Accommodating Difference: The Cultural Construction of the Hindu Women of South Australia

by

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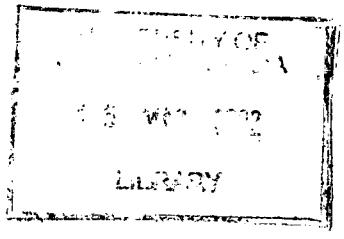
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Abstract

Although a small number of Hindus was first present within South Australia from the 1830s, no Hindu culture developed within the region until the post-war immigration of professionals from both India and other areas of the Indian diaspora. Despite the fact that the number of Hindus within South Australia is still relatively small, a Hindu temple has been established and a variety of alternative religious groups have formed, thus providing communal sacred space within the State.

The research focussed upon a group of women from within the Hindu community. The purpose of the thesis was threefold: it aimed, firstly, to identify the variety of practices which the women undertook, and their own understanding of them: secondly, to assess whether or not these practices retained a symbolic link to Hinduism, and derived meaning from a Hindu worldview; and, thirdly, to identify whether or not a tension existed between a Hindu worldview and the reality of living within this specific diaspora community.

The study placed religion at the forefront and utilised a variety of different theoretical approaches or 'tools' to gain depth within it. Foremost amongst the theorists who have been drawn upon are Clifford Geertz and Pierre Bourdieu. Geertz provided the basis for an understanding of culture and religion, their observable aspects, and the meaning behind the practices. Bourdieu provided a means of assessing the way in which change occurred in relation to the social and physical environment of the diaspora. Diaspora literature enabled a focus to be directed upon those aspects identified as undergoing change in other diaspora communities.

The study was undertaken as an ethnography, with information being gathered through interaction with a variety of people within the Hindu community; attendance at cultural, religious and private events; archival research; the collection of 50 questionnaires and 30 semi-structured interviews. The most significant aspect of the research was the interviews with the women, while the other material provided a background and context for them. The semi-structured interviews provided information that was analysed through the use of both the theoretical models and other scholarly work.

It was found that many practices and assumptions that had a symbolic link to Hinduism were maintained within the South Australian diaspora. These practices included conducting *puja* at a home shrine; the celebration of Hindu festivals, both pan-Indian and those associated with specific regional language groups; fasting; conducting *samskaras*; and undertaking pilgrimage. Alternatively, a number of practices were undergoing reassessment by some of the women, although they were maintained, without reflection, by others. These included aspects of diet, undertaking vows, as well as those pertaining to concepts of purity and pollution, and caste concerns.

Practices and assumptions were continually being assessed and reassessed by the women as circumstances changed. Those that did not appear to be consistent with the changing social and cultural environment or caused problems for individuals operating in the specific South Australian diaspora were abandoned, modified, adapted, or conducted out of sight of the wider community. Those practices and assumptions which were reassessed or abandoned were often described as not being part of Hinduism. Hinduism was not being rejected, but those practices considered to be unnecessary were.

Even where practices were not directly maintained as Hindu practices, often a symbolic link to Hinduism existed in the actions of the women. Generally, Hinduism retained meaning for the group of women taking part in the study. There were strong links to a devotional model of Hinduism; however, aspects of brahmanic practices and assumptions were also present. Generally, the women appeared to exert control through a range of devotional practices and, through these practices, were active in providing a stable environment for the family. The role of mother, rather than the role of wife, was often considered to be the most important role for women.

Hinduism, understood as both practice and worldview, was flexible in adapting to the environment of the diaspora without losing relevance. Those aspects which retained importance were maintained, while those which did not fit comfortably were re-evaluated and reassessed. Women were active within this process while providing stability for the family through their practices. Rather than causing problems for the women in the environment of the diaspora, Hinduism, due to its very nature, enabled the women to adjust to the changing environment.

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Candidate's Declaration

Accommodating Difference: the Cultural Construction of the Hindu Women of South Australia

Heather Foster

I declare that this thesis is the result of my own research, that it does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material submitted for a degree or diploma in any University and that it does not contain any materials previously published, written or produced by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed H Foster

Date: MAY 2001

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Glossary of Indic terms

Ahimsa: non-violence, non-injury

Annaprasana: first feeding

Bhajan: devotional song, often within a communal setting

Bhakta: devotee of a god or goddess

Bhakti: devotion, love

Darshan: holy sight

Divali: Festival of Light, Pan Indian festival

Dharma: complex term denoting duty, righteousness, discipline

Durga Puja: Bengali festival celebrating the defeat of Mahisasura by the Goddess Durga

Ganesha Chaturthi: festival celebrating the birthday of the god Ganesha

Jati: birth, birth into a group, caste

Jnana: knowledge of Ultimate Reality

Kalvachot (Karva Chauth): Punjabi fast undertaken by women for the welfare of their husbands

Karma: action, deed, including religious actions, law of cause and effect

Karnavedha: ear-piercing

Moksha: liberation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth

Mundan: tonsure, shaving the head

Namakarana: naming ceremony

Pativrata: woman who has taken a vow to her husband

Prasad: gift from gods often in the form of the return of a consecrated offering

Puja: ritualised worship

Raja Yoga: meditation practice

Sakti: power associated with women, the creative power of the Divine

Samsara: individual cycle of birth, death and rebirth determined by *karma*

Samskara: life cycle ritual

Sapindikarana: ceremony uniting the spirit of the deceased with the ancestors after cremation

Satyanarayana Puja: thanksgiving ceremony

Tirthas: river fords, used to denote sacred site

Tirthayatra: journey to sacred ford or pilgrimage site

Varna: colour, one of four divisions of class

Vrata: vow

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In this study, I undertake an examination of the religious attitudes and practices of a group of Hindu women in South Australia. It has been conducted in order to determine the way in which the reality of the diaspora may or, indeed, may not, have influenced attitudes and practices. Very few studies have focussed on Hindu immigrants in Australia. Even fewer have focussed specifically on the maintenance of their religion and the adaptation and adjustments of this in a new environment. None at all have focussed on Hindu women's religious attitudes and practices. This study is particularly interested in probing how Hindu women in South Australia understand themselves as individuals, as well as understanding their roles and positions within the family and the community.

The value of the study lies in its focus on women and Hinduism within the diaspora, as they are often overlooked in studies of religious maintenance and adaptations, although women are integral to the process of adaptation. This study highlights experiences which are specific to Hindu women, while placing them within the context of the family and the community. A focus on women within the diaspora community will provide a greater knowledge about their position and experiences and will add depth to other studies of Hinduism within the Indian diaspora.

My research took the form of an ethnographic study and involved three aspects. The first stage entailed familiarisation with the Hindu community in South Australia, including its history, communal activities and organisations. The second involved distributing questionnaires and collecting 50 responses to basic questions. Due to the inadequate wording of the first six questionnaires that were distributed, it is difficult to

give accurate information as to their places of birth, a variable which would have been interesting, as this section was not completed by all of the women. I also found that their responses concerning their places of birth were unreliable, as at least two of the women I discovered identified themselves by their parents or grandparents birth place, rather than their own.

The third involved in-depth interviews with 30 women who volunteered to be interviewed subsequent to answering questionnaires. Observations at community and private events took place throughout these stages and were recorded in a journal. During each stage, the seemingly never-ending process of researching, reading and analysing relevant information continued. As Michael Agar has noted, '...in ethnographic research, data collection and analysis are done concurrently rather than being separately scheduled parts of the research' (Agar 1980, p. 9). The information gained from these stages constitutes the data for this thesis.

The Scope of the Study

When the range of this study is set out, a number of parameters become apparent. The study is not meant to be a random sample or a microcosmic representation of the whole body of Hindu women in South Australia. A qualification of this nature is not, however, unique to my study but is a consideration which was also highlighted in *White women, race matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*, by Ruth Frankenberg (1993). Frankenberg's research was conducted amongst 30 women in the United States. She was attempting to ascertain the attitudes and practices of a number of women concerning race and how it affects them, as she suggests '...any system of differentiation shapes those on whom it bestows privilege as well as those it oppresses' (Frankenberg 1993, p. 9). Neither the questionnaires nor the interviews were conducted on the premise of random sampling and, in Frankenberg's words, the study is not meant to be 'in a "part-for-a whole" fashion, a microcosmic representation' (1993, p. 20) of the wider group. My own study is specifically an examination of a particular group situated within the diaspora and the host environment. This is in a similar manner to Frankenberg, who suggested that, through her study, she 'sought to map out and situate in sociocultural terms some patterns in the material contexts...' (1993, p. 20).

Due to my concern for diversity, I attempted to include women who were not obviously part of the Hindu community, i.e. those who did not attend religious or cultural functions or necessarily mix with the community generally.

On the basis of evidence provided by the interviews, I have been able to examine the way in which 30 women have articulated their assumptions and practices. I was concerned primarily with those assumptions and practices which may have a symbolic connection to Hinduism. These interviews took place in person between August 1995 and June 1997 in Adelaide and Whyalla, although one was conducted via telephone while the woman was temporarily interstate.

Theoretical orientation

In focussing on the current practices which the Hindu women undertook which may have a link to their assumptions and understanding of Hinduism, the main questions I attempted to answer were:

1. What were some of the specific practices the women undertook and what were their own understandings of them?
2. Did these practices retain a symbolic link to Hinduism and could they therefore be understood to derive meaning from a Hindu way of understanding the world?
3. Was there a tension between a Hindu way of understanding the world and the practicalities of living in the present environment?

Answering the questions required a distinction to be made between women's practices in the public and private spheres.

The symbolic links I was attempting to discover were both explicit and implicit. An example of an explicit link between the women's practices and Hinduism is the conscious linkage of the performance of *puja* at a home shrine to assumptions concerning the place of worship within Hinduism. Alternatively, the link may be implicit, such as choosing not to eat beef, but doing so not because of Hindu beliefs in the veneration of the cow or caste customs, but due to an unarticulated reflex - an impulsive reaction against the action. Even when an explicit connection to Hinduism is not foremost or relevant, the action may retain a symbolic connection to it. As Mircea Eliade has written, 'Religious symbols are capable of revealing a modality of the real or

a structure of the World that is not evident on the level of immediate experience' (Eliade, 1959, p. 98). Therefore, both the explicit and implicit symbolism within the practices can reveal the worldview or framework underlying the practice.

Actions or practices do not take place in isolation from the social and physical environment. It is, therefore, important to understand the interaction between an individual's construction of their own 'reality' and the environment in which they live. The world only makes sense to individuals within a particular framework. Their specific way of looking at and acting in the world must be workable and a balance must be achieved. If it is not, either the practices or the framework or both can be problematic for the individual.

There are obviously many different ways of interpreting the information I have gathered from the women within my sample: sociologists, psychologists, and others would each have their own approach to the material. I have drawn upon a number of theorists, who will be discussed in Chapter 3, as they provide an explanation of the way in which the study has been approached and the data analysed. The most important theorists for this study are Clifford Geertz and Pierre Bourdieu. Geertz has provided a framework for understanding religion as a cultural system comprising of symbolic activities (1973, p.90). Bourdieu's work on primary and secondary habitus has enabled an understanding of the influences of both the past and the present on current assumptions and practices (1990). A number of concepts will also be explored in Chapter 3, such as the nature of religion generally and of Hinduism specifically, including transmission and transformation; culture; and space, as they are integral to this study.

At the conclusion to each chapter containing the data, a summary will provide an analysis of the material in light of the theoretical orientation, while a final conclusion will bring these together.

