'. No oil is used for cooking and all food in the house is boiled. Oil is believed to irritate the spots. No utensils are borrowed or lent and no event (such as the birth of a child in the house) can be celebrated publicly. The patient is also given a mixture including turmeric powder and ground syringa berry to drink. If the course of illness does not run smoothly—if for instance the child's eyes become inflamed and the temperature does not drop quickly—the belief is that the Mother has been angered because someone dirty (e.g. a menstruating woman or someone wearing leather) entered the room or a taboo has been broken, and as a punishment the illness will spread further and be more severe.

If doctors or health educators or nurses come to the house during the period of isolation, they are regarded with disfavour and alarm lest they be 'unclean'. Relatives are opposed to patients with 'spots' being taken to hospital where they are in contact with 'unclean' people, including sufferers from other illnesses, and where their food and utensils are not kept separate and may be contaminated by 'flesh'. The most conservative folk place a brass container with syringa leaves at the entrance of the home, or syringa leaves over the doorway to indicate that strangers should keep away; nowadays people are afraid that these signs will be recognised and the health inspectors will arrive and insist on treating the patient.

The rash is said to last seven or eight days and on the tenth a purification ceremony in honour of the deity takes place. Since sickness is a family as well as an individual trial and trouble, the close kin are informed. The patient is washed and dressed in fresh clothes and is brought outside into the yard. Seven vessels of water, trays of fruits, sweetmeats and sugar are placed as offerings to the goddess, and camphor and cloves are burnt for her. A fire is lit and *ghee* poured on and some of the offerings are burnt. The officiant (usually the senior woman of the *kutum*) prays facing the sun, then cups her hand in the smoke, wipes the face of the child and circles it with an urn of water, kneels and offers

a final prayer. The ceremony ends with offering sweetmeats and fruit to the goddess and as always on such occasions, the food is distributed for consumption to members of the family and children of the neighbourhood.

Among some of the Hindi speaking, after the patient has recovered, the women of the house go to beg alms from about seven homes in the neighbourhood, carrying a tray (*thari*) covered with syringa leaves into which rice and money are collected and used in the final ritual, thereby making it an act of collective purification.

Treatment by doctors during the course of the illness is regarded as dangerous, inoculations before the visits are more acceptable. Thus there is no longer resistance to vaccination for smallpox, but once a person has contracted the illness, the traditional precautions for cleanliness and isolation are still considered essential, and any injections are believed to worsen the condition by rousing the anger of the visiting goddess.

Mumps (*Gul Phulni* in Hindi, *Pu Taal Amma* in Tamil) are also regarded as a visitation from Matha or Amma. The traditional home treatments include, in addition to isolation, poultices of honey and lime, and special drinks. In some homes, the mother borrows a golden ornament with which she touches the swelling seven times and the ornament must then be worn by the patient until he or she has recovered when it is returned. In other homes, the mother makes seven cakes of wet earth with which she touches the swellings and which she then keeps in a clean place until the swellings have subsided and then throws away. At a final ceremony, offerings including seven different varieties of beans are specially prepared for the goddess.

Whooping cough, like the spot diseases, is generally considered to come from a "Mother goddess", but requires very specific treatment. It is described as a "three months cough" by the Tamil, and "six months cough" by the Hindi, and during this time isolation is not so rigid, but phlegm is buried in a spot away from the main buildings. Some of the treatments for it are based on the principle that it is a 'cold' illness for which 'hot' foods are helpful, as well as various poultices. But other common remedies are based on the

belief that the patient must be given unclean food or be brought into contact with things unclean, so that the goddess "will be driven out in disgust". Salt, fish and even beef may be soaked in water and given to the patient to drink. One of the widely known remedies of the less educated Tamil is a mixture containing the bark of a tree on which someone committed suicide. At the end of the sickness, offerings, with sugar as a main ingredient, are made to the deity.

The rationale behind all these treatments lies in varying myths associated with the particular deity. One of the most widely known describes how a *Rishi* (Holy Man) wrongfully accused his wife of unfaithful desires and cursed her in his anger with the wish that she might burn. The curse took effect, but *Indra*, the Rain God, moved with compassion, extinguished the flames. The woman's clothing was already burned and her body became covered with small burn blisters. She clothed herself with soothing syringa leaves, but, hungry and afraid to return home, she went to a nearby village and asked for food. Poor people lived there and they were meat-eaters; knowing her to be the wife of a *Rishi*, they brought her only fresh vegetables and fruit, and of these she ate. Then she went to another village occupied by *Dhobi* (laundry people), who gave her fresh clean clothes. In the meantime, her husband had repented of his anger. He fetched her back and they were reconciled, whereafter she was imbued with special powers, and when she finds sin, she sends sickness in the form of 'spots' or 'blisters', in different degrees of severity.

Sophisticated informants, however, state that this and other myths were specifically designed by ancients to educate the illiterates in health measures. According to them, the early sages realised that the "spot diseases", including mumps and whooping cough, were epidemics that occurred at particular seasons, and that if the patient is isolated and the house kept strictly clean, the spread of the disease could be checked. They point out that many of the epidemics took place in the monsoon period, and that public ceremonies held for the Mother goddess at that time all stress cleanliness and abstinence. As one pandit said: "In the same way as you make an uneducated man see god through an image, you can teach him how to look after his body by making him afraid of punishment by a god."

Apart from the "Mother", other personalised deities are associated somewhat less directly with disease. Some Tamil take a vow to Katteri in cases of threatened abortion, excessive menstruation, haemorrhage and other "blood sicknesses", and to Subrahmanya for an even wider range including recurrent giddiness, amnesia, mental retardation, and sterility. How the vow is executed has already been described, and it must be repeated that the illnesses are not believed to be sent out of malice but may be punishment for sin.

We have given many examples of illness which fall into the third and large category of disturbance of harmony: non-fulfilment of a vow, the breach of a taboo, the neglect of family obligations, conflict between kinsmen. These factors are recognised as pertinent in understanding a large range of functional disorders.

In a fourth category are illnesses which carry a social stigma and in which the element of personal guilt is profoundly evident. Until fairly recently, the outstanding illustration was tuberculosis, one of the most widely spread as well as dreaded diseases. Named by Hindi as *sukunda* (literally 'drying up' (of the person)) it was attributed to various causes—dirty food, unhealthy living, too much night activity, too little sleep, and the individual or family was regarded as responsible. If a member was afflicted, visitors or more distant relatives were told that the patient had bronchitis or some other illness, and even though the visitor knew the real nature of the illness he would never mention it. If a marriage had been arranged in the family, the other party was considered justified in breaking off all negotiations, and even after a patient was cured it was difficult to find a spouse for fear the illness would be transmitted to the children. Health propaganda is having a marked effect on this attitude, and with the proven efficacy of modern drugs people are more prepared to go openly for treatment, but among the conservative Hindu it is still a secret and shameful illness.

Venereal disease is also considered to be the result of fast and loose living, but, probably because of the strength of Indian

family life, is not nearly so serious a problem in the Indian community as in other sections of the Non-White population.[1]

It is significant of the difference in outlook between western medicine and Hindu religion that the two illnesses—tuberculosis and venereal disease—which fall under the Department of Public Health and are interpreted largely in terms of such environmental conditions as housing and sanitation, should be considered by conservative Hindu as individual and personal responsibilities. Acceptance of Western medical measures does not necessitate acceptance of Western diagnosis.

In a final category, are illnesses attributed to sorcery, but while belief in sorcery as a deliberate, magical, anti-social act is widespread among the less literate, it is opposed by the philosophy of Hinduism. Nor does it play the same important part among Indian laymen in Durban as among their African neighbours. In sorcery oriented African society, illness, poverty, death, indeed any misfortune is usually charged against a sorcerer, i.e. a scapegoat outside of the self; but among the Hindu the power for evil, as for good, lies mainly within the self. Even those who firmly believe that people who wish to harm others may use magical means to "dope" or "trick" them, and consult *sunyagarin* for that purpose, agree that sorcery can only prove fatal if sanctioned by the more powerful Divine. The majority are aware that people who are motivated by malice, hatred and envy do not usually turn to sorcery; more frequently they resort to direct action. When sorcery is suspected, there is no public sanction for "smelling out" or detecting the evildoer and inflicting punishment. Quarrels embitter relationships, expressions of hatred or temper are recognised as dangerous to health—the curse (*sarap*) is particularly feared—but reconciliation not revenge

[1] Notification of tuberculosis per 1,000 of the population.

	European	*Coloured*	*Native*	*Asiatic*
1951	1·43	8·75	8·68	3·90
1952	1·41	7·22	9·29	2·89

Incidence of V.D. per 1,000 of the population: City area.

	European	*Coloured*	*Native*	*Asiatic*
1951	3·33	32·89	54·06	4·93
1952	2·69	29·83	54·43	4·08

Figures from the 50th Annual Report of the Medical Officer of health, Durban, 1952.

is urged as a solution. If two sisters-in-law are at loggerheads and one falls ill, the other is not in danger of being accused of sorcery—and if by any chance she is suspected, no retaliative action against her is taken. The treatment is directed to restoring harmony, not to make the breach more obvious.

In addition to sorcery, there is a general belief in the power of the "jealous eye" or "evil eye" (*najar* in Hindi, *disti* in Tamil) which may be diagnosed as the cause of recurrent headaches, running stomach, fever, drying up of the milk of a lactating mother, loss of appetite. The evil eye, however, is a quality of which the possessor may be unaware and which may be exerted without conscious malice. In some respects the evil eye resembles the African concept of witchcraft,[1] but again there is no need to detect the agent and punish him or her. There exists a wide range of amulets and rituals to prevent the evil eye taking effect, and some additional rites to remove the harm if it has.

In a related category are the various "evil spirits" (*pitjatji* or *pisaasu* in Tamil, *bhoot* and *chooreyl* in Hindi) believed to prowl about at night and to be particularly dangerous to children and women during menstruation and pregnancy. These spirits were once bad people—murderers, thieves, people who died a violent or abnormal death. Again, there are numerous recognised routine rituals and symbolic weapons against them, and if these are inadequate a wide range of practitioners may be consulted to perform their rites of exorcism. From a large number of cases of illness from evil spirits I have selected two: the first illustrates underlying conflict in a Hindu family; the second is particularly interesting because it shows the influence of association with African beliefs.

(1) Sookni was childless after four years of marriage and went to Babni, whom she described as a *wojha*, for help. Babni got the trance of the goddess Durga in which condition she diagnosed that Sookni was "caught" by a bad spirit. Babni blessed some cloves and gave some of them to Sookni as an amulet and told her to eat the

[1] Sorcery is defined as a deliberate anti-social act; witchcraft as a physiological and often unconscious quality for evil. For the clearest exposition on these two concepts the reader is referred to *Witchcraft among the Azande* by E. Evans Pritchard. Oxford University Press, 1938.

others over seven days, and to come again for further treatments. At the third visit Sookni herself got the trance. "I had never had anything like it before. I was surprised by it. I hadn't even believed in it particularly." During the trance Babni asked who the spirit was, but it would not speak till Babni hit Sookni with a strap. Then the spirit spoke, and it was not one spirit but two. The mother-in-law and a sister-in-law, both dead. Babni ordered them to leave, and finally they agreed. Babni went through an elaborate ritual of extracting the spirits from Sookni's body and of "tying them in a knot" in a special rope. After this Sookni said she felt very much more at peace and conceived almost immediately; she now has nine children. My informant was Sookni herself who added that her mother-in-law and sister-in-law had died in quick succession soon after her marriage. She said she was "surprised" at what they had done to her, as they had been the ones who had arranged the marriage.

(2) When Vida was about nine years old she fainted at school and when she came round she was unable to walk. Her teacher fetched her father and together they carried the child home, a distance of about one mile. They were astonished at how heavy the child was. The father called in a Western doctor who said that nothing was wrong, but the child did not improve and after a while began talking to herself. The father took the child to the temple, and made a *pooja*, without result. An African family living in the same yard, suggested that he consult a Zulu *sangoma* (diviner) whom they recommended highly. The *sangoma* diagnosed that the child had five evil spirits fighting in her and he undertook to exorcise them. They proved very obstinate, but eventually he claimed that he had succeeded. The father paid him with gratitude. The girl seemed much better and returned to school, but soon after had another attack. This time the father consulted a 'Zanzibari' who asked for sand from the family grave; on learning that this was unobtainable he said he could do nothing. Finally a *poojari* from another district was consulted by the mother; he scolded her for going to "unclean" people. He got the trance and all he did was to blow holy ash on the girl. Almost at once she began to vomit. He put a thick cane on her neck, and "though it was very strong it broke in half". The girl seemed suddenly to waken. She was immediately better and for the past two years has had no attack. The *poojari* said that three evil spirits had got into the girl, one of them being *fufunyane*,[1] an African spirit. My informant was the father himself, who says he will in future consult only Hindu or Europeans.

It is clear that Hinduism allows for various alternatives in the explanations of illness, and that diagnosis and treatment do not disrupt personal relations to the same extent as in sorcery oriented societies. Sorcerers are left anonymous, 'evil spirits' are among the dead, and guilt is personified in the self.

We have shown that South African Hindu tend to interpret illness in religious terms, and that diagnosis and treatment flow from the central concept of the need for harmony. Man is not considered an isolated individual: in health or in sickness he is part of a family, a community, and a wider universe with which he is related through various rituals.

Illness is but one event in the cosmic cycle, and for the average South African Hindu the almanac becomes a guide for routine health. The empirical tests of science are not denied but their significance is relative. Drugs and all materia medica are effective not in themselves but in their associations. Doctor and priest, hospital and temple, prescription and *mantra*, are often different aspects of the same treatment.

Suffering is brought on man largely by his own actions, and he must attempt, therefore, to act righteously and, if necessary, to expiate his sinful and wrongful deeds through vows, devotions and mortification of the self.

[1] *Fufunyane* is a type of possession believed to be sent by an *umtakati* (sorcerer or witch). It is often directed against girls and young women by men whose sexual advances have been rejected.

The therapeutic value of faith is explicitly acknowledged, and though the cynic may ask what is faith and what is fake, to the devout they are worlds apart. Faith in the power of faith is unshaken by occasional exposure of fakes. The specialised scepticism and avowed agnosticism of many South African Whites are not sentiments voiced by South African Hindu. One of the complaints against Indian patients made by Indian and European doctors is that they are always 'trying' new doctors and medicines, and may be receiving and carrying out more than one treatment at the same time, sometimes with drastic and even fatal results (as in the case of a patient to whom three doctors, unaware of each other's services, each administered digitalis). The patients are motivated partly by the cultural belief that doctors—or any healers—have different spiritual qualities, as well as degrees of knowledge, and that they might find one amongst them who, by his own virtues, possesses the power to mitigate the sins of the patient. There is also a less philosophic rationale: European medicines are expected by the less literate to produce immediate results. This is not the case with traditional cures, which may go on for several months, but which have the sanction of faith: new medicines by a strange practitioner have not, and so must prove their efficacy dramatically, and quickly.

In South Africa, cultural distinction between the three main racial groups—Whites, Africans and Indians—is reflected in their respective attitudes to health and sickness.

In South African White society the emphasis is on the application of scientific knowledge—i.e. knowledge based on controlled experimentation; among the Africans, serious illness is most frequently attributed to an external personal agent (an evil-doer) exercising powers beyond empirical verification; and among the South African Hindu the main responsibility is placed on the moral and religious behaviour of the individual and the reaction of the Divine, through its many manifestations which by their very nature are above or beyond human scrutiny. The Western microscope and laboratory; the African divining bones and secret medicines; the Hindu Temple and sacred mantras; these are broadly symbolic of three distinctive cultural approaches to disease in South Africa.

These distinctions are admittedly crude; in Western medicine,

scientific knowledge is complete neither at the popular level (where patent medicines and old wives' remedies still abound) nor at the professional level (e.g. the tonsil period; the tooth-pulling period; the appendix period; the slipped disc period). In both African and Indian society, there is a wide and proven range of herbal remedies and medico-technical skills such as massaging, poulticing, and sweat-baths. There are, moreover, an increasing number of Africans and Indians with degrees in Western medicine. There are also a number of Whites in South Africa (more than is generally recognised) who come for treatment to African and Indian diviners and healers, and there are a limited number of Africans and Indians who will only be treated by Western-trained men or women, White or Non-White. But most Whites usually go only to Western trained doctors, while the majority of Africans and Indians come to them for certain diseases only, and even then may receive religious or magical treatment at the same time.

While it is in the context of Hindu religion that many medical practices in South Africa become understandable, we must emphasise that there is nothing static in this approach to health. The different levels of sophistication, evident for example in explanations behind the ritual treatment of epidemics, and in the variety of possible practitioners, reveal the flexibility of "Hindu concepts of health" and also reflect the cultural heterogeneity within the society which we described in our opening chapter.

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSION

WHILE IT IS REPEATEDLY stated by Whites, not only in the government, that Indians are "unassimilable", Indians claim with equal insistence that they are an integral part of South African society.[1] Both approaches are politically motivated, the former to justify exclusion and "repatriation", the latter to win security and acceptance. In this book I am not concerned with the blunt political issues, but with the more complex realities of adaptation.

It has become obvious that assimilation is a reciprocal process requiring as the first essential not only a readiness by the Indians to be assimilated but a willingness by the Whites to assimilate. The Indians, despite exclusion and rejection, have made many major adaptations to the South African social environment. I deliberately avoid writing of "South African culture" for there is no clear-cut culture of South Africa, only an overlapping of various sub-cultures in which each appears to be marginal to everything but itself.

Even the Durban Whites are culturally diverse. Not all are born in Natal, nor even in other parts of the Union; nor do they all speak the same language, and the two official languages, English and Afrikaans, have come to represent differences in political allegiances and social values. In religion they are mainly Anglicans and Protestant, but on the vital issue of colour, there is a wide cleavage between the Afrikaans speaking Protestants (15%) and other Christian groups. The Jews in Durban

[1] For recent government pronouncements, see speeches made by the Minister of the Interior: Senate, 31 January, 1956, *Hansard* 3 cols, 495/514; Assembly, 9 May, 1956, *Hansard*, 15 cols, 5260/8.
For the Indian viewpoint, see S. Cooppan and A. D. Lazarus, "The Indians as an Integral Part of South African Society", in *The Indian as a South African*, Institute of Race Relations, 1956, pp. 55-73.
Somasandarum Cooppan, "The Indian Outlook", in *Africa in Transition* ed. Prudence Smith, London, 1958, pp. 158/168.
S. Cooppan and B. A. Naidoo, "Indian adjustments to urbanisation", *Race Relations Journal*, 1955, No. 2.

are another small group (only 3%) more culturally selfconscious and isolated through oblique anti-semitism than in other cities of South Africa. Cutting through the silken bonds of religious orthodoxy are the sharp edges of economic and social class. Distinction is intensified by the fact that the group which has the lowest mean income is Afrikaans speaking—reflecting in an increasingly industrialised milieu the more limited skills of their rural background.

The non-Whites, the term extended to Africans (Natives), Coloureds and Asians, are also internally divided into interacting and often hostile sub-cultures of their own. Even Durban Africans, though relatively homogeneous, are becoming increasingly stratified by religion and occupation.

Though the terms Europeans, Africans, Asians, Indians are applied to the 'races' of South Africa, criteria for defining each 'race' reflect the unscientific basis of classification, and the fallacy (useful for political purposes) of identifying race with culture. Pigmentation is the dominant mark of discrimination, but further and not consistent characteristics, are also introduced.