Importance of History

In the early stages of my study, I became aware of the diverse journeys which brought the Hindu women to South Australia and that their time in this region has been quite brief. I was keenly aware that the community in South Australia needed to be interpreted not only in relation with the individual histories of the women but also within the context of Hinduism within South Australia. The only information about this was brief and scattered. No substantial history of Hinduism or the Indian diaspora in South Australia exists. Although, in a sense, I could have opted to repeat those snippets

which did exist, or to have suggested that the history was insignificant and not worth repeating, I opted to incorporate a more extensive history into the thesis. I chose this option in order to give a firmer structure to the understanding of the cultural construction of Hinduism in South Australia, as the different journeys became a part of the State's history. These early journeys have only been recorded in relation to the activities of the "founding fathers" of South Australia, reflecting the ethnocentrism and power relationships within the early years of the state, and the representation of history which has continued. An historical chapter was also undertaken in order to fill the void which the lack of a systematic history of Indian immigration to South Australia had created. Indeed, as I argue in Chapter 3, an understanding of history is an integral aspect of this type of study (Bottomley 1991, Bourdieu 1977). Both the individual histories of the women and the historical circumstances in which they are located within the diaspora are important to this study.

My relationship with the women within the community

In commencing my research I encountered many of the frustrations which Frankenberg discusses (1993). As I was not known within the community at the beginning of my research I was seen as an unknown quantity. Over the years of my involvement, I sensed more openness towards me and, whereas the initial interviews were quite difficult to set up, it became easier as time went by and I was understood more fully by the women. During the course of the research and due to my attendance at various functions, I was invited to act in a more formal capacity as Assistant Secretary of the Indian Australian Association, from June 1995 to June 1996. This was in spite of my stated position as a researcher and the permission to conduct research which I had previously gained from the Association. Pat Caplan, in her research work with women's organisations in Madras, was also placed in a similar position as she also assisted with a specific project being undertaken by one of the organisations she was researching (1994).

Joining the executive committee was a wonderful opportunity to work with a number of women on a more personal basis. This time was invaluable as it provided informal situations where unstructured talks could take place and I could be 'taught' and learn more about the community. This was also a conscious way of placing myself in a different relationship with the women being interviewed, other than as a researcher. The time spent at functions and talking to individuals enabled me to place the interviews and questionnaires into a wider perspective. In light of the theoretical basis for my work, which is set out in Chapter 3, this was an essential aspect. I could identify

as a fellow worker for the Association on one level although I was not from an Indian background and was, therefore, distanced from them.

The questionnaires were distributed at functions held at the Indian Australian Association and a variety of religious and cultural events. As I was introduced to individuals I would also distribute questionnaires. I found that the most difficult aspect of my research was approaching individuals and suggesting the possibility of an interview. I was very much dependent upon the goodwill of the women of the community to participate in the project and, as I was not dealing with women I knew prior to initiating the research project, making contacts was a time-consuming process. Initially, I was concerned to steer away from women who were considered by others to be the leaders within the community, especially in a religious sense, but, ultimately I did include these women who were seen as the 'main players' in the religious life of the community, as I realised that they had valuable experiences which would balance experiences of less commitment. Indeed, I came to realise that they constituted an essential aspect of the group. I constantly strove for a diversity of women, through what Kim Knott and Sajda Khokher have described as 'Four broad orientations ...those expressing a positive intersect in both religious and ethnic cultural systems; those with little interest in ethnic cultural traditions, and vice versa' (1993, p. 607), through to differing regional backgrounds and age groups. Due to past Australian government policies on immigration, which are addressed further in Chapter 4, the one area where relatively little variation occurred was in socio-economic status.

Finding Indian women who did not participate in either Indian or Hindu cultural or religious events and stood apart from the main Indian community was difficult, and it was only achieved through the assistance of non-Indian friends and acquaintances who were able to place me in contact with these women. Only two women fall into this category, although the remaining women do vary considerably in their involvement in the community generally.

I made the conscious decision to identify myself and my own assumptions and practices within the interviews when called upon to do so, rather than to make what I felt would be a futile attempt at distancing myself from them. In this respect, discussions did not always flow one way. I believed I needed to be in a position to answer questions about my own assumptions, when specifically asked, if I were to expect others to do the same. Frankenberg suggests that this approach '...democratises the research process...' to a certain extent (1993, p. 31). She also suggests, citing other scholars, that pretence at being a neutral observer and interviewer is problematic (Frankenberg 1991, p. 31).

My own position within the research was never static: it was constantly changing and being challenged. At one stage, within a gathering of the committee members of the Indian Australian Association, a general discussion took place in which the members discussed their own backgrounds, including their time in Australia, region of origin, and the languages they spoke. All eyes then turned to me. I had never understood myself in those terms before, but needed to make a response and name myself in the same terms they had used. At best, I had previously considered myself a fifth generation Australian of vaguely Anglo-Saxon heritage. This did not seem to be adequate under the circumstances and I found myself mumbling, attempting to decipher my amalgam of Scottish, Cornish, English, and Irish ancestry. I was no longer an Australian but I had become a "hyphenated Australian". As Kamala Visweswaran wrote,

> Hyphens are radically ambivalent signifiers for they simultaneously connect and set apart; they simultaneously represent both belonging and not belonging. What is even more curious about a hyphenated pair of words is that meaning cannot reside in one word or the other, but can be understood in movement. (Visweswaran 1994, p. 118)

My position had shifted from one of belonging to the dominant group within the community, one which tends to understand itself as being the established 'norm' within South Australia rather than within the context of an immigrant group, to one connecting me with a history of immigration, in a similar way to them. At the same time, my history emphasised my different heritage.

There were many times when I was called to reflect upon my history, my position in the community, and my own religious views. I could certainly not retain a passive, detached approach to my research. When I was interviewing women, at times I related to them as a woman, a mother, a wife, or a student, while at other times it was quite the opposite, being Christian, younger or older, poorer or wealthier. For example, I shifted between what Pat Caplan termed 'identification and distanciation' (Caplan 1994), that is, identifying with the women or feeling distanced from them and their lives. However, my own experiences were not as extreme as those Caplan reported (1994).

At times I felt quite in awe of the successful women I approached. Even when approaching women after the interview I found some with whom I would avoid contact as I felt intimidated by them, while with others I enjoyed renewing contact and chatted to them about a variety of unrelated topics. A small number I have continued to see since the interview and their continuing input has been invaluable. They have become my teachers in many respects. Therefore, although the ultimate power remains with me as researcher in what I choose to represent, on a separate level the power relationship

between researcher and researched was also shifting and, very occasionally, I was considered to be a social inferior, particularly by those women who were married to members of the medical profession. This mirrors Caplan's experience in Madras (1994).

Frankenberg discusses the position of power of the researcher in what is represented and suggests that 'Critics of the idea of objectivity have pointed out that there is no disinterested position to be adopted in scholarship' (Frankenberg 1993, p. 30). The researcher/researched relationship is one which is understood to be problematic (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe and Cohen 1989) and the research subjects are placed 'at grave risk of manipulation and betrayal by the ethnographer' (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe and Cohen 1989, p. 21). The limitations of the ethnographic process and, the text which is produced through it, must be acknowledged, as Megan Jennaway writes

> ...ethnographic truths are fictions not only in the sense that they are constructed, i. e. 'made up', but also that they are inherently and always incomplete. Built on 'powerful 'lies' of exclusion and rhetoric', ethnographic texts are always 'economies of truth'. Yet, for all that ethnographic truths are inherently partial, constructed and therefore fallible, advocates of the new ethnography do not wish to abandon the ethnographic enterprise. (Jennaway 1990, p. 171-2)

At times, where the limitations are acknowledged, alternative forms of writing are used as experimentation (Jennaway 1990, p. 172). Although the relationship is problematic, there are points at which the researcher may act as a mediator. George Marcus and Michael Fischer, when discussing the approach of Clifford Geertz to this relationship, suggest that

> The act of translation involved in any act of cross-cultural interpretation is thus a relative matter with an ethnographer as mediator between distinct sets of categories and cultural conceptions that interact in different ways at different points of the ethnographic process. (Marcus and Fischer 1986, p. 31).

It is, therefore, important for a researcher to be aware of their position as interpreter and mediator while acknowledging that any construction will be their own interpretation.

While using the specific tools that I understand to be most appropriate for analysis, I hope I have presented the data, albeit what I have chosen to represent, in such a way that is transparent and can be used by other scholars. Frankenberg raises '...possibilities for multiple interpretation' (1993, p. 30) if enough room is left within the text.

The Women

The information which I can supply is limited because of the small size of the community in South Australia. The women could be easily identified if the information were too extensive and it is important that their identity remains confidential. However, this brief introduction coupled with further information which is supplied throughout the thesis can provide a general understanding of the women.

The number of people who identify themselves as Hindu within the government census in South Australia is small - some 2095 individuals in 1996, of whom 999 were female, out of a total population of just over 1.5 million. The majority of Hindus live in Adelaide, the capital city of South Australia, while the regional city of Whyalla has a community of just over 100 Hindus. Very few families live in rural areas. Hindus form part of the wider South Australian society which is made up of immigrants from an enormous variety of regions, however, the dominant culture in South Australia stems from the British culture of the early immigrants, which was reinforced during later periods of extensive immigration from Britain. It is within this dominant culture that the thirty women who participated in the study, are situated, and form part of a minority community.

Of the thirty women interviewed, 29 were born outside Australia. Only one of these women immigrated as a baby, while the others came at a much later stage of life having spent their childhood and adolescence elsewhere. The majority of these women came to Australia after marriage, although some did so as students or to undertake employment. The youngest woman interviewed was born in Australia after her parents immigrated. Of the 29 women born outside Australia, 20 were from India, 4 from Malaysia, 2 from Fiji and 1 each from South Africa, Sri Lanka and Singapore.

The women were aged from 18 to over 55 at the time of the interviews. However, the majority were between 26 and 55 with only one woman under 25 and two over 55. A number of the women had been long term residents of Australia from between 19 to 24 years, while others had been resident for a relatively short term, the most recent arriving 15 months prior to the interview.

Diverse experiences, different journeys, and shifting identities are all important aspects of the women in the Hindu diaspora and their cultural construction. When asked what it means to be a Hindu in Australia, Meena (pseudonyms are used for the women) said that she doesn't see herself as a Hindu (Interview 6). She replied:

> Fijian, Indian, Hindu ... all these combinations they're so much part of the whole spectrum of things coming together and I'm ever changing and clinging onto straws for some things I don't want to let go. And trying to absorb other things and I'm changing so rapidly, you know, not knowing when I'm changing. (Interview 6)

Although the areas covered by the interviews were focussed on assumptions and practices, as part of this, the nature of the environment in which the participants spent their time prior to immigrating to Australia was continually referred to by the women. As it was a significant part of who they are, it was intricately woven into their own understanding of themselves. Therefore, although specific questions were not always asked about their lives prior to immigration, it was interwoven into their discourse on their practices and assumptions.

Although the women related to a common form of identification as Hindus, on one level, and as such, were part of a Hindu diaspora, they were also differentiated from each other by differing experiences. For example, Meena (interview 6) could relate on some levels to Poonam (interview 13) who was also from Fiji, but at other times their experiences differed considerably as Meena's family had immigrated to Fiji as traders and subsequently to Australia, while Poonam's family had journeyed to Fiji as indentured labourers.