The Population Registration Act, which will fix a person and his descendants for all time in a rigid uniform of colour[1] defines a "White person" as "a person who in appearance obviously is, or who is generally accepted as a white person, but does not include a person, who, although in appearance obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a coloured person". A "native" is defined as a "person who in fact is or is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa". No less than eleven other definitions of 'native' exist in South African legislation, action being determined by the definition contained in that particular law, so that in one situation a person may be deemed a native, and in others not. A "coloured person", as is customary in South Africa, is negatively defined as "not a white person or a native".[2]

In this major act of racial definitions, no separate definition was given of Asian, or Indian. They were included by implication among the Coloured, though in other legislation they

[1] For a fuller analysis of this concept see H. Kuper, *The Uniform of Colour*, Witwatersrand University Press, 1947, especially pp. 26-48.
[2] *Population Registration Act*, No. 30, 1950.

were dealt with as a distinct category, or sub-divided for specific situations into Indian Immigrants and Passenger Indians.[1]

The Group Areas Act[2] subsequently introduced somewhat different definitions, placing on the individual in a particular category the onus to prove his right to that category if challenged. One of the confusing results is that a person who is White in appearance, but is generally accepted as a Coloured, might be classified as Coloured under the Population Registration Act; but under the Group Areas Act he may, on the basis of appearance, be classified as White unless an allegation is made, which he cannot disprove, that he is really Coloured.[3] By Proclamation under the Act, the Minister of the Interior is enabled when proclaiming any area to distinguish an Indian on the grounds that such person in fact is, or is generally accepted as a member of a race or tribe whose national home is in India or Pakistan. But also under the Act, a person's racial category may be changed by intermarriage, and a Coloured woman who marries or cohabits with an African or Indian is deemed to have become an African or Indian respectively, and an Indian or African woman who marries or cohabits with a Coloured man becomes a Coloured. Children of Mixed Marriages may live with the father's group during their minority but later, on the grounds of appearance, may officially be given the racial identity of the mother.

An Inter-Departmental Committee, appointed by the Minister of the Interior to investigate whether it was possible to arrive at common definitions of the various racial groups for the purpose of all legislation, reported in 1957, after a period of trial, that the task was beyond its powers; but the Minister asked members to try again.

Interesting comparisons can be drawn between the adaptation of Indians and Africans to the South African situation. In other countries, comparison might with more validity have been drawn between Indians and other immigrant groups in

[1] Eg. Indian Immigration Law, No. 25/1891; Indians Relief Act, 22/1914; Births, Marriages and Deaths Act, 17/1923.

[2] *Group Areas Act (Consolidated)*, No. 77, 1957.

[3] For a full exposition see Muriel Horrell *Race Classification in South Africa*, South African Institute of Race Relations, 1958.

their assimilation to a "host" society, by such techniques as naturalisation, joint education, and steady inclusion in the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship. But in South Africa only "white" immigrants are treated in this way; all Indians are regarded as "non-Whites".

Superficially a traditional "Native" (African) culture has been persistently preserved in a vast network of legislation. This is particularly the case in Natal, where the Natal Code of Native Laws passed in 1891 attempts to codify indigenous rules relating to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and other aspects of social life insofar as they are deemed "not opposed to the principles of public policy or natural justice" as interpreted by special "native courts". In addition, a number of special laws are applicable only to Africans. These include the pass laws, curfew regulations, regulations for registration of Africans, Master and Servants Laws; the largest proportion of prosecutions each year is under these laws relating specifically to the control of Africans. There are furthermore laws that, while not specifying Africans directly, exclude them from various occupations and organisations.

Indian culture received no comparable recognition, or punishment. On the contrary, the 'uplift clause' of the Cape Town Agreement encouraged the adoption of Western standards. The merits or demerits of any particular Indian institution were not considered. Matters brought by Indians to the courts are dealt with under Roman Dutch Law (the law developed by White South Africans) and not by Hindu, Moslem or any 'Indian customary law'.[1] In comparison with Africans, the margin of personal freedom of Indians is wider—their movements are less restricted and their personal dignity is less directly violated by police interference. But in relation to Europeans, Indians as we saw are discriminated against, and the approach to them can be cryptically stated as 'positively negative'—they are not encouraged to pursue their own culture and they are excluded from assimilation in White institutions.

[1] At the same time considerable confusion has arisen through the classification of Indians into Immigrants and Passengers and the large number of marriages across this artificial division. The validity of these marriages is uncertain in law, with particularly serious effects on the rights of children and widows.

Thus while it might appear from the legal situation in which Africans have been singled out under the most far-reaching legislation, that African culture would be more persistent than Indian, on deeper analysis we realise that this is not necessarily the case. There is confusion and conflict for the individual African, affected in basic personal relationship by different evaluations of his own customs as well as by different legal systems—Native customary law and South African Common Law, and it is clear that the so-called 'Native' culture of the present is an artificial abstraction, an anachronism in a constantly changing milieu. The process of adaptation is complex and uneven. Legislation may give to social change a direction and an impetus, but it is a sociological truism that alone it is not sufficient to control change: a law may produce repercussions far beyond its explicitly defined ends, and, without support from the people for whom it was designed may evoke, consciously or unconsciously, the opposite reaction.

Politically, the structure but not the substance, of traditional African chieftainship is retained. The Africans in Natal are mainly descendants of various Nguni clans welded by the military ability of Chaka into the powerful Zulu tribe in the first half of the 19th century. Though, in 1879, the Zulu lost their independence to the British, and their chief Cetswayo was sent into exile, chieftainship was preserved and chiefs have been maintained and created by successive South African governments; by the Natal Code the Governor-General is 'Supreme Chief'. At the present time, the authority of government supported chiefs is being more strongly asserted than formerly for Africans in towns as well as reserves. At the same time the foundation of tribal allegiance, control over the distribution of land, has been transferred to the white government, and the traditional military, legal and economic powers of chiefs have been taken from them in whole or in part. In urban areas, where men of different tribes work and live together, tribal ties are often secondary to wider African loyalties, and effective leadership is passing, and in many situations has passed, to educated or wealthy commoners drawn from an emerging middle class.

Indians, legally uncommitted to any traditional pattern of control, have not the same conflict between traditional and

Western forms of authority. It is noteworthy that in South Africa the caste system has broken down more effectively than in India though in South Africa no positive attempt was made to legislate it out of existence. The South African Indian political organisations, both Protest and Compromise, are non-traditional in structure, though the technique of non-violence, associated with Indian political struggle in South Africa, is based on Hindu philosophy.

Indians support their moral claim for assimilation by indicating the contribution they have made to the prosperity and economic development of South Africa. They provided efficient labour for agriculture and industry, and, being already familiar with the incentives and mechanisms of a monetary system, entered easily into commerce. There have been less restrictions on Indians than on Africans in economic development. Indians have been able, within limits, to invest in land and property; Africans have not had the same scope. The principle of communal ownership of land was perpetuated in the tribal Reserves, freehold tenure—a legal right introduced by the Whites—was everywhere restricted for the Africans, and the relationship of tenant to landlord (European or Indian) was developed in the towns. However, Indian property rights are not secure. In a country governed by racial laws, economic integration may be interpreted by the master race as an attack on its privileges and not only must this be checked but a recurrence of the danger must be eliminated. Indian 'integration' is being undermined at two levels: firstly the avenues of employment for Indians are being increasingly restricted and more and more Africans are being employed in their place, and secondly the main investment of Indians—property—is being taken from them by Whites under cover of Group Areas.

African adjustment to Western industrialism and a money economy has been slower, and more difficult, yet the effects have been more fundamental. While treated politically as tribesmen, the labour demands of the new economy brought an increasing number of Africans into the city. The initial demand was for men, and housing and wages were fixed by standards assessed for single workers; when women followed the men, and most of them also came as workers, a limited number of

married quarters were provided but most towns in the Union are still characterised by a disproportion of adult able-bodied men while in tribal areas there is a preponderance of women, children and old people. In the traditional culture, wives, cattle and grain were the main indices of wealth, specialisation of labour was limited, goods were exchanged by barter, and wage labour on an individual competitive basis was contrary to tribal mores. All this is changing. The majority of Africans spend much of their adult life working for wages, new technological skills are being acquired, and symbols of prestige are related to urban ambitions—Western clothing, cars, furniture. Unlike Indians, however, Africans have not been able to express themselves in home ownership. Land in tribal areas cannot be sold, and since 1913, Africans have been virtually prohibited from purchasing land in urban areas. The municipal locations where they are "housed" as tenants are conspicuous by their monotonous uniformity.

In both Indian and African societies, the elementary family, the unit in an extended kinship system, was the centre for inculcating social norms, but statistics of divorce, illegitimacy and delinquency reflect the greater stability of Indian family life in an urban environment. These can be related to two important facts: firstly Indians did not suffer the social disequilibrium resulting from a migrant labour policy, and secondly, once the women were freed from identure, they were insulated from outside contact. Their emancipation was checked not only the by the outlook of the males, but by their willingness in the past to accept the sheltered, and highly honoured status, of wife and mother.

The African family, particularly in the urban areas, is often incomplete and insecure and the burden of adjustment is borne by the woman. African tradition, like Indian tradition, emphasises the legal superiority of men, but in the town, African women were better able to match their economic independence against any enforced inferiority.

The urbanisation of small-scale isolated societies has been shown to be accompanied by secularisation.[1] This is true of

[1] Robert Redfield. *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*, Chigaco, 1941; *Peasant Society and Culture*, Chicago, 1956. Godfrey and Monica Wilson, *Analysis of Social Change*, Cambridge, 1945.

African society in Durban. That Hinduism has retained and even extended it hold over certain sections of the people reflects the more wide scale structure of the society in which it was rooted. By virtue of its universal outlook, it has been better able to resolve multi-racial conflicts than the tribal ancestral cult of Africans, and to form the basis of associations which adapt its believers to the impersonality and individualism which are further characteristics of city life. African associations on the other hand could not be formulated within the narrow confines of ancestral worship, and are based on tribal (political) loyalties, the new religion of Christianity, or on secular interests.

Magic and witchcraft beliefs have little place in the weltanschauung of Sanskritic Hinduism which is gaining ground over the more backward village cults practised by some of the early immigrants. Nor are they compatible with the Western empiricism inculcated in the schools attended by Indian children. But among the Africans schools are fewer, teachers less qualified, and educational opportunities more restricted, and in the town as well as the tribal reserves these beliefs persist and flourish. Magic is extended to urban situations—the finding of a job, the successful sale of beer, the evasion of penalties for breach of various laws. And witchcraft, the traditional mode of recognising hostility, is attributed to a wider, and more anonymous range of enemies.[1]

Hindu culture in South Africa derives its strength largely from the existence of a traditional literature which provides the reference for many ordinary as well as special occasions. South African Indians are proudly aware that a great civilisation flourished in India when Europe was still without literature or refinement. Even the illiterates are aware of the existence of their heritage, and have some acquaintance with the contents through participation in its rituals. The *guru* (teacher), is honoured together with the parents, and the value of learning is indoctrinated from childhood. Much modern writing is religiously inspired, and in South Africa realistic fiction by Indians is rare.

[1] See H. Kuper "Childrearing among Africans and Indians in Durban", in *Medicine and Community Living*, ed. Sidney Kark (in preparation for publication by E. and S. Livingstone).

Africans have no written tradition of their own to which they can turn for reassurance and guidance. Their heroes are warriors, not priests or teachers. The records of their past, and often of their present, are set down by anthropologists and lawmakers, and have neither the sanctity nor the inspired wisdom of traditional sages. Moreover educated Africans are generally contemptuous of the illiterate tribesman whom they describe as ignorant or "backward". Unlike modern Indian writings, the emerging African literature deals with real life and down to earth situations.

Free from the legal imposition of customs from the past, yet rooted in an ancient and literate tradition, Indians have selected more selfconsciously than Africans, retaining as well as abandoning ancient institutions and customs. More deliberately than most immigrants, forced into self-consciousness by exclusion, they have sought to create a synthesis between past and future in order to protect themselves against the insecurity of the present.

In a slowly changing homogeneous society it may be possible for the individual to adjust without building small closed social systems for protection of the ego, but in heterogeneous societies undergoing rapid change it appears that there is an inevitable drive for the individual to commit himself to a particular group or groups. Assailed on one side by rising African nationalism and on the other by increasing European antagonism, the small heterogeneous Indian population has developed its own complex pattern of identification. A community of struggle is not sufficient to create a united community. "Protest" leaders attempt to work with Africans, "compromise" leaders with White politicians, there are separate Indian religious, linguistic and cultural groups, numerous associations that sometimes work together, sometimes separately, and sometimes against each other. It is by reaction to an externally imposed identity that there are 'Indian South Africans'.

Africans, despite increasing specialisation, retain a more positive identity and though sociologists, looking at the situation

analytically, may regard them as well as Indians as a minority,[1] (being subject to discrimination and exclusion) their numerically greater strength is an important factor, distinguishing Indian and African development. They claim Africa as their land by right of prior occupation and are beginning to demonstrate their economic as well as physical and political power.

Like the Jews in other countries, the Indians in South Africa can be, and have been used as a scapegoat by other national groups. Sufficiently wealthy to serve as bait for greed, too few to be feared, and, in the main, ideologically opposed to counter aggression with physical violence, their ethnic difference and cultural diversity serve as excuses for discrimination and oppression. Characteristic of many South African Hindu gatherings is the *Shanti Path* (Hymn of Peace) culminating in the appeal 'Aum Shanti. Shanti. Shanti' ('God. Peace. Peace. Peace').

F I N I S

[1] Louis Wirth 'The Problem of Minority Groups' in *The Science of Man in the World Crisis*, ed. Ralph Linton, New York, 1945.
G. Simpson and J. Yinger. *Racial and Cultural Minorities*. New York, 1953.

APPENDIX II

TABLE II

CASTE NAMES AND HOME DISTRICTS OF INDENTURED INDIANS ON THE S.S. CONGELLA, FROM CALCUTTA, 1st MAY, 1889

No. of Persons	*Caste*	*Traditional Occupation*	*District*
3	Musulman		Basti (Northern Province).
2	Barhai	Carpenters (Hutton, p. 275).	Etawah (Northern Province).
30	Kahar	Fishermen, porters, domestic servants, well sinkers and cultivators of water nuts (Hutton, p. 281).	Allahabad, Bahraich, Sultanpur, Azimgurh, Basti, Unao, Benares.
10	Chuttri (Kshatriya)	Rulers and Warriors.	Fyzabad, Barabauki, Gonda, Azimgurh.
22	Koli	Cultivators and labourers (Hutton, p. 19, p. 283)	Etawah, Gonda, Hannipur, Pertabgurh, Babraich, Sultanpur, Ghazipur, Basti.
7	Kalwar	Distillers and liquor sellers (Hutton, p. 281).	Cawnpore, Fyzabad, Jawnpur, Gonda, Bareilly.
90	Chamar	Skinners, tanners, and workers in leather (Hutton, p. 277).	Allahabad, Azimgurh, Babraich, Benares, Basti, Ghazipur, Ballia, Fatehpur, Unao, Aushabad, Jawnpur.
15	Passi (Pāsi)	Toddy drawers (Hutton, p. 289).	Bara Bauki, Unao, Pertabgurh, Sultanpur, Babraich.
9	Bhar	Formerly of some political and social importance, now low caste (Hutton, p. 275).	Azamburh.
1	Nao (Nai)	Barbers (Hutton, p. 287).	Azamburh.

No. of Persons	*Caste*	*Traditional Occupation*	*District*
1	Māli	Domestic and market gardeners (Hutton, p. 285).	Farackabad (Farrukhabad), (Northern Province).
6	Thakur (Singhs)	(Thakur is an administrative post).	Nepal, Jalwan, Benares, Gurgaon, (Punjab), Cawnpore.
12	Kunbi	Cultivating caste (Hutton, p. 284).	Pertabgurh, Basti, Bahraich, Lucknow, Mirzapur, Nepal (1).
2	Kurmi		
39	Ahir	Graziers and cowherds (Hutton, p. 274).	Allahabad, Fyzabad, Ballia, Benares, Ghazipur, Gonda, Azimbur, Unao, Basti, Cawnpore, Sultanpur.
1	Bares (Bauri)	Field labourers in Bengal and Bihar (Hutton, p. 275).	Allahabad.
1	Lōhār	Blacksmith (Hutton, p. 284).	Etawah.
14	Besadh (Dusadh)		Ballia, Saran, Chapra.
1	Kewot	Fishing and cultivating caste of upper India (Hutton, p. 282).	Gorakhpur.
1	Māla	Labourers and village servants (Hutton, p. 285).	Azimgur.
6	Gareri	Shepherds—low caste.	Allahabad, Sultanpur, Cawnpur, Bahraich.
2	Goria		Allahabad, Gonda.
1	Bhooj	Popcorn makers—low caste.	
1	Dhobi	Washerman (Hutton, p. 278).	Gonda (Northern Province).
2	Kabaria		Gonda.
11	Ladh (Lonia)		Bahraich, Lucknow, Gonda, Unao.
2	Kumbar (Kumhar)	Potter (Hutton, p. 284).	Bareilly, Ghazipur.

No. of Persons	Caste	Traditional Occupation	District
1	Machee (Mahli) ..	Labourers, porters and basket makers (Hutton, p. 285).	Cawnpore.
9	Goala	Cattle breeders and milkmen (Hutton, p. 279).	Gorakhpur, Basti, Saran.
3	Thapa		Nepal.
13	Bhur ..		Ghazipur, Mahput, Ballia, Benares (Northern Provinces).
3	Dhangar	Shepherd (Hutton, p. 278).	Saran.
5	Kori, Koiri	Cultivating and market gardening (Hutton, p. 283).	Shahabad, Ballia, Jawnpur.
1	Bind	Cultivators and field labourers (Hutton, p. 276).	

Note.—Caste descriptions and districts are as given in the records of the Protector of Indian Immigrants. I have inserted in brackets under the caste name what appear to be the correct designations, and I have added in the next column additional information relating to traditional occupation. The references in brackets, under traditional occupation, are to Hutton, J. H. *Caste in India*, Oxford University Press, 1951.

TABLE III

CASTE NAMES AND HOME DISTRICTS OF INDENTURED INDIANS ON THE S.S. UMTATA FROM MADRAS, 28th JUNE, 1891

No. of Persons	Caste	Traditional Occupation	District
8	Chakkili (Chakli) ..	Tamil caste of Leather workers (Hutton, p. 277).	Coimbatore, Madina, North Arcot, Nellore.
	Madiga	Telugu caste of leather workers (Hutton, p. 284).	Nellore.
89	Pariah (Paraiyan) ..	Tamil caste of field labourers and village servants—an 'exterior caste' (Hutton, p. 289).	South Arcot, Nilgiri, Salem, Chingleput, Coimbatore, Bangalore, North Arcot, Madras.
5	Padayachee	(Synonym of title of Palli or Vanniyan—claim Kshatriya origin.) (Thurston, Vol. V, p. 447, vol. VI, pp. 1—38)	Tanjore, South Arcot.
7	Govender Goundon	(Title Goundan appended as caste name by some agricultural classes.—Thurston, vol. II, p. 300).	Coimbatore, Salem, North Arcot, Chingleput.
	Velama	Telugu agriculturalists (Thurston, Vol. VII, pp. 336—342).	Nellore.
27	Vellala .. .. .. / Pillay	Tamil cultivators (Hutton, p. 294, Thurston, Vol. VII, pp. 361—388).	Salem, Tanjore, Tiruvelly, Travancore, Cochin, Coimbatore, Bangalore, Malabar, North Arcot.
135	Vannia (Vanniyan) ..	Equivalent of Palli—agricultural caste. Claiming Kshatriya origin (Hutton, p. 288; Thurston, vol. VII, p. 321).	North Arcot, Chingleput, South Arcot, Nellore, Madras, Pondicherry.
1	Basher (Bestha) ..	Telugu hunters, fishers, agriculturalists, Palanquin bearers, cooks (Thurston, vol. I, pp. 218—222).	North Arcot.