I have chosen to highlight a number of experiences which demonstrate both difference and convergence. Although not constituting complete histories for comparison, a discussion of regional and language affiliation, mobility, education and marriage - in other words a picture of the group of women who participated in the interview process - will be sketched, with detail added within the main discussion of practices and assumptions. I have also placed some of these details in Appendix 1 to provide an introduction to the women.

On a very basic level, difference was most obvious in country of origin. Although the women born in diaspora communities had different experiences than those from India, just as importantly, the Indian experiences differed widely. I will attempt to give an overview of some of these experiences in order to highlight the diversity and, although the information acquired is not consistent, the individual stories will provide an overall sense of their experiences.

For those women born in India it was often difficult to locate them as being from one particular area. Although a number were brought up and educated in a particular region, for others the nature of their father's employment meant that they often lived in areas which differed from their parents' family region. In the interview eleven of the women mentioned the experience of growing up in differing regions, and a number of these stated that their families were required to relocate at various times due to their father's employment. They were often part of an elite which was privileged within the colonial system. Kamala Visweswaran suggests that the colonial authorities set up mediating positions in colonial India between the '...white dominated power structures and less privileged communities' (1997, p. 17). It appears that this was often the family experience of a number of the women.

The stories of several of these women demonstrate these experiences. Devi's parents were from Bengal but her father was posted to Assam where she spent her childhood, although she attended boarding school in Calcutta (interview 4). Savita's father was in the government service and, although she was born in Madras, she lived in many different states throughout India (interview 22). Malati had a similar experience as, although she was born in Maharashtra her father, who was also in the government service, was transferred every three years, and she lived in both the south and north of India (interview 29). Surika's father's employment also resulted in family mobility and she mentioned 4 different northern cities in which she lived after leaving Calcutta (interview 16). This echoes Indira's experience (interview 14).

Families had sometimes moved from the family region prior to the birth of the women. Two women mentioned that although they were brought up in Delhi, their families were from the south of India (interviews 7 and 8). Employment opportunities had a significant impact on the women as they were growing up, exposing them to different experiences. Urbanisation had been an experience of a number of the families as well as of individuals, who went to regional centres for education. Marriage also resulted in a change of region within India for a number of women prior to their migration to Australia.

Out of the 20 women from India, 12 discussed their mobility either in their formative years or after marriage. Another had been taken to Australia by her parents as a toddler.

Although historically bi- and tri-lingualism has been part of the Indian experience, the high degree of mobility resulted in an amplified familiarity with different regional cultures and languages. Many of the women spoke a surprising number of languages.

Those with exposure to both the north and south of India and, therefore, to southern and northern cultures, tended to speak a number of languages, which has meant that, in Australia, they have been able to mix with a variety of Indian immigrants without being confined to southern or northern groups. A knowledge of both Tamil and Hindi tends to provide an entree into most sections of the Australian Indian community.

Those women born outside the Indian sub-continent tended to speak fewer Indian languages than did the women from India. They did, of course, normally have a knowledge of the languages of their specific region such as Malay, for those from Malaysia, African languages for South Africans and the Fijian dialect of Hindi which is used in Fiji, for those from Fiji. Two Malaysian women also included Indonesian in their list of languages.

Some of the less mobile women were limited to a local language plus a greater regional language. Only three women from India, excluding the one who migrated as a toddler, spoke only one Indian language. Five of the women listed at least four Indian languages which they spoke. Kuna commented that between her husband and her they spoke 11 languages which, she suggested gave them a wonderful opportunity to mix with others (interview 7). The languages spoken indicated an exposure to a wide variety of cultures. Two women mentioned that they knew Urdu, attributing this to the Islamic influence in their region, rather than its similarity to Hindi.

German was listed by three of the women from India as being one of the languages they spoke, reflecting their time in that country. These languages gives a good indication of the variety of individuals' experiences as well as the way the women's experiences differed.

Schooling proved to be a means whereby the women were exposed to Christianity. Although it was not one of the interview questions, many of the women mentioned that they had been educated at Christian institutions. Of the eight women who told me that they had gone to Catholic schools, six were from India, one was from Fiji and one from Malaysia. Three other women had attended Protestant schools, in India, Singapore and Fiji respectively. Alternatively, Vijaya commented that her schooling was very much influenced by the Marxist attitudes prevalent within Kerala at the time (interview 5).

Higher education was the norm amongst the women with only one, from Sri Lanka, stating that she had not proceeded past high school. Not all women had been successful in completing their course, however, Kavita, for example, had her studies terminated

after her arranged marriage, when her visa for immigration to Australia arrived (interview 3.) Although her studies were undertaken at a university, her first year subjects have only been given the status of Australian year eleven. Pria, who immigrated as a toddler, had also failed to complete her university education (interview 25). Other than these few exceptions, the women were highly educated, often with higher degrees, indicating the elite nature of the group.

An examination of the marriage alliances demonstrates, once again, different experiences and, also, the way in which traditional marriage arrangements had only been followed for fourteen of the women. Twelve of these were from India, one from Fiji and one from Sri Lanka. Ten women commented that they and their partners had decided on marriage themselves. Two of these women, one from India and the other from Malaysia, had married non-Indians. Four women described their marriages as semi-arranged. This tended to mean that they had been acquainted with their future husbands and the marriage was mooted with the parents before a relationship developed. Two of these women were from India and one from Singapore, while the fourth was from South Africa. Two of the women were unmarried. They were a Malaysian born woman who had made a lifestyle and spiritual choice to remain single and an 18 year old Australian-born woman.

Two of the women had marriages with Indian husbands from Australia, who had returned to India in order to make the arrangement. Kavita, who married at 18, seven years prior to the interview, had seen but not talked to her husband prior to the marriage (interview 3). Devi, who was married in 1970, had socialised with her husband whilst he was on holiday from Australia, prior to the marriage being hastily arranged (interview 4).

It is interesting to note that the women generally immigrated as married women. This was the experience of 23 of the 28 women who were married or had been married at the time of the interview. Of the remaining five women, three had settled their own marriages after being a student or working in the west, with men they had met during this time. Only one woman, who subsequently divorced, entered into an arranged marriage after immigration, while the only women born in India but brought up in Australia, immigrated with her mother in order to join her father who had preceded them.

Arranged marriages were certainly not confined to the older group and cannot be viewed as a remnant of the past. Semi-arranged marriages are, however, confined to

the 35 to 55 year age group. Non-arranged marriages may have taken over from this trend as they are not found in the group 26 to 35 years of age. Details of marriages are show in tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1

DISTRIBUTION OF ARRANGED MARRIAGE, NON-ARRANGED MARRIAGE AND SEMI-ARRANGED MARRIAGE, BY AGE.

Age group	Arranged	Non Arranged	Semi-Arranged
26-35	5	4	0
36-45	1	2	1
46-55	7	3	3
55+	1	1	0
Total	14	10	4

Table 2

DISTRIBUTION OF ARRANGED MARRIAGE, NON-ARRANGED MARRIAGE AND SEMI ARRANGED MARRIAGE, BY PLACE OF BIRTH.

Birthplace	Arranged	Non Arranged	Semi-Arranged
India	12	6	2
Sri Lanka	1	0	0
Fiji	1	1	0
Malaysia	0	3	0
Singapore	0	0	1
South Africa	0	0	1

All three marriages from Malaysia were organised by the couple and not by the family. A fourth woman from Malaysia had chosen to remain single. Sita, who migrated to Australia from Malaysia prior to meeting her husband, indicated that pressure to marry was a motivating factor in her decision to leave Malaysia (interview 2). Two of the Malaysian women who chose their own husbands, as well as the unmarried Malaysian

woman, had been students in the west and had come to Australia to work. The third had met and fallen in love while undertaking further education with her husband.

Rather than suggesting that Malaysian born Indians, generally, were more likely to choose their own husbands, statistics perhaps highlight the types of women who are prepared to migrate to Australia by themselves and, perhaps, the reasons for this. Those who have been educated in the west are, perhaps, less likely to accept a marriage partner who is chosen for them. The two other women who had furthered their education in the west prior to marriage, also decided on their own husbands. One was from India, and the other from Fiji. Both were between 46 and 55. Therefore, all five women who undertook further studies in the west prior to marriage chose their own husbands.

Other than the women who studied in western countries, 5 women lived in alternative countries prior to migrating to Australia. Three women spent time in Germany after their marriage, Devi living there for 5 years after initially taking up residence in Australia (interview 4). One went to England with her husband (interview 29) while New York had been the home, for a year, for one of the women now living in Whyalla (interview 20). Not all residences had been in western countries. Shamila, from Sri Lanka, lived in Malaysia for eleven years before making Australia her home (interview 11).

Two of the women from India mentioned that their fathers had lived in Europe (interview 16 and 24). They suggested that this experience had profoundly affected the family. Other family members had lived or were living away from India (interview 5, 19, 28) while one woman's husband had spent a number of years in Europe prior to their marriage (interview 12). Three women married men who were living in Australia (interview 3, 4 and 22).

It would be incorrect to suggest that all the women were exposed to a variety of influences. For example, on the alternative end of the scale is Kavita, who was brought up in one particular region of north India speaking a regional language plus Hindi (interview 3). Her experiences were limited, although she had lived with both her aunt and her mother, as her father had died whilst she was a child. She was attending a regional university when her maternal uncle arranged a marriage for her to an Australian resident.

It can, however, be suggested that the majority of women had wide ranging experiences and influences before their migration to Australia. It would also be fair to say that they were, on the whole, a highly educated group, the majority of whom immigrated to Australia with their husbands. Therefore, as part of a Hindu diaspora community within the symbolic boundaries which the women, at times, share, alternative configurations and experiences exist which differentiate the group internally.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

It is my intention within the literature review to set out the scholarly context within which my dissertation is positioned. The literature review is in many respects a map which has a variety of paths or routes leading up to the specific area of interest. As this thesis is concerned with the cultural construction of a group of women within the Hindu community of South Australia, the paths which lead to this point, and the places of interest along the way, are diverse, but add to a sense of identification within a wider landscape.

At the edge of the landscape is an historical understanding of Indian immigration, a summary of which will be given within Chapter 4. The Literature Review itself will commence with a summary of work conducted internationally on the Indian diaspora. As the Hindu diaspora in Australia needs to be viewed, to a certain extent, in the broader context of other diasporas in Australia, both ethnic and religious, a discussion of these will follow. The Hindu diaspora is the general area of interest within Australia, and work conducted in this area will be examined with specific interest in research on women within the Hindu diaspora. The specific locality for the study is then confined to the South Australian context.

International studies: early

In 1953, I. M. Cumpston published the text *Indians Overseas in British Territories 1834-1854*, which became a starting point for many scholars researching the Indian diaspora. Not only is this an important text for the general study of the system of using Indian labourers around the world, it also introduces the first Indians to come to Australia, including South Australia. Cumpston provides an historical description of the indenture system, including its initiation, the countries involved, and the problems associated with it, including the high death rate during transportation and concern caused by the severe gender imbalance amongst participants. He discusses the limited extent to which indentured labourers were used within Australia. Another important early work, although somewhat later than Cumpston's, was that written by Hugh Tinker (1977), in which more recent movements by Indians are examined. Tinker introduces the term 'chain migrants' to describe those who immigrated under family or caste sponsorship. He also describes the way in which urban professionals were taking up the opportunities which work in the west provided for them. These two texts enable an understanding of the development of Indian immigration, and are most useful in providing a background for coming to grips with the developments which occurred within Australia and, more specifically, South Australia.