No. of Persons	Caste	Traditional Occupation	District
1	Naidu (Title used by many Telugu castes, e.g. Balija, Velama, Kapu, Thurston, vol. V, p. 138).		Chingleput.
1	Polegor (Poligar) ..	Fendal chiefs, landowners, predatory classes. (Thurston, vol. VI, pp. 205—206).	North Arcot.
13	Reddi (Title among Kapu)	(Hutton, p. 290).	Bangalore, Ganjam, Madura, North Arcot.
2	Redikulu (Reddi) ..		Mysore, Chingleput.
2	Kapu	Primarily cultivators—in some districts they rank next to Brahman and claim Rajput origin (Hutton, p. 282, Thurston, vol. III, pp. 222—248).	Cuddapah, Vizagapatam.
14	Baliji (Balija)	Telugu Trading (Hutton, p. 275).	N. Arcot, Cuddapah, Nellore, Salem, S. Arcot.
1	Mathiguda (Mathiga?)		Bangalore, Kalahasti.
4	Golla	Telugu herdsmen, cattle breeders and milkmen (Hutton, p. 279; Thurston, vol. II, p. 284—296).	Madura, Bangalore. Trichinopoly.
1	Golla(der)	Telugu herdsmen, cattle breeders and milkmen (Hutton, p. 279; Thurston, vol. II, p. 284—296).	Salem.
1	Yadvala (Yadava) subdivision of Golla (Thurston, vol. VII, p. 415).		North Arcot.
7	Naiker / Naik	Title for vaious Tamil, Telugu and others (Thurston, vol. V, pp. 138—140).	Chingleput, South Arcot, Coimbatore.
1	Kopulavada (Koppala). Section of Velama (Thurston, vol. III, p. 424).		Nellore.
	Sheik Imam, Rewther		Coimbatore.
	Hussan Rowlter, Iothia		

No. of Persons	Caste	Traditional Occupation	District
2	Labbai. Muslims of Tamil origin.	Traders, fishermen, etc. (Thurston, vol. IV, pp. 198—205).	Malabar, Coimbatore.
3	Nāyar	Warriors, oil sellers, potters, herdsmen, barbers and others (Hutton, p. 288; Thurston, vol. V, pp. 283—412).	Malabar.
15	Christian		Trichinopoly, North Arcot, Belgaum (Bombay), Nellore, 'Women from French Territory', Cuddapah.
11	Mussalman		Malabar, Salem, Chingleput, North Arcot, Nilgiris, Nellore.
1	Nesatain (Nese) ..	Weavers (Thurston, vol. V, p. 414).	Cochin State.
6	Agamudia (Agamudaiyan)..	Tamil cultivating caste (Thurston, vol. I, pp. 5—16).	Malabar, North Arcot, Coimbatore, Madura.
4	Palli	Agricultural caste claiming Kshatriya origin (Hutton, p. 288).	Coimbatore, Madura.
3	Telugu Chetty (Chetti)..	Chetty bankers, brokers, shopkeepers, moneylenders, corresponds to Bariya of North (Hutton, p. 278).	Coimbatore.
1	Devanga Chetty (Chetti)	Bankers, brokers, shopkeepers, etc. (Hutton, p. 278).	Coimbatore.
1	Kurumba (Kuruba)	Shepherds, weavers and stonemasons (Hutton, p. 284; Thurston, vol. IV, pp. 155—176).	Coimbatore.

No. of Persons	Caste	Traditional Occupation	District
1	Muduli (Mudali) ..	Title of Vellala, Pillai-others (Thurston, vol. V, p. 84).	Chingleput.
1	Vadugu (Vadugan)..	Applied to different Telugu castes (Thurston, vol. VII, p. 266).	Bangalore.
1	Elavaniya..		Tiruvan Malai.
1	Gondha (Gond) ..	Tribe in Central India (Hutton, p. 279).	
	(Gondaliga)	Mendicants in the South (Thurston, pp. 296—297).	Cuddapah.
4	S(h)ahar (Shaha) ..	Distillers, liquor-sellers and shopkeepers in Bengal (Hutton, p. 291).	North Arcot, Travancore, Malabar.
8	Odda (Odde)	Migratory caste of earthworkers (Hutton, p. 288; Thurston, vol. V, p. 422—436).	North Arcot, Coimbatore, Salem.
1	Korava	Nomad fortune tellers, quacks (Hutton, p. 283).	North Arcot.
1	Marava (Maravam)	Cultivating, marauding, cattle lifting caste (Hutton, p. 285).	Madura.
1	Sooba Naiker Kammavan	Telugu peasant owners and cultivators (Hutton, p. 282).	North Arcot.
4	Kamavaru (Kammavan)	Telugu peasant owners and cultivators (Hutton, p. 282).	North Arcot, Nellore, Coimbatore.
10	Kavarai	Telugu traders in Tamilland (Thurston, vol. III, pp. 263—266).	Coimbatore, Nellore, Trichinopoly, North Arcot.
1	Gana Sing Maharatu (Maharathi)	Tailors, messengers, etc. (Thurston, vol. V, pp. 14—22).	Vellore.
1	Marathi	Tailors, messengers, etc. (Thurston, vol. V, pp. 14—22).	North Arcot.
1	Korwa	Hill or forest tribe (Hutton, p. 283).	North Arcot.
5	Edaya (Odiya) ..	Mixed caste (Thurston, vol. V, pp. 436—438).	North Arcot, Chingleput.

No. of Persons	Caste	Traditional Occupation	District
8	Sudra	Fourth Varna (Hutton, pp. 64—66).	Godavery, Vizagapatam.
1	Mala..	Telugu—fieldworkers, labourers and village servants (Hutton, p. 285).	Vizagapatam.
10	Malavadu (Mala ?) ..	Telugu—fieldworkers, labourers and village servants (Hutton, p. 285).	Nellore, North Arcot.
24	Malavetan	Primitive tribe (Hutton, p. 9 and p. 285).	North Arcot, Nellore, Chingleput, Trinnevelly.
3	T(h)elaga	Cultivating and military caste (Hutton, p. 292; Thurston, vol. VII, pp. 13—14).	Vizagapatam, Nellore.
3	Thelarga (Telarga) ..	Cultivating and military caste (Hutton, p. 292).	Vizagapatam, Nellore.
1	Devanga	Weavers, (Hutton, p. 279; Thurston, vol. II, pp. 154—165).	Vizagapatam.
1	Kumsala		Ganjam.
1	Sali (Sale)	Telugu weavers (Thurston, vol. VI, pp. 265—277).	Vizagapatam.
1	Kalingulu (Kalingi)	Agriculturalists (Thurston, vol. III, pp. 47—52).	Ganjam.
13	Dhobi	Washermen (Hutton, p. 278).	North Arcot, Madras.
1	Kankal		Coimbatore.
1	Thavaraj		Salem.
2	Wuddan (Wudder) ..	Migratory caste of earthworkers (Thurston, vol. VII, p. 412 and vol. V, pp. 422—436).	
15	Maravan	Cultivating, marauding, cattle lifting caste (Hutton, p. 285).	Tiruvannamalai, Madura.

Note.—References are to Hutton, *op. cit.*, and to Thurston, E., *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Madras Government Press, 1909.

APPENDIX III

Four Examples of South African Hindu Public Temples

HINDU TEMPLES vary in style, social organisation and content, as can be seen from the following brief illustrations.

(*a*) The Mariamma Temple, on the main South Coast road from Durban, and near Isipingo, is a non-Brahminic Temple privately owned by a Tamil family calling themselves Moodleys (i.e. they are not of the priestly caste). The founder of the temple, the great-grandfather of the present family head, was a "*poojari*" (temple oracle) who "got the spirit" and who could read the almanac. Neither his sons nor sons' sons are *poojari* who 'get the spirit', but they continue to read the almanac. In ordinary ceremonies a younger brother of the family officiates. For special occasions when the 'spirits' are required, the family hires an old man (Mr Chinsami) who gets the spirits of three deities described as Mariamma, Muni and Perumalsami.

The temple faces east and is set in approximately 3 acres of land with many trees, including a syringa tree brought from India, and a coconut palm planted in 1870 by the first owner. The site was chosen because in it is the hole of a sacred snake (*Nag*). The *Nag* is believed to come out once a year, and is described as a cobra having a red jewel in its head. It is given daily offerings of milk and eggs, and near the hole at the back of the temple is a tree trunk shaped like a cobra head, which is anointed with yellow and red powder. Facing the temple, on the southern side, is a pool for ablutions, and also a tap. Steps lead up to the temple verandah in front on which are three tall wooden poles (*kodi*), decorated with syringa leaves, and to which special flags are attached during certain festivals. In front of the *kodi* are mounds, about two feet high of a black tar-like substance brought originally from India, which taper upwards and then bulge slightly again. Smaller lumps are on the sides, and the caretaker explained that these marked the "spot" diseases associated with the central deity, Mariamma. On these mounds are small miniatures in tin and silver in the shape of eyes, hands,

arms, fingers, torso and stomach with conspicuous navel; these are offerings made by grateful devotees to the goddess. Behind the mounds are shapes of lions, (Simbu, Karadi and Puli), and behind them three *kavali* (guardians) representing Ganessa, Madurai Veeran and Munesvaram, guarding respectively Subrahmanya, Mariamma and Perumalsami. The temple is whitewashed, and the roof is decorated with a lion at each corner, and figures of various deities and associated animals between.

The verandah leads into the outer temple, the walls of which are decorated with brightly coloured lithographs selected without discrimination from the Hindu pantheon, and in two small recesses in the wall are images of Mariamma dressed in bright cloth with yellow silk draped round her shoulders and the *Nag* protecting her. Garlands and *mala* (necklaces) of silver and holy beads are round her neck, and one of the images also had a *tali* (marriage necklace) the first time I was there, presented her by a woman who, having lost six children, dedicated her new baby girl to Mariamma, and on her marriage, the husband had first to put a *tali* round the neck of the goddess.

Leading from the outer hall were the three shrines, each with its deity. On the left was Subrahmanya, dark and frightening, with the "needles" used by devotees during the *Kavady* ceremony held in his honour; in the centre was Mariamma gaily adorned and in striking contrast to Subrahmanya; and in the third was Perumalsami, squat and manlike, the deity worshipped by Tamil during the month of *puratassi* when prayers and offerings (but no "blood" sacrifices) are made. In front of each deity were trays of offerings. No flesh is ever brought inside the temple, but on the special days that Mariamma is worshipped, sacrifices of goats and fowls are made to her, special places being built outside where the slaughter takes place. In a building adjoining the main temple, are sheds and in one locked room was a brightly painted and elaborately decorated chariot, built in the form of a lion with the wings of a bird, and decorated with a multi-headed coiled snake, the crest of which towered like an umbrella to protect the goddess Mariamma who, on the great day, would be seated in the chariot and driven round the district. The body of the snake rested on an enormous

tortoise, which according to mythology, carried the goddess, protected by the Nag, across the seas to her new home.

(*b*) More simple and more typical is the Laxmi Narayan Mandil, in the industrial area of Clairwood, a temple built by community donations. It is a Hindi temple in the charge of a Brahmin appointed by trustees. He is South African born, relatively uneducated, and very devout; he 'never misses' saying the *sandhya* each morning before he carries out his temple duties, anointing the images and renewing the oil in the sacred lamps. To people who come to him with their troubles, he gives sacred ash or he may recite sacred mantra. He is critical of the *poojari* who 'gets the trance'.

The sacred tulsi plant and a few shrubs are cultivated in the small yard, in one corner of which are *jhunda* (ritual bamboo poles with red flags). Near to them is a stone with water dripping on it 'to keep it cool'; this, the Brahmin explained, represented the stone Rama used to part the waters at one stage of his perilous exile, and it also stood for Rama himself, because during his absence people represented him by a stone. His explanation was contradicted by an old man, who said: "No, that stone is Siva's *lingam*."

The temple is divided into two parts—the verandah which is without any *kavali* (guards) or ornamentation, and the main hall from which lead four shrines, each with an image: Ganessa, Krishna with his love Radha protected by the snake Shesh, and circled by a lotus; Parvati, wife of Siva; and Hanuman, the monkey god. These images are all of marble, and there are also a number of smaller figures in brass. Round the rest of the walls are pictures of Hanuman, Rama and Sita, and Krishna. The main body of the hall is used by the Brahmin for typical ritual objects: sacred lamps, a conch shell, peacock feathers, a brass bell which he rings when worshippers enter, trays of various ritual substances including flowers, holy ash, incense, and brass *lotas* (urns) with water and milk.

In addition to the main temple, there is a smaller temple privately built by a man from Umgeni on the North Coast entirely at his own expense as an offering to Parvati, who "helped him in his troubles". He comes there for special ceremonies, and it

is open to the public which now maintains it. Inside, there are images of Parvati, Vishnu, and other related deities. Outside, is a notice in English: "Please take off shoes".

On Sunday mornings at 9 o'clock the *havan*, sacred fire ritual, is performed, and in the afternoon the Brahmin and other devotees read from the Ramayana in Hindi. In this temple only Brahminic ceremonies are performed and only clean offerings (i.e. no blood sacrifice) accepted. Attached to the temple is a Government-aided Indian school with some 300 pupils who learn both English and Hindi. The school goes up to Standard III, but higher classes will start when the demand increases. Over the week-end the school hall is hired for weddings, the money contributing to temple upkeep.

(*c*) Somewhat different again is the Sthree Vaithianatha Easperar Vishnu Temple in Umgeni Road, one of the largest in Durban. Amongst other sacred trees are the "*haressaan* and *vimboo*", close together and representing male and female. If girls have difficulty in getting husbands, or if women cannot conceive, they may be instructed to go around these trees a specified number of times. In this temple yard, peacocks wander freely.

This temple too is public property, of considerable value, controlled by a board of trustees, who have appointed a 'care-taker', also described as *poojali*, of non-Brahminic caste. He does not get the trance or act as oracle. For special occasions the committee 'hires' priests versed in the appropriate literature, but only Tamil priests.

The main section of the temple is devoted to Vishnu, a smaller section to Siva. Vishnu is depicted as a giant with huge moustaches, seated on Garuda, the man-bird. Outside the Siva section, on a long verandah are *kodi* and within the main room are nine images, small, black, carefully adorned. They are propitiated for the removal of evil following action during an eclipse, or other inauspicious time; offerings of fruit, flowers, milk and cloth are made to each for nine consecutive days. The nine images have been described to me in English as "the planets that control human destiny". In addition to

these images, is a shrine to Subrahmanya, and this is another of the temples where *kavady* is carried in his honour.

In the temple grounds is a small lodge occupied by a young Swami who, though physically close to the temple, is spiritually remote from its rituals. He represents the Rama Krishna Centre in South Africa, preaches Vedanta, runs classes in Yoga, organises welfare activities, and edits *Jyoti*, The Light, a small quarterly journal. The main public ceremony of his Centre is called the Motherhood of God; it lasts for a week and is characterised by religious-educational lectures and slides, and singing of hymns.

(*d*) Our final example is a temple open to the public but built in the private garden of "the lady who gets Dundamari". She is a Tamil who, when asked about caste, replied: "No caste today." Her power came after an illness (see Chapter XII) and she deliberately invokes Dundamari on set days (Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays). The temple has no specific name, but is described by the name of the possessing deity or by the street. The temple is built of corrugated iron, with a slanting roof painted green, which is perhaps the only feature distinguishing it from an ordinary small outhouse. In the garden are a few ritual shrubs, a syringa tree, and a tap. The entrance to the temple is very clean. There is no verandah, and one walks directly into the shrine, on the walls of which are pictures of a few deities. At one end is a small table with a few brass ornaments, peacock feathers, ash, flowers and other sacred ingredients; seven clay pots, each with water, mango leaves and flowers, represent the "Seven Sisters", one of whom is Dundamari, described by the lady, through my Tamil interpreter, as a goddess to whom kings and warriors pray before going to battle.

Another feature not previously described, but also fairly common, is a large iron trident, 'Siva's sign', marked with red dots, to which a stout rope is attached. "This rope", continued the interpreter, "is to whip the evil spirits that sometimes trouble young girls and boys. They are spirits of people who have committed suicide, and their souls never get peace and settlement; therefore they roam about with the raging spirit until they get hold of someone to worry. Dundamari gives me the instruction

to whip, and the spirit gets frightened and runs away." Apart from driving out spirits, this trance-possessed treats other illnesses by ritually brushing the patient with a peacock feather or syringa leaves, and giving ashes and limes.

Dundamari "takes sacrifice", and goats and fowls are brought her on a specified day each *Chitray massum* (month of the Tamil New Year) in fulfilment of vows made by people she has helped, on the principle that "this is done because of life for life".

APPENDIX IV

Example of Religious Dramatic Performances: The drama (natak) of Sarwan Kumar

(*Written up from notes taken by Fatima Meer*)

One company puts on a play (*natak*) of Sarwan Kumar each year before a communal *Kali pooja* at Sea Cow Lake near Durban. The *Kali pooja* committee operates in the area attached to a Vishnu Temple financed by public donation. The *Natak* company performs without any charge.

The *Kali pooja* precedes Deepavali and is held in September in the period of Naurathan,[1] when female deities are generally worshipped. It is predominantly a Hindi ceremonial but not exclusively so, and other sections of the population join freely in the entertainment. A well-known Brahmin from the Springfield area in Durban was in charge of the religious ritual. Offerings of fruit and milk were made to the goddess, prayers were said and the sacred fire was lit for *havan*. The *pooja* itself has been performed on a communal level for fifty years, but the play has only been acted for fourteen years.

The leading members of the committee go on a vegetarian diet for two months before the *pooja* and the entire committee for nine days, during which period prayers are said daily. For the play, a huge tent was built in which some 3,000 people assembled. Women and children sat on the ground, the men and young boys on chairs arranged in a circle. This play took

[1] Spelt Navrathram in the Almanac — also known as Navrathree.

place in the day time on a Sunday, and people came in their best wear, treating the performance as a social occasion. Most of the people were from the locality, but there were some from areas as far afield as Riverside, Springvale, Briardene and Verulam. The stage was a raised platform constructed at the rear and devoid of all props except for a screen which marked it off from a small dressing-room under canvas. At the back of the stage was the orchestra consisting of harmonium and *tabla* (drum) players who sat cross-legged on the floor. The play to be enacted was the classical story of Sarwan Kumar, depicting the tribulations of parents, the power of filial devotion and the wickedness of the daughter-in-law. The following is a very brief summary of a nine hour performance. My informants, drawn from the crowd, were unable to tell me who each character represented, but some said that it was a religious play based on the Ramayana.

A man dressed in a *dhoti* with a white satin shirt, a red shawl worn diagonally over the shoulder, a red scarf round his neck, and with his face painted, came on to the stage, clasped his hands and sang a prayer in praise of Vishnu and Mahabir. He followed this with a dramatised speech on *dharma*—rather like a sermon—making little impression on the crowd which maintained a constant buzz of conversation. When he walked off the stage, a woman (i.e. a man dressed as a woman, as all the actors are men, who, for the female characters, wear saris and cosmetics), appeared with a lighted camphor on a tray and sang a song to Devi, the female form of God. Her husband followed her and a dialogue then took place between husband and wife, in which they discussed the principles of perfect marriage. Rama and Sita were eulogised. The wife then requested that the performance of Sarwan Kumar be enacted before the gathering, to revive the merits of a righteous son in the minds of the audience.

While the actors prepared for the main play, there was a short interlude in which a man and woman danced and sang a little ditty on the theme of:

"Wear jewels and cosmetics, oh ladies.
Drape yourselves in pretty veils."

This interlude was much appreciated but, traditionally, there is no clapping.

The couple went back-stage and a new character emerged. He was a fine man in *dhoti*, a Parsee topee, and a big artificial moustache. He entered singing sadly and followed by his wife. When he had finished singing, his wife asked him why he was so sad and if it were her fault; if so, she would try to ease his sadness. It then emerged that the couple were childless, and this was the cause of his sorrow. They prayed together and in answer to their prayer a figure dressed as a god, with flowing hair, appeared. It was Narayan, to whom they were praying. To test their faith, he told them to stop their meaningless mutterings to Narayan and said he would give them a rosary which would produce wealth for them for the rest of their lives. They spurned this offer, whereupon Narayan revealed himself and said he would grant them their wish, but to it was attached one condition: the moment they set eyes on the face of the child they would both become blind. They accepted this. "What is blindness if I can feel the dance of a babe on my lap", said the woman. The act ended, and a short musical humorous piece followed, depicting the courtship of a young man dressed like a clown and dancing all the time to an aloof female. This item was interspersed with wisecracks in English, and the applause at the end was tremendous.