All three forms of immigration - indentured labourers, chain migrants and urban professionals - are applicable to Australia, but the urban professional group is of specific interest for this dissertation, reflecting the elite status of many of the women studied here. Tinker's discussion is valuable in the way in which he identifies specific immigration trends for different Indian groups; however, as the number of urban professional immigrants has generally increased since the time Tinker was writing, many of his observations were more applicable to an earlier period. He understood the way in which change and adaptation have occurred differently for specific groups, and the diversity which was present within communities. In his observations concerning the practices of Gujarati women in Britain, he demonstrates, although somewhat condescendingly, the manner in which they maintained Hinduism within the domestic sphere. He states that 'Even when Gujarati men slide away from the conventional practices – the women cherish the old ways, observing prayer rituals

and dietetic laws' (Tinker 1977, p. 183). Religion was not a focus of his research, however, although it was occasionally referred to.

More recent work combines analysis of Indian immigration with broader theoretical reflection on the so called Indian diapsora. The history of immigration has been documented for many countries and regions and, although I do not intend to create a definitive list of sources, it is important to mention those pertinent to similar geographical locations or with comparable histories or circumstances to the women I have studied. Within the Pacific, Fijian Indians have been described by various authors, including Ahmed Ali, in the 1979 text edited by Subramani. Two publication in 1980 also dealt with Fijian Indians, although religion was not the major focus of these publications (Chandra 1980 & Ali 1980). Ali's 1979 and 1980 works provides a solid history of Indians in Fiji, while also looking at the Hindu and Muslim conflict in that country. An interesting and relevant aspect of his analysis is the way in which he describes shifting identities amongst the Indian population. He states that 'During indenture Hindus and Muslims considered themselves Indians first and foremost, but subsequently loyalty to the respective subcultures became more important' (Ali 1979, p. 11). It appears that a number of external factors can influence identification and loyalties, including the size of the community and power relationships. Rajesh Chandra's study is more specific, as it focuses on the village of Maro (1980). Religious conflict is a theme of his study and he details some of the Hindu activities which take place within the village. As Maro does not have a temple, he observes that 'Most people pray at home if they pray at all' (Chandra 1980, p. 40). Priests are used to conduct *puja* 'in response to an answered prayer' (Chandra 1980, p. 40), and a selection of lifecycle rituals and festivals are maintained. His work provides an insight into the maintenance of Hinduism in a diaspora community in the absence of communal sacred space.

A history of Indians in New Zealand was included in the edited volume by K. N. Tiwari (1980), while other contributors to that text directed their study to different aspects of the Indian presence in that country. One chapter does deal with Hindu practices. In this

chapter, entitled 'Food, Marriage and Festivals in India and New Zealand' (1980), L. Kasanji offers a detailed discussion of the changes which have occurred in relation to the areas of food, marriage and festivals. The conclusion is interesting as it sets out a number of changes which have been influenced by the diaspora. It is stated that

> It can be observed that Indian migration to New Zealand has affected many aspects of Hindu life. Major changes have occurred in areas of food where many restrictions are absent. Different caste and sub-caste aspects are no longer significant except in marriage where all members withdraw into their own sub-castes and support their traditional endogamous marriages. Ceremonial and religious rituals still hold a great significance and are practiced with the same vigour as in India, although some minor changes...are noticeable. One possible reason for this strong support of the Hindu way of life could be located in the chain migration of the fellow Indians necessitating the development of group settlement in urban areas or 'community formations' which accentuates their distinctiveness from the host society. Another possible reason for the continuation of Indian culture in New Zealand could be the fact that India serves as a model for the Indians in New Zealand. Because of the cultural identity with India, it seems natural for those with Indian heritage to carry out some of their cultural practices. (Kasanji 1980, p. 234)

Kasanji's observations and analysis are important contributions to the study of Hinduism within the diaspora. Although the Indian experience in New Zealand is analogous to that in Australia, the nature of the journeys do differ due to specific immigration policies and the limited chain migration to South Australia. Therefore, Kasanji's analysis may indicate areas where change can occur; however, the differing experiences of the diaspora must be borne in mind.

Indians who had immigrated to Malaysia and Africa have also been studied by scholars. Paul Wiebe and S. Mariappen produced an interesting study based or research conducted into the social life of Indians on a rubber plantation in west Malaysia (1978). Although religion was not the main focus of their study, some of their findings were noteworthy and have relevance to religion. The authors suggest that

> Religious systems provide the symbols according to which people can identify themselves. They define also the worlds of the people, identifying their backgrounds, the patterns according to which they 'should' rear their children, live their lives and direct their energies. (Wiebe & Mariappen 1978, p. 128)

Religious symbols retain meaning, as part of a connection to a specific religious worldview within the diaspora, even when the considerable adaptations to the Malaysian environment have occurred.

East Africa was the focus of a study, published in 1963, by George Delf. Although historical in nature, his descriptions of caste are valuable, especially when taken together with other analyses of this topic. The specific issue of caste in both East Africa and South Africa was included in a volume devoted to caste, edited by Barton Schwartz (1967). The most important finding within these parallel studies (dealt with in more detail in Chapter 11) is that even, where caste affiliation has survived, due to the presence of sufficient numbers from a particular caste, a caste system, as such, has not. These studies are important for a broad interpretation of developments concerning caste within the diaspora, and provide a clearer understanding of the developments which have occurred, and why they have done so, within the South Australian diaspora.

An important and often quoted study was undertaken by Chandra Jayawardena (1965-66). In this study he looks at the way religion has adapted and changed to the environment in British Guiana, now known as Guyana. He provides a useful background to the early development of Hinduism in the region, on which subsequent studies have been built. Although the study was conducted some time ago, the findings are still relevant. He goes into considerable detail concerning the Hinduism of the immigrants and changes which have taken place over the years, including the development of reformist movements. His conclusion concerning Hinduism is of direct importance to this thesis as he suggests that

> Developments in religious belief were influenced at all stages by the nature of Hinduism – non-dogmatic, amorphous and immensely tolerant of divergent tendencies...The basic attitude of "Reality is One: sages speak of it in many ways" (Rig-Veda) has made Hinduism resistant to sharp distinctions between sects or between orthodoxy and heresy. (Jayawardena 1965-66, p. 240)

It is the flexible nature of Hinduism, which allows for adaptation and change, that will be taken up further within subsequent chapters.

In 1976, Gary Hess wrote an article entitled 'The forgotten Asian Americans: the East Indian Community in the United States' which highlighted the lack of research in that country. Brett Melendy subsequently included a relevant section in his 1977 book on Asians within America, providing a history of migration and the attitudes towards Asian migration, which were present in the United States over the years. Maxine Fisher, in the following year, produced a dissertation concentrating on Asian Indian ethnic identities in the same country, which included a discussion of the function of religious organisations, and detailed Hindu temples and religious sects (1978). She found that regional/ language identification was most salient for Hindus in New York. Her findings are taken up within Chapter 11, as part of a discussion of the importance of regional/ language groups in Adelaide.

In Britain, Rashmi Desai's 1963 study is of importance as it is a comprehensive study of Indians in Britain. Desai offers much of interest in his book, especially when discussing religion. However, it is obvious that some of his statements only reflect the situation during the early part of the 1960s. More recent studies would suggest this situation has indeed changed. Some statements such as 'The Brahmans, however, do not act as priests, because few ritual acts are performed in the United Kingdom' (Desai 1963, p. 15) and

> Hindu immigrants usually delegate their ritual duties to other members of their families to the extent that marriage and funeral rites may be carried out by delegation in India with nothing but a token ceremony in the United Kingdom. (Desai 1963, p. 93)

These developments applied to the period when Desai was conducting his field work. He does describe many of the features which came to be prominent amongst the chain migrants who make up much of the British population originating from South Asia. His study is of importance in understanding the early stages of the development of Hinduism within the region, including employment in non-traditional occupations and the decline of the functions of caste in Britain, while there were continuing concerns with ritual purity and inter-caste marriage.

Other studies followed Desai, concentrating on different aspects of South Asians in Britain. Specific communities are examined by particular scholars. Michael Lyon looks at ethnicity and Gujarati tradition in Britain (1972-3). He establishes a working definition of ethnicity in order to understand Indian ethnicity. He suggest that communality of language has been an important component for creating cultural boundaries for the Gujaratis within Britain by providing a common set of cultural meaning for them. This, along with similar migration experiences, assists the establishment and maintenance of Gujarati ethnicity within Britain.

Gujarati communities in Britain were subsequently the focus of studies conducted by Harald Tambs-Lyche (1975 & 1980). Tambs-Lyche conducted his research amongst the Gujarati community before refining his observations to the Patidar caste, describing their social and religious organisation. Such areas as marriage, caste hierarchy, and ritual activities are incorporated into his work. When discussing women specifically, he concludes that 'Religion is very much the woman's domain in the London Patidar households. She may for example fast every Friday' (Tambs-Lyche 1980, p. 10). However, he does not elaborate further upon this statement. Although his emphasis is upon an ethnic group and a specific caste within Britain, the relevance of his work for this thesis is found within one of his more general concluding statements. He suggests that '...Indians wish to accommodate to rather than to integrate into British society' (Tambs-Lyche 1980, p. 124). Accommodation is a theme directly taken up in this thesis.

Within Britain, the specific Hindu sect, the Swami Narayans, has been the focus of work by a number of scholars, including Rohit Barot (1972-3), D. F. Pocock (1976), and Raymond Williams (1984). These studies were relevant to the South Australian community only in a general way as providing religious background. Specific South Australian contributions required different approaches than those applied to the Swami Narayana community. Due to the nature of the Hindu community in South Australia, these studies were of a more general, rather than specific, interest. Sean Carey (1983) examines another religious group, the Hare Krishna Movement, and the way in which, although traditionally attracting non-Asian members, it was beginning to become an alternative for Indian Hindus in Britain. His

article is of interest, in providing an alternative to the developments which have occurred in South Australia, where the Hare Krishna Temple only appeared to be of significance for the diaspora community for the celebration of Krishna's birthday prior to the construction of the Hindu temple. Robert Jackson (1976), rather than examining a specific Hindu movement, examines a religious festival, Holi, and the way it has been adapted in Britain. He provides an insight into the way adaptation can occur in the face of the retention of the essence and symbolism of the celebration.

As previously mentioned, caste has been a major focus of some studies of Hindu communities, specifically in Africa. The contributors to Barton Schwartz's (1967) study, including Hilda Kuper and Agehananda Bharati, have examined caste amongst Indians living in South Africa, East Africa, Guyana, Mauritius, and Trinidad. The authors were interested in the specific function of caste in these communities and the changes which have occurred over the years, in comparison with caste in India. The main argument in these studies, that a caste system has not been established in these areas, is a theme taken up in Chapter 11.

During the period up until the late 1980s, general surveys of Indian immigration had taken place for a variety of different areas. These surveys help to build a picture of the different waves of Indian immigration and the developments which were associated with them. During the later period, studies tended to become more focussed on specific communities and sects within specific regions. Some important conclusions have been made as to the maintenance and adaptation of Hinduism and, indeed, as to the flexibility of Hinduism, which has enabled this adaptation to occur. This trend was to continue within more recent scholarship.

International studies: recent

I have divided the international studies into those pre1987 and those 1987 and later, as this year appears to be the beginning of the proliferation of specific studies on diaspora

communities which have significance for my own work. It was also the year that Ninian Smart (1987a) called for more research in the area of diaspora religious communities. During 1987, a number of significant publications appeared. A text relevant to Britain was *Hinduism in Great Britain*, edited by Richard Burghart, which contained an important collection of essays focussing on a variety of different, but interrelated, aspects of the diaspora experience. Kim Knott's 'Hindu temple rituals in Britain: the reinterpretation of tradition' and Maureen Michaelson's 'Domestic Hinduism in a Gujarati trading Caste' are two chapters which are included in the volume. In both the emphasis is firmly on religion in the diaspora.

Maureen Michaelson examines private practices rather than public rituals in Britain, concluding that much meaningful religious activity takes place within the home and that temple attendance is sporadic. She suggests that

> The Lohanas, like other Gujarati castes, are involved in an intensive weekly round of religious activities, but in the Lohana case these activities are organized by family and kin, the local caste associations and various devotional congregations (satsang) in the neighbourhood. (Michaelson 1987, p. 32)

According to Michaelson, although communal religious activities have increased over the period that the Lohanas have been resident in Britain, it is not on the same basis as it had been for those previously resident in Africa, where daily temple worship was common (Michaelson 1987, p. 47). She suggests that devotionalism, combined with religio-cultural activities, are important in Britain. Hinduism and Hindu rituals have not only been maintained by this group within the British diaspora, but the younger generation have also been given a solid grounding in them (Michaelson 1987, p. 46).

Kim Knott (1987), although concentrating on temple rituals, does add to a better understanding of domestic practices by commenting on the importance of the role of women in the domestic sphere when describing the Hindu community in Leeds. She concludes that

> In Leeds it is primarily through the temple that local Hindus have organized and maintained their religion. It is undeniably true that religious practice has persisted in the home, with women continuing to fast and to conduct regular pujas, and with families continuing to observe life-cycle rites. (Knott 1987, p.16)

From the contributions in this volume, an understanding of adaptation and transformation of Hinduism in this specific diasporic setting is gained.

In 1987, a conference on 'South Asian Communities Overseas' was held at Oxford University. A legacy from the conference has been the publication in 1991 of selected papers, edited by Steven Vertovec. Two of the papers from this selection are of particular interest: Arthur Helweg's chapter concerning Australia will be discussed later. Kim Knott's chapter is a valuable contribution to a general understanding of the agency of change in the diaspora. When trying to establish the way in which change occurs, she suggests that areas to be explored are: the home and host traditions, the nature of the process of immigration, the composition of the immigrant group, and the response of the host society (Knott 1991, pp. 87-88). Although setting up a framework for understanding and identifying change, she warns against generalisations:

> The changes which take place as time passes will be peculiar to the experience of British South Asian religious communities and, as such, different to parallel developments in the Indian subcontinent or amongst other Asian diaspora populations. Scholarly awareness of the context of religious change, however, should be yoked to an exploration of the contribution played by the character and content of the religious traditions themselves in determining the structure and dynamics of the new religious forms. (Knott 1991, p. 105)

Once again, Knott's work is of considerable interest, as it addresses Hinduism and change in the diaspora but with the important warning each diaspora must be studied as a discrete entity, although other studies can be of help.

Even though she suggests context is important, her analysis of the situation in Britain does provide guidelines as to trends which may occur and what influences change. She suggests that '...Hinduism was slower to manifest itself publicly than the other [Asian] religions' (Knott 1991, p. 96) and it was 'with the arrival of women and the development of multiple

places of worship, [that] there was a consequent intensification of practice' (Knott 1991, p. 97). Knott identifies the concern for the younger generation within the diaspora as stimulating both innovation and the replication of practices (Knott 1991, p. 98). From her description and analysis of the South Asian religions in the British diaspora, she then speculates tentatively about the future. Perhaps the presence of women within the diaspora, as well as the subsequent birth of children, is integral to the development of both communal Hinduism and innovation, as the focus may be upon the younger generation with regards to '...religious and cultural needs of children and for their moral development in a Western environment' (Knott 1991, p. 98).

Research into immigration by South Asians to America was published by Raymond Williams in 1987. He places them amongst the 'new ethnics' and suggests that

> Those admitted in the first few years were part of a "brain drain" - doctors, engineers, scientists and nurses who quickly established themselves as upper-middle-class professionals. More recently, members of those immigrants' families have been admitted under family reunification provisions. These Asian Indians are young, well educated, prosperous and energetic and they are actively establishing Hindu organizations, temples and ashrams. (Williams 1987, p. 247)

He elaborates on their religious organisation, commenting that

> Where only a few Hindus are present they will generally meet together for worship and rituals which are identified with ecumenical Hinduism. The common language is English, and the religious texts and rituals are those associated with the all-Indian Sanskrit tradition. When there is a larger community its tendency is to splinter into regional linguistic or sectarian groups. (Williams 1987, p. 247)

Williams' research confirms some of the earlier finding by Maxine Fisher concerning the way in which identity is coalesced around different boundaries as the size and configuration of the community changes.

The Caribbean was the focus of another important text, edited by I. J. Bahadur Singh, which was published in 1987. In this volume, Dennis Bassier looks at a sect in Guyana worshipping Kali Mai, while Richard Forbes writes about the Arya Samaj in Trinidad. The

influence of an Indian heritage is the focus of a study by Brinsley Samaroo, who suggests that contact with Indian ideas has influenced the religious development in the Caribbean:

> In the religious sphere the Indian connection has been strong and continuous. Between the Caribbean visits of Bhai Parmanand, an Indian mystic in 1910 and that of Sant Keshav Dass in 1977, there has been a constant flow of Indian religious leaders to the Caribbean. (Samaroo 1987, p. 108)

Samaroo demonstrates that, although Hindus may have initially been isolated from India, during this century there has been considerable contact, and religious development has not occurred in isolation.

Kusha Haraksingh, in the same volume, when discussing Hinduism in Trinidad, laments the lack of research into the relationship between Hinduism and social and economic development and change (Haraksingh 1987, p. 167). He concludes that

> Compartmentalisation is a keynote of the Hindu experience in Trinidad: it indicates within the individual himself the operation of the values of tolerance and reconciliation, and as an adaptive process it serves both as a mechanism for stability and change. (Haraksingh 1987, p. 183)

These comments are important, because they indicate how Hinduism can facilitate both security and change rather than working against them, within the Trinidadian environment at least. For example, compartmentalisation occurs with concepts such as purity and pollution. The 'neutralisation of the work place' (Haraksingh 1987, p. 182) requires contact with those of different ritual status and, therefore, what occurs within the domestic or social spheres can not occur within the workplace.

Of interest in Haraksingh's findings is the emphasis on devotionalism and, as an extension of this, the development of a Sai Baba following in the region (Haraksingh 1987, p. 167). It is suggested that, generally, Sai Baba attracts a following from the urban elite, which was not the original profile of the Indians from Trinidad. Therefore, Haraksingh concludes because of the influence of a Western environment the Indians in Trinidad appear to 'resemble that of urban India more and village India less' (Haraksingh 1987, p. 178), thus demonstrating the way the social environment has influenced the Hindu community.

An unpublished conference paper by R. S. Newman (1988) provides an insight into the way Hinduism is practiced in Mauritius. He looks at language, rituals and identity in order to understand both the practices and the changes which have occurred within Mauritius over the years. His summary is of some interest, as he states:

> Thus we must view Mauritian popular Hinduism through the lens of migration, indenture and a socio-economic crucible, and the struggle for liberation. This history produced moves away from tradition and moves toward it for help, guidance or an anchor. Though there are still wide swathes of similarity with South Asian Hinduism, Mauritian popular Hinduism has developed a flavour and rhythm of its own. (Newman 1988, pp. 15-16)

Newman's conclusions can be understood in relationship to other works previously mentioned. For example, he takes areas similar to those of Kim Knott (1991), such as language and devotional activities for examination, in order to understand the way in which Hinduism has developed, and his conclusion that Hinduism provides stability within Mauritius echoes Haraksingh's finding for Trinidad.

Since 1987 scholarship in the area has continued with considerable work being devoted to Hinduism within Britain. Many of these studies are of interest, as they throw light on the developments which have occurred within specific communities or in aspects of Hindu practice within Britain. One such study is that by Penny Logan (1988), who looks at specific religious practices during a Hindu festival in Britain. Gwilym Beckerlegg (1991), in contrast, has examined the influence of Imperialism in order to explain regional and linguistic groupings in Britain, as well as increased religious activity. He concentrates on the way a British colonial understanding of Indian identity ultimately assisted the development of interest groups which were subsequently used against the British in India. These constructed groups maintained a sense of shared common boundaries after immigration to Britain. Another study of note, although concerned with Muslim girls in Britain, is that by Kim Knott and Sajda Khokher (1993). In this study, the authors demonstrate the way in which current frameworks which suggest either cultural schizophrenia or synthesis are inadequate in capturing the complexity of the way in which negotiating a position is flexible, and that the '...women's accounts of their experiences...are

complex, shifting and multi-faceted, and also, at times, selective, critical and assertive' (Knott & Khokher 1994, p. 607). It is studies such as these that help to build a more complex picture of diasporan communities.

One of the most important, more recent, texts focussing on the diaspora is *Desh Pardesh: the South Asian Presence in Britain*, edited by Roger Ballard (1994). The chapters in this book, while highlighting different aspects of diasporan communities, provide an interesting and scholarly overview of South Asians within Britain. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains and Parsis are included in specific chapters, emphasising the importance of community based on religious affiliation. Although discussing Pakistani Muslims in Oxford, Alison Shaw sums up the way in which, for many, religious affiliation has provided symbolic boundaries for the creation of a community. She suggests

> Yet despite the different emphasis the current concern with religious identity can be seen as serving a very similar purpose to that which the myth of return once did. It, too, represents an effective way for migrants to maintain and control their distinctive culture and social structure. (Shaw 1994, p. 36)

Shaw is suggesting that religion, specifically Islam, provides a means of stability within the British environment while allowing the maintenance of distinctive boundaries which establish difference.

Within the same volume, caste is the primary focus of a number of studies, including Eleanor Nesbitt's examination of members of the Valmiki Caste in Coventry; Rachel Dwyer's description of, amongst other things, caste and Hindu religious sects amongst Gujaratis; and Kim Knott's chapter on Gujarati Mochis in the English city of Leeds. Knott devotes the concluding section of her chapter to women and resistance to established caste principles. She suggests that the contribution of women in caste affairs often revolves around their involvement in women's groups and also operates within the family context. It is less evident within a male dominated public sphere, thus leading to a lack of understanding of their role in these matters (Knott 1994, p. 230). Taken as a whole, *Desh Pardesh* makes a solid contribution to understanding the diversity of the Asian presence in Britain.

Cartographies of Diaspora: contesting identities, the 1996 publication by Avtar Brah, has also made a considerable contribution to the understanding of the Indian diaspora. Although Britain is used as the focus of this text, her more general analysis of the diaspora adds notably to an understanding to the diaspora. Her work will be referred to in subsequent chapters.