Act II opened with the son, Sarwan, leading his blind parents and singing sadly of their misfortune. The parents were begging for food and told him for the first time the reason for their blindness. "If there be no offspring, life becomes a void." The son pledged himself to serve his parents. The priest of the locality then entered the stage and advised Sarwan to beg on his own and leave the old people. Sarwan refused and the priest commended him for his virtue. Sarwan's mother then asked him to marry, so that she could feel his children on her lap, and at first he refused, saying that his life was dedicated to their service. The priest replied, however, that the daughter-in-law could help tend them and undertook to make arrangements himself to find a bride. They agreed, but the three left the stage singing sadly, followed by the priest.

Act III opened with the commentator attacking the modern daughter-in-law who was not dedicated to her in-laws.

Sarwan and his wife came on as the commentator moved off.

Sarwan's wife was depicted as a particularly bad girl who, when Sarwan told her that he had married her so that she would look after his parents, flouted him, saying times are modern and it was not her duty to tend them. She sang a song with the theme "May the in-laws be set alight". He warned her in song of the reaction of the community to her behaviour and what her own misfortunes would be in the next world. He told her to reconsider her attitude lest she be forced to relent later.

The play continued with the tragedies which beset the lives of Sarwan and his parents at the hands of this daughter-in-law. The malice of the daughter-in-law was revealed when Sarwan accidentally tasted of the food which she had prepared for his parents and found that it was full of salt, whereas his own food was tasty. His parents had accepted the ill-treatment in silence. Sarwan lost his temper with his wife and showed his wrath by pulling her by her hair and throwing her on the ground, a traditional way of assaulting a woman. This was done very violently on the stage, to the accompaniment of a song culminating in his banishing her from his house. He then reaffirmed his devotion to his parents.

In the next scene his parents appeared not only blind but totally crippled and unable to move by themselves, whereupon Sarwan made a huge scale of two baskets slung across a pole, and in each he placed one of the parents. It required superhuman strength for him to carry them, but God came and helped him, and in this way he managed his burden and, as a reward, he was eternally blessed—and that was the end.

APPENDIX V

Example of two very different methods of celebrating the *Kulwutra* (sour porridge) ceremony by two Tamil families of similar economic and educational standards

(*a*) AT THE HOUSE of Mr P., a semi-educated Tamil gardener, *kulwutra* is an annual devotion held on the third Sunday of every Ardimassum. Special foods are prepared, the most important

being the *kul* (sour porridge, made from sour milk with a little spring onion and crushed syringa leaf). In the morning, after every member of the family has bathed and dressed in fresh clothing the mother places a little *kul* in a brass vessel near the *kamatchi velekoo* (house lamp) and the family prays to Marimutu, after which they all eat of the special foods.

Explaining this simple ceremony to me, Mr P. said that he had done this since his daughter got ill several years ago; the doctors had despaired of her, but he and his wife had continued to hope and pray, and in Ardimassum, the month of Mariamma the 'Mother goddess', she had got better and "wanting to show our gratitude in some way, we do this. We pray to Marimutu." "I thought you called her Mariamma?" "Mariamma and Marimutu,[1] same thing. It is perhaps old-fashioned," he continued. "Marimutu, to whom we pray is really a saint. Like Florence Nightingale. Long ago, there was a terrible epidemic—cholera or smallpox—and this woman went round, nursing people and telling them to eat only clean foods and drink porridge with onions and syringa as medicine. She saved a lot of people. There are lots of stories about her. Some of them are written down. And some backward people worship her with all sorts of sonsense. They haven't kept up with modern times. You shouldn't stick to the ox wagon when you can go on an aeroplane. Or look at Guy Fawkes—to keep that up is a waste of money."

(*b*) For Mrs C., also a semi-educated Tamil, *kulwutra* has become a personal experience in which she identifies herself bodily and emotionally with the goddess Mariamma through the trance. As a child, Mrs C. was very sickly and at the age of five her mother took her to a temple where a *poojari* (who himself got a "spirit" trance), explained that her mother must promise her daughter to Mariamma and give annual offerings. Her mother did as commanded, and when her daughter got married she continued the offerings herself. Several years later the spirit "caught her", and henceforth revealed itself each *kulwutra*. For

[1] Professor Srinivas suggests that this may be an endearing way of referring to Mari (the mother goddess of might euphemistically refer to the pox) (*muthu* is a *pearl*).

this great occasion Mrs C. "fasts"—goes on a strict vegetarian diet—for ten days. The ceremony itself begins on the 8th day, which she always fixes for a Friday, and for which she prepares special foods including sweet rice, milk, sugar, and spices, and the *kul*, prepared as by Mr P. from sour milk, onions and syringa leaves.

The following description of the *kulwutra* is based on my notes (15th September, 1954):

We (my assistant and I), arrived at 4 p.m. at Mrs. C.'s shack in Merebank where a temple of branches decorated with syringa leaves had been erected in the yard which was specially swept and sprinkled with cow's urine. With Mrs C. were her husband, his mother, a few neighbours and the *poojari* (temple oracle) who came from another area, and who directed activities. The women (all Tamil) prepared the offerings and placed some on banana leaves and some on brass trays, together with lighted camphor and a lot of water, at the temple entrance. A few feet from the main temple, they put a brick with another tray of offerings, and this brick was explained by the *poojari* as "Mariamma's policeman" (i.e. her guardian, Madurai Veeran) "the son who opens the way for the mother". By the time the preparations were complete it was almost dark. Two men with *woodika* drums, and two other devotees, each accompanied by relatives, arrived. All had bathed and dressed in fresh clothes. The *poojari* began to chant from a book: "Mariamma Thalathu". The musicians beat the drums. Mrs C. took the tray with camphor and circled it three times round each "god", placed it in front of the main altar, sprinkled round some water, then prostrated herself before both altars. The other devotees, beginning with her mother-in-law, did likewise. While the last one was still prostrating herself, Mrs C. began to tremble, put her hands together in an attitude of prayer, then suddenly shook her head violently. The *poojari* unbraided her hair, which fell long and loose over her shoulders, and then she began to dance round, swaying rhythmically and passionately.

Her husband was looking on, apparently unmoved, when his mother 'got the spirit' as well, and with flowing hair and wide staring eyes danced up to him and without speaking a word shook her finger at him admonishingly, conveying with the

greatest clarity that he must do no wrong. In her left hand she held a tray with camphor and holy ash and with the ash she put the sign of Siva on his forehead. Then she moved away, only to return and slowly repeat the performance. Her majestic behaviour was in marked contrast with that of a third woman who had never before had the trance, and who suddenly began jerking violently backwards and forwards, falling on her knees and banging herself on the ground. Then one of the other devotees got the trance and joined in, but each woman appeared to be acting quite independently of the others.

After about an hour, the "spirit" began to leave, its departure marked in each case by the possessed woman giving a shout "Goinda" while the drums beat faster. Then the women shook their heads, as though waking from a dream. Mrs C. seemed ashamed and went straight into her house, but after a while came out, neat and tidied, and pressed us to stay with the others who were there and partake of the offerings. Before the devotees left for their respective homes, the *poojari* tied a *kankam* (ritual bangle) on each of their right wrists, signifying their vow to the deity, and marked their foreheads with ash. He also told them that they had to remain pure till Sunday, the climax of the ceremony, sleep on the floor at night and avoid all flesh. (Sleeping on the floor is prescribed generally by the gods but not always adhered to for, as one woman put it: "Mariamma may say twenty things; you do ten, it is all right.")

Mrs C. went shopping on Saturday, and though she is a poor woman whose husband earns £2. 14s. 0d. per week, she spent £5. 14s. 0d. for she had to buy, in addition to fruits and sweetmeats and camphor, three fowls costing 13'- each.

On Sunday morning we came again to the area, and found Mrs C. and the others near a stream some distance from her home, since this part of the ceremony, known as *garo gum* (ritual pots) must be held near running water. A square had been cleared on the ground and sprinkled with turmeric water, and on it were three pots, one of clay and two of bronze, which the *poojari* and his two assistants were decorating. They represented Marimutu (same as Mariamma), Madurai Veeran and Perimulsami. Marimutu was decorated with turmeric and covered with marigolds; in front of Madurai Veeran was placed a trident, each

prong decorated with a lime, and round it was draped heavy rope dipped in turmeric. Perimulsami was a coconut tied with yellow ribbon. In front of the deities were trays with freshly cut fruit and long silver needles stuck in limes.

The devotees, beginning with Mrs. C.'s mother-in-law, did homage by prostrating themselves before the deities, after having circled them with trays with lighted camphor and ash. The musicians started beating drums and rattles, and the spirit began to wake in the people. The first to be "entered" was a young unmarried girl, who began panting and swaying while her mother unloosed her hair. The next to get the trance was Mrs C. senior; kneeling in front of Marimutu, she shouted 'Goinda'; then she pushed her tongue between her teeth and the *poojari* asked if she desired the needle. She nodded without speaking and, taking one of the long needles in the lime for Perimulsami, he pierced it right through her tongue. He dropped a little holy ash on the wound, from which no blood flowed. Then the 'trance' woman took the *thari* (tray) with ash, lighted camphor and lime and went to her daughter-in-law who, on being approached, started to tremble and sway. Soon she, too, was kneeling in front of Marimutu, tongue out, eyes open, waiting; the *poojari* first stuck a silver skewer right through both corners of her mouth, and another through her tongue, and then he stuck long hooked pins with marigold garlands through her arms. He dropped rose water on the wounds and marked her forehead with ash. She rose and taking a *thari* of lime and ash and camphor danced among the onlookers, going first to a young devotee who, with hands clasped in front of her, was waiting for the spirit to come. Others anxious to be blessed moved forward to the dancers, who sprinkled them with ash. After more than an hour the *poojari* gave the sign for the devotees to return from the river. The main devotees were each given one of the pots, which they carried on their heads, and a fourth carried the trident. With the musicians dancing and singing in front, the procession walked through the streets, and when they came to a crossroad, the assistant cut a lime into four pieces and threw it in four directions, removing evil and defilement from the path of the gods.