Raymond Williams continued his contribution to an understanding of Hindus in the United States by editing *A Sacred Thread: Modern Transmission of Hindu Traditions in India and Abroad* (1992). Although there are a number of valuable chapters within the volume, it is somewhat disappointing in that only one of the contributors, out of fourteen, was a woman. Williams has taken the title of the book from the male initiation ceremony and makes the analogy that the Hindu tradition itself is similar to a Sacred Thread. The focus of the book is '...on the four primary media for the transmission of Hindu traditions: temples, rituals, texts, and exemplary persons' (Williams 1992, p. 4), the last of which he defines as gurus. Although is could be argued that women play a role in the transmission of religion as ritual practitioners, this does ignore the daily process whereby women transmit Hinduism through the examples they set in fulfilment of duties and attitudes towards others, not even considering their ritual duties.

In spite of these concerns, there are some interesting chapters within the text, not least being Raymond Williams' own chapter entitled 'Sacred Threads of Several Textures: Strategies of Adaptation in the United States' (1992). This chapter is extremely valuable, as it sets out different strategies of adaptation which are directly applicable and identifiable within the South Australian diaspora, and assist an understanding of both the Hindu communities in Adelaide and Whyalla. It has been drawn upon in subsequent chapters. The dynamic nature of Hinduism in the diaspora is an important theme in this volume, with Williams concluding that 'The Asian-Indian community is dynamic, and the strategies of adaptation are malleable to meet the diverse needs of a growing population' (Williams 1992, p. 255).

An extensive study, concentrating on South Asians in the United States, was conducted by Karen Leonard (1997). She draws upon Williams' strategies of adaptation in her discussion, looking at the developments which have occurred in terms of these strategies. This is particularly relevant when comparing American developments with those that have occurred within South Australia, especially where regional language groups are becoming more important. This will be discussed further within Chapter 11. Her chapter on South Asian religions in America is particularly relevant. Although dealing with a variety of religious traditions, she does describe Hindu rituals. An important aspect of her research is the acknowledgment of the active role which women take as agents of change within both the private and public domains (Leonard 1997, p. 88). She suggests that although women, especially first-generation women, are '...charged with embodying and transmitting "tradition"' (Leonard 1997, p. 88), they change it in line with their own and their families' changing needs. Their impact on community life is extensive, in their provision of social support and promotion of communal cultural activities.

Other works are less regionally specific, although they may draw examples from specific regions. Bhikhu Parekh's 1994 article is concerned with the adjustment of indentured Indian labourers generally. Martin Baumann (1995), however, deals specifically with many of the issues within the range of my thesis. Baumann, after conceptualising the diaspora, concentrates the second part of his article on a discussion of the establishment of temples as vehicles in the maintenance of a Hindu identity. He emphasises the importance of studying individual diasporas while 'universalizing comparison' (Baumann 1995, p. 29), in order to shed light on similar groups. He sets out a number of concepts which could be followed, such as trends towards dispersal or perpetuation, 'retraditionalisation' or reinterpretation, and fusion or fission of organisations, doctrines and concepts. Baumann contends that '...not until living away from one's home country is the religious adherence consciously valued as significant. In a way, the religious affiliation moves from the latent to the manifest' (Baumann 1995, p. 26). However, it is through reinterpretation and adaptation that religions will survive within the diaspora. Baumann, therefore, indicates a number of areas appropriate to a study of Hinduism in the diaspora, and the general value of these studies. His scholarship is especially relevant to this study.

Steven Vertovec (1997), whose work is discussed in subsequent chapters, is one of the most recent scholars to draw examples from the South Asian religions for a general discussion of the meaning of the diaspora. He suggests that discussions of diaspora can been divided between diaspora as social form; diaspora as type of consciousness; and diaspora as means of production (Vertovec 1997, p. 277-8). He concludes that any approach to the study of diaspora needs to be taken from both an historical perspective and an analysis of the meaning and structure for the individual (Vertovec 1997, p. 292-3). Vijay Mishra, writing from an Australian university, uses Indians as the basis for a discussion of diaspora in an article entitled 'The diasporic imaginary: theorizing the Indian diaspora' (1996). Mishra compares what he terms the older 'exclusive' diasporas, with more recent 'border' diasporas (1996, p. 422). By drawing upon literature and film, he demonstrates that the older diasporas of exclusivism are self contained '"little Indias" within the colonies' (Mishra 1996, p.122), while the more recent Indian diasporas 'border' positions with the wider community. Mishra suggests the new Indian diaspora '...incorporates "India" into its bordered, deterritorialized experiences within Western nation states' (1996, p. 434). Mishra's scholarship, although focussing in general terms upon the Indian diaspora, is a valuable contribution to an understanding of the differing experiences within the diaspora, as the South Australian diaspora can be classified as a new diaspora, although some of those within it have immigrated from an older diaspora.

The literature varies as to its applicability to my thesis, although much of the description and analysis is of interest in building an overall picture of the way in which Hinduism has developed within different diaspora communities. Some of the more recent work, especially, has implications for looking at the way in which a study of Hindu assumptions and practices may be approached and understood within the Australian diaspora, although the physical and social environments may differ.

Australia: general studies

General studies on non-European immigration to Australia provide little information on Indians. A. T. Yarwood (1968) discusses Indian coolies, but Hinduism is not specifically mentioned. In Kenneth Rivett's *Australia and the Non White Migrant* (1975), Indians receive little attention, and there is no reference made to religion. Issues of concern to migrant groups are considered in Robert Birrell and Colin Hay's *The Immigration Issue in Australia* (1978). These revolve around economic concerns such as unemployment, economic growth and trade unions, while religious issues are not discussed.

Basil E. Dennis (1971), when discussing the development of ethnic communities in South Australia, does not discuss the Hindu community specifically. However, he does include a short discussion of the history of the Indian community. His research was published in 1971 and, therefore, provides an insight into the Indian community at this time. He suggests that

> Indians in Adelaide are few in number and most arrived within the last ten years. There are a few doctors working at the Royal Adelaide, Queen Elizabeth and Adelaide Children's Hospitals and in the Public Health Department. There are several lecturers at the Adelaide and Flinders Universities and at the Waite Agricultural Research Institute. In addition there are about twelve research scholars doing post-graduate studies. (Dennis 1971, p. 44)

He continues with a discussion of the establishment of an Indian Club to foster a better understanding between Indians and Australians. The festivals which he notes as being kept by the Club are mainly political events, such as Independence Day, while the only religious events listed are Dipavali (Diwali) and Christmas. Religion is not specifically mentioned in the discussion, nor are the Sikh community or any other Indian religious groups.

In *Australia Today*, with text by Suzanne Falkiner and photographs by Lorrie Graham (1985), a brief history of Indian immigration to Australia is given, taken from other sources, primarily from Marie de Lepervanche (1984). Jock Collins' (1988) study is another which draws on de Lepervanche's work. Post-war immigration is discussed, with Indians being

mentioned only in relation to de Lepervanche's study of the Sikh community, and Hindus are not mentioned. Although one section of the book is devoted to 'Migrant women, Aged and Second Generation', Indians are not specifically mentioned within this section.

Ian Burnley, Sol Encel and Grant McCall (1985) deal with immigration and ethnicity in Australia. In Burnley's chapter in the book, religion is examined to a minor extent. It is suggested that religion is a significant element in the maintenance of ethnic identity within countries which have been subjected to extensive periods of colonial domination (Burnley, Encel and McCall 1985, p. 185). When the importance of religion to specific groups is looked at within Australia, however,

> ...persons were asked which church they attended, and their frequency of attendance, since frequency would attest to the maintenance of traditional rituals and be at least a surface manifestation of identity. (Burnley, Encel & McCall 1985, p. 185)

A list was compiled from this information but it did not include any Asian groups specifically. However, public worship is not an adequate indicator of the maintenance of Hinduism, as was evident in the studies undertaken within other diaspora communities. It is doubtful, therefore, whether the assumptions on which the survey is based are sufficiently broad enough to discover the maintenance of Hinduism within Australia.

Some studies such as Graeme Hugo's *The Aging of Ethnic Populations in South Australia* (undated) use statistical information to give profiles of ethnic communities. Hugo generally includes Indians under the heading of 'Asian'. No information of relevance is provided concerning religion. *Religion and Ancestry in Australia: Changes over the Generations 1986* (1991) by Charles Price is a general study which also uses statistical information in order to assess the degree of religiosity of different migrant groups. Broad statements are made from the statistical analysis and Price states that

> With persons of Indian and mixed Indian descent the No Religion and Not Stated Categories have increased markedly in the II 1/2 and III+ generations. Hinduism, unlike Islam, seems to provide a relatively easy path into Agnosticism and Atheism, this being more marked with those of mixed descent. (Price 1991, p. 30)

Not only does this study assume that religion is absolutely separate from the secular but also that, if a religion is not stated, one does not exist or, indeed, that atheism is opposed to religion.

It is evident that little information is available within the general studies on immigration, which provides insight into the Hindu or Indian diaspora community. It is certainly an aspect which has lacked attention in the more general research into immigrant groups. Even where religion has been the focus of a study, assumptions underlying the study have not been sufficiently explored to enable an examination which would take into account the specific nature of Hinduism.

Australia: specific ethnic groups

Studies have been undertaken of individual 'ethnic' groups in Australia, including Indians. The way these specific ethnic groups have been approached is of interest to this thesis, especially where they have dealt with women or religion or, indeed, cultural maintenance.

One particular study of Indians in Australia has led the way for further scholarship in the area. Although not specifically dealing with women or Hinduism, Marie de Lepervanche's anthropological study of a Sikh community has been influential. The community which de Lepervanche examines in detail, is centred around Woolgoolga, in northern New South Wales. The community is quite homogeneous, as it basically comprises of members of the Sikh Jat, agricultural caste.

De Lepervanche devotes a chapter to religion and, while commenting that although the religion is 'ritually austere' (de Lepervanche 1984, p. 160), she was in fact made aware of the '...rules and customs pertaining to ritual purity' (de Lepervanche 1984, p.160) in daily life. Much of the chapter is devoted to an exploration of the divisions within the community and the two temples which exist in a competitive relationship. She concludes that

> The building of temples on Woolgoolga and elsewhere in overseas communities has enhanced Sikh solidarity. At the same time, temple affairs provide a fertile ground for engaging in parish politics, aspiring to leadership and furthering status aspirations. The resultant divisions in the Sikh communities are manifested in the factions that adhere to temple organisation and management. In this way, Sikh temples become more than bastions of social security and spiritual comfort in a foreign land; each provides an arena for conflict while simultaneously continuing a cultural tradition. (de Lepervanche 1984, p. 166)

Public sacred space has become important in the maintenance of Sikhism and a Sikh or Indian culture within the diaspora and, importantly, a catalyst for conflict.

Although de Lepervanche suggests that maintenance of beliefs and practices, symbolically linked to a worldview developed and having meaning within the Punjab, occurred, she also points out alternative developments:

> The Indians brought to Australia cultural practices and beliefs that have their origins in Punjabi social relations. Many of these customs persist in the immigrant settlement but others have been abandoned, modified or moulded by the structure of social life in Australia. (de Lepervanche 1984, p. 28)

She discovered that individual customs may be continued, discarded or changed within the Australian environment; however, those that survived in some form still derived meaning from Punjabi culture, even though distanced from the environment in which they evolved.

De Lepervanche's work was important, as it focussed on a specific ethnic and religious community within a region of Australia. It was the first major study on a community from the Indian subcontinent. Many studies both before and after that of de Lepervanche were concerned with broader categories of immigrants in Australia. Generalisations have been made within the literature with differences being glossed over in an attempt to discover commonalities. De Lepervanche's research, along with recent international work on specific diaspora groups, has been exciting, as it has pointed to the deeper understanding which can be achieved by focussing on specific groups within discrete geographical areas. These individual studies assist in an understanding of the way in which specific South Asian diasporas work within different environments.