The altar at Mrs C.'s was built up with palms, flowers and

syringa branches and the procession circled round in devotion, and the women laid their ritual pots at the altar while the drums beat madly. The spirit was beginning to leave, the drummers "drummed it out", and the *poojari* removed the needles.

Mr C. went to fetch a huge bucket with the sour porridge and, having sprinkled water round the altar, put in front, on banana leaves, offerings of sour porridge and three different vegetable curries. The music started again, infectious, monotonous, drowning the crowing of eight big fowls which the *poojari*, his assistants and Mr C. were decorating, on foot and comb, with red lead powder. Praying and singing, Mrs C. again came to the altar and circled the deities with the *thari*, and the *poojari* handed her a long sharp knife marked with a red lead dot. With it she danced in a trance; and, still in trance, handed it back to the *poojari*. His assistant held a fowl and with one quick and skilful movement the *poojari* decapitated it. Then a long shudder shook the onlookers as the possessed woman sucked up the blood from the neck of the warm and quivering body. A second bird, and then a third, was killed in this strange and lurid sacrifice. With blood on her face and glazed eyes, the woman drank of the sacred porridge. Then, sated, refusing more by a final shake of her head, she was taken inside by her mother-in-law. Five more birds contributed by the other devotees were killed, but without their blood being required. Of the eight birds, five were for Marimutu, three for her son, Madurai Veeran; Perimulsami does not take flesh, only porridge. After a while Mrs C. returned, calm, clean and purified. The people were fed with porridge and vegetable curries. The fowls were plucked and prepared for the evening meal.

That evening the spirit came again. Many people were at the home. They now came to appeal to Mrs C. as the oracle, and she would again be possessed and would answer their questions. I could not attend, but am told it was similar to other auditions or seances that I have witnessed in Durban.

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APPENDIX I

TABLE I

AGE AND SEX COMPOSITION OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS ON VARIOUS SHIPMENTS, 1883—1890

Name of Ship	Voyage Number	From Madras or Calcutta	Date of sailing and arrival and passage in days			Embarked						Born		Died on Voyage						Landed						Men, Women and Children			
						Adults		2/10 years		Infants				Adults		2/10 years		Infants		Adults		2/10 years		Infants		Madras		Calcutta	
			S	A	Days	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
				1885																									
Foyle	1	C		30/5	—	330	148	47	48	17	11	3	—	4	2	—	—	2	—	326	146	47	48	18	11	—	—	391	205
John Davie	1	C		30/6	—	278	113	29	12	6	7	3	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	278	113	29	12	8	6	—	—	315	131
Soaphia Joakim	1	C		14/8	—	258	99	24	19	10	8	—	—	2	1	—	—	—	—	256	98	24	19	10	8	—	—	290	125
Coldstream	1	M		19/4	—	196	76	20	18	7	10	1	—	1	3	—	1	1	—	195	73	20	17	7	10	222	100	—	—
Umvoti	11	M		24/6	—	150	45	4	12	3	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	150	45	4	12	2	2	156	59	—	—
Castleton	1	M		10/10	—	162	47	4	10	1	6	—	—	2	1	—	—	1	—	160	46	4	10	—	6	164	62	—	—
Umvoti	12	M		11/11	—	99	46	16	10	4	8	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	99	46	16	10	4	9	119	65	—	—
			1884	1884																									
Umvoti	13	M	3/2	23/4	55	124	65	14	14	4	2	—	1	3	—	2	1	—	—	121	65	12	13	4	3	137	81	—	—
Cyrene	1	M	24/6	1/8	37	188	47	9	9	6	4	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	188	47	9	9	6	3	203	59	—	—
Umvoti	14	M	16/7	2/9	48	143	50	10	10	4	4	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	142	50	10	10	4	4	156	64	—	—
John Allen	1	M	29/9	4/11	36	207	78	8	6	9	6	2	1	—	—	—	—	2	1	207	78	10	6	9	6	226	90	—	—
Laurel	1	M	22/8	27/9	36	211	70	9	3	7	3	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	210	70	9	3	6	3	225	76	—	—
Dumphaile Castle	4	M	10/11	12/12	32	227	61	6	8	5	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	227	61	6	8	5	4	238	73	—	—
John Davie	2	C	14/3	2/5	49	272	115	29	21	15	10	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	1	271	114	29	21	15	9	—	—	245	144
Glenroy	4	C	7/5	7/8	52	299	125	26	12	9	10	1	1	4	1	—	1	2	2	295	124	26	11	8	9	—	—	329	144
Sophia Joakin	2	C	4/6	1/8	57	268	96	18	14	4	7	1	2	2	2	1	—	—	—	266	94	17	14	5	9	—	—	288	117
			1885	1885																									
Laurel	2	M	11/12	17/1	37	213	63	13	9	4	8	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	212	63	13	9	4	8	229	80	—	—
Umvoti	[illegible]	M	22/12	29/1	38	130	52	15	11	3	5	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	130	51	15	11	3	5	149	67	—	—
Dumphaile Castle	15	M	10/2	15/3	33	202	82	11	15	5	13	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	200	82	11	15	5	13	216	110	—	—
Merchantman	5	C	13/3	1/5	49	243	104	11	18	12	6	2	—	2	—	—	2	3	—	241	104	11	16	11	6	—	—	263	126
				1886																									
Umvoti	16	C	24/1	17/3	52	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	—
Umvoti	17	C	10/9	26/10	46	130	59	11	12	2	7	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	130	59	11	12	2	8	143	79	—	—
			1887																										
Laurel	3	M	23/12	28/1	36	203	60	6	4	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	203	60	6	4	—	2	209	66	—	—
Umvoti	18	M	8/5	9/6	32	150	37	8	3	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	150	37	8	3	3	3	161	43	—	—
Quathlamba	1	M	18/7	28/8	47	149	68	10	10	6	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	149	68	10	10	5	6	164	84	—	—
Umvoti	19	M	7/10	16/11	40	143	54	3	7	4	3	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	143	54	3	7	4	3	150	64	—	—
			1888																										
Quathlamba	2	M	25/1	6/3	41	156	64	4	7	4	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	156	64	4	7	4	4	164	75	—	—
Umvoti	20	M	19/4	2/6	44	143	50	10	4	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	143	60	10	4	5	5	158	69	—	—
Quathlamba	3	M	6/7	22/8	46	148	65	15	12	10	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	148	64	15	12	10	3	173	79	—	—
Umvoti	21	M	25/8	4/11	40	135	53	17	15	8	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	135	53	17	15	8	7	160	75	—	—
			1889																										
Quathlamba*	4	M	6/11	25/12	49	154	64	10	8	4	3	—	2	2	4	1	1	—	—	152	60	9	7	4	5	165	72	—	—
Umvoti	22	M	18/12	22/1	35	134	58	17	7	4	6	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	133	58	17	7	4	6	154	71	—	—
Taif	1	M	14/3	4/4	21	218	107	31	19	13	23	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	218	107	31	19	13	24	262	150	—	—
Congella	1	C	1/5	26/5	21	196	95	25	26	9	12	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	196	95	25	26	9	13	—	—	230	134
Umvoti	23	M	15/4	16/6	62	147	45	13	11	13	12	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	147	45	13	10	13	12	173	67	—	—
Pongola	1	C	29/5	23/6	24	208	85	12	13	13	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	208	85	12	13	15	2	—	—	235	100
Congella	2	M	25/7	15/8	21	226	89	29	21	26	17	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	225	89	28	21	26	17	279	127	—	—
Taif	2	M	31/7	22/8	22	228	100	25	19	19	17	—	—	2	1	—	—	—	—	226	99	25	19	19	17	270	135	—	—
Pongola	2	M	4/9	27/9	23	224	84	20	12	7	16	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	223	84	20	12	7	16	250	112	—	—
Congella	3	M	21/10	11/11	21	234	91	15	15	16	13	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	233	91	15	15	16	132	64	119	—	—
			1890																										
Pongola	3	M	24/1	15/2	22	200	102	34	28	26	33	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	200	102	34	28	26	33	260	163	—	—
Congella	4	C	22/1	15/2	24	214	96	15	8	9	3	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	213	96	15	8	9	3	—	—	237	107
Umtata	1	M	18/3	11/4	22	252	116	16	16	16	16	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	251	116	16	16	16	16	293	148	—	—
Warora	1	C	17/3	14/4	28	265	107	18	24	3	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	265	107	18	24	3	10	—	—	286	141
Congella	5	M	30/4	20/5	21	215	84	5	11	11	14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	215	84	5	11	11	14	231	109	—	—
Pongola	4	C	14/4	6/6	43	217	78	13	16	6	6	2	1	—	—	—	1	1	—	217	78	13	15	7	7	—	—	237	100
Umtata	2	M	7/7	30/7	23	276	128	35	23	26	25	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	276	128	35	23	26	25	337	176	—	—
Congella	6	M	29/7	18/8	20	241	79	20	20	21	19	—	1	4	1	2	—	—	2	237	78	18	20	21	18	276	116	—	—
Pongola	5	M	1/10	24/10	23	225	94	11	11	19	9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	225	94	11	11	20	9	256	114	—	—
Umtata	3	M	27/10	17/11	21	309	98	12	15	16	19	—	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	307	98	12	15	16	20	335	133	—	—
Congella	7	M	15/11	8/12	23	233	80	18	10	10	11	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	233	80	18	10	10	12	261	102	—	—
Total Arrivals 30/5/1883—8/12/1890																										1,967	3,534	3,351	1,574

*Quathlamba 4 in quarantine from December 25th, 1888 to January 19th, 1889.

TAIF, CONGELLA and PONGOLA obviously steamships that replaced the old sailing barques like the UMVOTI on a regular 21 day schedule

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