Of considerable interest are other studies which deal with ethnicity from a broader perspective than simply providing statistical data. Gill Bottomley and Marie de Lepervanche (1984) have edited a collection of articles dealing with many important aspects of migrant communities, such as multiculturalism and education, and the 'naturalness' of inequality. The chapters by Bottomley and Jeannie Martin, although dealing with women, do not consider the religious perspective. Bottomley is concerned with ethnicity, class and gender in the Greek community, and the way in which they '...combine to oppress, but movement into the petite bourgeoisie may just alter the form and not the existence of oppression' (Bottomley 1984, p. 108). However, there are generally very different migration, education and social class experiences for the group within her study from those of the women in the Indian community. An examination of Martin's chapter highlights the alternative profile many immigrant women have from that of the Indian women. However, problems may occur for all these groups show similarities and differences. She suggests that immigrant women 'For economic reasons, for cultural reasons, from isolation and boredom, they are driven into paid work at a stage in their life cycle when they are 'supposed' to be at home caring for and rearing their families...'(Martin 1984, p. 115).

Within the same text, religion is the focus of Michael Humphrey's chapter on a Lebanese Muslim community in Sydney. He looks at the conflicts that occur, and the manner in which living the 'correct way' (Humphrey 1984, p. 197) may place an Islamic way of life at odds with Australian law and the broader community. This community is also the focus of other work by Humphrey (1987). In his later publication he looks at the role religion plays in the mobilisation of a Lebanese Muslim community in Sydney. He concludes that 'Religion has played a significant role in the process of incorporating immigrants marginal to, or isolated from, the wider Australian society' (Humphrey 1987, p. 244). Primarily, he is concerned with the way the mosque and the activities of the Imam have '...become a focal point for organisation and assertion of one's cultural identity' (Humphrey 1987, p. 244). This study is of general interest as it demonstrates the impact organised communal religion can have on an immigrant group in developing a specific identity and being a catalyst for communal organisation on other levels.

In the introduction to his text, *Ethnic Family Values in Australia*, Des Storer summarises the inter-generational problems which were identified in the few studies he relies upon that have been undertaken in this area (1985, p. 27). They included conflict between generations, resulting in a clash of cultures and cultural confusion and problems in different role expectations between husband and wife. However, he warns against stereotyping the immigrant family. Two studies are of specific interest in the same text. They are 'Pakistani Families' and 'Sri Lankan Families', both by Hanifa Dean-Oswald. When discussing Pakistani Families, Dean-Oswald suggests that

> The key to understanding Pakistani family life and the values that underlie it is the realization that Islam is the major influence. Certain Islamic concepts, if appreciated in their historical and social context, can provide a deeper understanding of the factors affecting family outlook, family law, and an entire range of family matters. (Dean-Oswald 1985, p. 199)

Her finding concerning the underlying importance of Islam in daily life highlights the way in which religion can be fundamental to the analysis of diaspora communities, something which is often ignored within scholarship on the diaspora.

When specifically discussing teenage girls, Dean-Oswald suggests that, although there has been a reassessment of customs regarding segregation from young men, 'traditional Muslim values' (Dean-Oswald 1985, p. 216) have been retained for dress codes and behaviour. The conclusion which is reached in the discussion of the woman's role is that

> In many homes, it is the Pakistani woman who remains even more traditional than her husband and acts as the custodian and transmitter of values. (Dean-Oswald 1985, p. 220)

It is unclear whether Dean-Oswald is setting up women as upholders of tradition in opposition to modernity, although it does appear that she has used the term 'traditional' as meaning an indicator of values and practices which are ethnically or religiously based, rather than being opposed to modernity. It appears from her work, however, that the girls studied are being made to conform within the domestic space rather than choosing to so do, but whether this is really so is difficult to determine. This study is of considerable interest, however, as the profile which Dean-Oswald suggests for the majority of Pakistanis in

Australia is one of a middle-class, professional, urban community, fluent in English. This mirrors the profile of the Indian community in Australia.

When discussing the Sri Lankan community, Dean-Oswald examines the various divisions within it. Although she focuses on Buddhists and Christians, she also spends some time in discussing the two Hindu groups from Sri Lanka, the 'Sri Lankan' Tamils and the Indian Tamils, who, although sharing a common language and religion, form two specific groups, their immigration being centuries apart and for different reasons. The 'Sri Lankan' Tamils are descendants of Tamil- speaking Indians who immigrated to Ceylon in the eleventh century, while Indian Tamils were brought to Ceylon during British rule (Dean-Oswald 1985, p. 229). Although considerable space is devoted to an exploration of the Sri Lankan legal system, especially as it relates to personal law, the small Sri Lankan Tamil community in Western Australia (consisting of 20 families) is also discussed in some detail.

This community is described as being well educated, professional and fluent in English, but, also, adhering to traditional values (Dean-Oswald 1985, p. 250). *Bhakti* worship is said to be popular and Tamil House, a centre for celebration and religious festivals, has been established for all Tamil-speakers. It is suggested that 'Parents are anxious that their children should retain their religious and linguistic heritage' (Dean-Oswald 1985, p. 251). Some of the traditional practices which Dean-Oswald suggests are maintained include arranged marriages and dowries (dowries still being legal in Sri Lanka but not in India) (Dean-Oswald 1985, p. 256).

Dean-Oswald outlines the need for further research by stating that

> Detailed study of the Sri Lankan Tamil community in Australia is also needed. They are an emerging ethnic group in terms of Australia's history of immigration. Given these restrictions, the observations recorded are generalized and represent no more than impressions and likely trends. (Dean-Oswald 1985, p. 256)

There is an acknowledgment that the research presented is only paving the way for more intense studies of this particular diaspora group within the Australian community. Sri

Lankan women immigrants were also the focus of an M. A. thesis from the Flinders University of South Australia. However, it dealt with emigration generally from Sri Lanka, rather than immigration specifically to South Australia (Mahawewa 1993).

Purusottama Bilimoria and Ruchira Ganguly-Scrase in *Indians in Victoria (Australia)* (1988) present some valuable information concerning the Indian community in Victoria. The main concern within the book is, however,

> ...to collect relevant information and detail on the Indian community in Victoria with respect to the pattern of settlement adaptability, linguistic and cultural integration, educational and professional status, cultural orientation and welfare issues. (Bilimoria & Ganguly-Scrase 1988, p. 11)

Although this information is valuable for a general understanding of Indians in Australia, Bilimoria's other work specifically dealing with Hindus is of more benefit to this dissertation and will be dealt with below.

Studies which have been conducted on the Afghan community in Australia are of some interest, although they are basically historical, rather than analytical discussions of these communities. Afghans were generally Muslims; however, a few Sikhs and Hindus were incorrectly called Afghans as they worked alongside the Afghan camel drivers. Michael Cigler (1986), does not discuss the Hindus and Sikhs who were amongst this group, but Christine Stevens (1989) does mention them and the way in which they were isolated by the Islamic Afghan community. The Muslims used '...the term Hindu in a derogatory way to distinguish them from Muslims' (Stevens 1989, p. 206). Stevens' book concentrates on the Islamic Afghans, although she does mention specific events concerning Hindus and Sikhs. The Afghans, Stevens suggests, did not bring wives to Australia, although sons were brought out.

A statistical analysis of a specific community of second and third generation Chinese is used as the basis of Kee Pookong and Arthur Huck's (1991) work. Religion receives little attention in this study as the authors suggest that '...Chinese tend to be a secular people'

(Pookong & Huck 1991, p. 53) and that 'Religion has not played an important role in Chinese societies' (Pookong & Huck 1991, p. 53).

Research has been undertaken by Karobi Mukherjee on Indian women in South Australia. She is currently writing a Ph. D. on the immigration experiences of twenty Indian women who came to South Australia. Her work, both scholarly and community-focussed, has been concerned with facilitating a general understanding of migrant women, especially Asian women, within the broader Australian society (Mukherjee 1992a, p. 124). Although her work is a valuable contribution to an understanding of Asian women in South Australia as she is able to place the Asian voice in a central position and provide a personal narrative, she does not explore religious beliefs and practices within her research.

Worthy of mention are two recent studies which deal with Asian women in Australia. The first, Ien Ang's article 'The Curse of the Smile: Ambivalence and the "Asian Woman in Australian Multiculturalism"' (1996), is a post-colonial exploration of the relationship between Asian women and the Australian policy of multiculturalism. The second, by Chris Cunneen and Julie Stubbs, deals specifically with the issue of violence against Filipino women in Australia (1997). Therefore, issues concerning the relationship between immigrant women and the 'host' community are starting to be explored in more recent literature, highlighting areas which may warrant further examination, as well as issues of concern.

Two recent unpublished theses have been devoted to an examination of ethnic Indian women. Diana Ponnusamy's thesis, part of a Master of Arts degree, is entitled 'Diasporic Study of Ethnic Indian Women in Melbourne: Links Between Education, Occupation and Employment and the Impact of Work in Changing Attitudes' (1997), does discuss Hindu values where they specifically relate to their impact on both occupation and employment. An important conclusion by Ponnusamy concerns the maintenance of values, attitudes and cultural identity. She concludes that

> Integration has witnessed the erosion of many traditional socio-cultural values and attitudes. The desire to maintain an ethnic identity has been achieved by regular and frequent visits to India rather than membership and association with regional and linguistic community groups. (Ponnusamy 1997, p.2)

This demonstrates that accessibility to travel has influenced the maintenance of identity for this group of immigrants. Apart from the inclusion of non-Hindus, the women who were included within Ponnusamy's sample were similar to the women in my own and, as such, her findings reinforce conclusions which will be made within this thesis. It is important to note that she discusses a number of changing attitudes and practices which she suggests have occurred in response to the host environment, in an attempt to '...accommodate to the dominant society norms' (Ponnusamy 1997, p. 35). She goes on to suggest that this is a pragmatic approach and, for the Hindu women, religion has become 'a more humanistic, spiritual, individualised practice' (Ponnusamy 1997, p. 41). For the Hindu women, she concludes that religion has become more private, with emphasis upon conducting *puja* at the home shrine, rather than oriented towards the community and the temple.

The second thesis is that by Vijaya Joshi entitled 'Curries, Carlton Draught and Cultural Purgatory: Second Generation Indian Women in Australia' (1995). Her concern is the examination of the way second generation Indian women negotiate between two specific cultures. Religion has not been a primary concern within the study. Due to restrictions placed upon access to this thesis, it is difficult to elaborate upon it in too fine a detail. However, an unpublished conference paper of Joshi's articulates many of the ideas within the thesis itself (Joshi 1993). Joshi rejects the implication that second generation Indian women live in a cultural schizophrenia. Instead, she understands their position as being liberating, allowing for multiple possibilities (Joshi 1993, p. 11). Although Joshi's study was confined to the second generation, her conclusions are valuable, as they provide a wider view of women from an Indian cultural background in Australia.

A number of very valuable studies have been undertaken which examine specific Asian groups within the Australian community, and the influence of the Australian environment is developed within some of these. A picture of the way attitudes and practices are negotiated

by immigrant groups is developed through a number of these studies. They also paved the way for individual studies to be undertaken, which will add to a greater understanding of diaspora communities in Australia.

Australia: studies of individual immigrants

Some studies focus on individual migrants, generally describing their experiences; however, Indian women are rarely represented within them. For example, although Wendy Lowenstein and Morag Loh (1977) record the stories of 17 different immigrants to Australia, no Asians are included in the study, although religion is sometimes mentioned in regards to the difficulties involved in its maintenance in the early stages of the diaspora communities.

Two Asian women are focussed upon by Elizabeth Sloniec (1987), who looks at the lives of 15 female migrants. A Vietnamese woman interviewed was Catholic while a Laotian woman was a Buddhist. A paragraph was devoted to a discussion of religion by the Buddhist, who stated that '...the Buddhists do not go to the temple every time to pray. We can pray at home. If we don't follow our five precepts but go to the temple it means nothing' (Sloniec 1987, p. 60). It is evident that personal practice in daily life is an integral aspect of the Buddhist religion, for this woman, and public rituals are subordinated to private rituals. This is consistent with research conducted with Hindus.

In his research, Arthur Helweg (1991) picked up on Marie de Lepervanche's study of Sikhs in Australia. He compares different immigration journeys by taking examples of what he terms an old immmigrant and a new immigrant. He selects a Sikh man who with the assistance of a resident uncle, migrated to Australia, to a specific region of New South Wales where a Punjabi Sikh community had been established. This type of immigrant is normally known as a chain migrant. He compares this journey with what he terms a new immigrant, generally described as being an urban professional. In a sense his work is of interest, as the new immigrant mirrors the profile of the community in South Australia. It is limited, however, as the subjects of the study are both male and Sikh. Therefore, although

the specific immigration experiences of the new immigrant have commonalities with the immigrants in South Australia, the religion and gender aspects vary.

A study of second generation migrant women in Australia edited by Karen Herne, Joanne Travaglia and Elizabeth Weiss (1992) does include a chapter by an Indian woman, Rahmere Bhatti, entitled 'The Good Indian Girl'. Although she does discuss problems of cultural and religious differences, she at no time tells the reader her religion, which would be difficult to guess without specific knowledge. It could be assumed that she is, in fact, a Sikh, as she comes from an area predominantly known for its Sikh community, and she mentions that her grandfather came to Australia to work in the sugarcane fields. Her mother migrated to Australia after an arranged marriage to her Australian-born Indian father. Her profile as a descendent of chain migrants, differs from the Indian women in South Australia, but her self-examination may echo a search for identity by other second generation Indian women. She wanted to adapt to being both Indian and Australian, and understood that a conscious effort needed to be made in regards to her 'cultural identity' (Bhatti 1992, p. 131).

Short biographies of 15 South Australian women who had migrated from Greece were the focus of a book by Georgia Xenophou (1994). Religion was not a focus within the text, although it was occasionally touched upon.

This is an area in which very little work that adds to a greater understanding of the significance of religion for Asian or Indian immigrants to Australia has been conducted. It is an area in need of further scholarship.

Australia: studies which include significant insights into Hinduism

Australian studies which include significant insights into Hinduism in the diaspora are most important for my specific thesis. I have chosen to include under this heading a discussion in an M. Ed. thesis presented to the University of Adelaide in 1988 by Malathi Murugaian.

Although it was not specifically concerned with Hinduism, it does, however, offer significant insights into Hinduism in South Australia. The thesis, entitled 'A Study of Cultural Assimilation and Cultural Maintenance Amongst Tertiary Students of Indian Origin', is concerned with understanding '...the Indian-Australian community and ... its values and influences on the behaviour of group members' (Murugaian 1988, p. iv). Murugaian studies 26 students, whom she divides between those she terms transient, and settlers. Much of the thesis is devoted to the discussion of the importance of language and the maintenance of tradition; in fact, a number of the students are Hindu and considerable time is spent in a discussion of religious beliefs and practices, but this is often in relation to a link between language retention and religious intensity (Murugaian 1988, p. 59). Six of the respondents are described as being strongly committed to Hinduism (Murugaian 1988, p. 59). One interesting aspect of the study is the way in which Christian Indians discuss Hinduism. Two of the Christian students understood Hinduism as being intricately tied to Indian culture. Therefore, they did not see themselves as upholding any Indian culture, as they understood that culture as being Hindu culture (Murugaian 1988, pp. 61- 62). Murugaian discusses the importance of religion for providing a sense of cultural identity for active Hindus (Murugaian 1988, p. 142). She concludes that the cultural construction was an active process for the students, as she suggests that 'Clearly the respondents were making their own evaluations and decisions about which cultural values it was best to activate in different domains of their living in the social context of Australia' (Murugaian 1988, p. 170).

One important contribution to the study of the plethora of religions to be found in Australia is *Many Faiths One Nation* edited by Ian Gillman (1988). The book contains a chapter on Hinduism in Australia by Purusottoma Bilimoria, the most widely published author on Hinduism in Australia, and Jayant Bapat. Although much of the article concentrates on a general discussion of Hinduism, specific information is given to the history of Hindus in Australia, as well as current trends. The authors provide a history of Hindu immigration to Australia and an estimate of the numbers of Hindus in Australia at specific periods.

Under the heading 'Organised Hinduism', Bilimoria and Bapat discuss the formation of distinctive groups which were created for worship and the celebration of festivals, which developed out of small home groups. This arrangement, first developed in the 1970s, but in 1974 the Sri Mandir (Sacred Temple) Society was established in New South Wales and, by 1979, they had acquired a building suitable to be used as a temple. This was the beginning of formal worship by Hindus in Australia.

One paragraph is devoted to Hinduism in South Australia, and in it Bilimoria and Bapat state that

> The Hindu community in South Australia hitherto maintained its practices through the activities of small groups such as the Hindu Seva Samaj, Vedanta Society, Sai Baba Group, and various other small neo-Hindu yoga groups. In late 1985 some members of the community formed the Hindu society to provide an over-arching structure for the Hindu groups in the state. The society acquired a vacated Lutheran church building in Adelaide (Oaklands Park) which has been converted into a Hindu Temple, with a Ganesha image from India installed within it. (Bilimoria & Bapat 1988, p. 338)

The authors briefly discuss the trends which are occurring in Australia, such as the shortening or modification of rituals. Bilimoria expands upon his and Bapat's discussion of Hinduism in Australia in *Hinduism in Australia: Mandala for the Gods* (1989), which is devoted to the subject. He not only elaborated upon points raised in his chapter with Bapat (1988), but he also discusses the way in which Hinduism has developed in three distinct directions within Australia. Much of his book is devoted to the development of the Hindu temple at Helensburgh in New South Wales. His discussion of Hinduism in South Australia is concise and provides only a basic outline.

Ajoy Lahiri (1992) also examines Hinduism in Australia in a brief chapter in *Religion and Multiculturalism in Australia.* Lahiri comments on the difficulty of piecing together a profile of early Hinduism in Australia due to the lack of historical sources, while women are even harder to research due to their exceedingly small numbers (Lahiri 1992, p. 203). He identifies trends amongst Hindus in Australia and suggests that Hindus from India are

more 'secular' in nature than those from other diaspora countries. He goes on to state that Hindus who emigrated from such countries as Fiji, Singapore and Malaysia '...gave a great impetus to organised Hinduism, although Hindus from the Indian sub-continent also made their distinct contribution to it' (Lahiri 1992, p. 205).

The most recent text by Bilimoria, *The Hindus and Sikhs in Australia* (1996), is part of a series on the profiles of religious communities which is produced by a Commonwealth government department. As well as statistical information and a history of Hinduism in Australia, it also gives an outline of Hindu beliefs. Six pages are devoted to Hindu practices in Australia. Bilimoria commences this section by stating that

> Generally speaking and ideally, Hindus in Australia aspire to continue the entire range of Hindu beliefs and practices, but there are many constraints and limitations in the Australian environment. The result is that many traditions have been modified or adapted. (Bilimoria 1996, p. 24)

He goes on to elaborate upon these, briefly mentioning Vedic rites, lifecycle rites, festivals and *bhakti* worship (Bilimoria 1996, p. 24-26). He points out that Hindus try to avoid drawing attention to themselves as far as their Hinduism is concerned (Bilimoria 1996, p. 26). His conclusions in regard to such aspects as the retention of caste division for marriage alone and the desire of those of the second generation to integrate with the wider Australian community are of considerable interest when tested against the women in the Hindu community in South Australia. However, women have not been the focus of any of these specific studies on Hinduism.

Conclusion

It is evident that, although some research has been undertaken on diaspora Hinduism, primarily by Bilimoria, this research does not focus upon gendered space, nor is the South Australian environment given special treatment. The general work is most useful in placing the cultural construction of the Hindu women in South Australia into the broader context of Hinduism in Australia. As overseas studies have demonstrated, specific research focussing on select groups within the diaspora provides a more detailed description which can

highlight diversity as well as commonality. These studies, together with the Australian research, can provide a much clearer understanding of the way in which diaspora Hindus operate as individuals, as members of a community, and within the wider environment.

A number of the studies provide insights into specific situation and groups. There are often commonalities as well as differences between, on the one hand, the groups that have been studied, and, on the other, the Hindu women of South Australia. The scholarship that has been produced may indicate areas where examinations could be fruitfully directed. The most helpful studies will be taken up further throughout the body of the thesis.

There is a need to explore small groups and to highlight the female voice within the Australian environment. My study is positioned within studies of religious communities in the Australian diaspora, focussing on gendered space and, as such, fills a void of which other studies have only hinted.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK and METHODOLOGY

Introduction

My orientation in this thesis is multidisciplinary, taking into account a variety of different theoretical approaches. Although a multidisciplinary approach allows for a variety of theoretically perspectives to be taken into account, and their essence and strengths utilised, it also poses problems in the integration of different approaches for the formation of a consistent theme or orientation. The danger, as I see it, can be both a lack of consistency and a failure of commitment. My aim within this chapter is to set out the way in which my thinking has developed into a specific approach to my topic. Although, out of necessity, this will be documented as a linear development, this was seldom the case in reality. The clear picture or understanding which developed had many twists, turns and dead ends. Not only did it involve the exploration and selection of theorists, it became a personal exploration, along with my exploration of a specific community. These three aspects continually fed into each other. Some of the theorists influenced the way in which I approached the topic and the women involved, while others were more applicable to interpreting the information received from the women.

I understand my own research to have been primarily in two stages. Firstly, the information which I have collected and, secondly, my own interpretation of this information. The first stage is necessarily informed by the second.

Ultimately, I have developed an understanding of the concept of culture and the way in which it is constructed, contemporaneously with the way it is reflected in lifestyle or lived experiences. Rather than taking culture as being determinative, a link or mediating construct, between culture and practice, allowed for an alternative understanding of the way culture is constituted in practice. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus is the mediating construct I have used. One scholar who has also used Bourdieu's concept of habitus in a similar manner is Gillian Bottomley (1991). For her study of culture and ethnicity, she uses

> ...a version of Bourdieu's constructivist structuralism, in which habitus, that is "the embodiment of history," traces a dialectical relationship between structured circumstances and people's actions and perceptions. (Bottomley 1991, p. 303)

Her findings are relevant for this thesis as she suggests that

> Culture, therefore, can be seen not only as expressive, but also as constitutive, of social relations; its role in the definition of what is deemed necessary or even thinkable and in the reproduction of communality through practices and dispositions become visible within Bourdieu's formulation. (Bottomley, 1991, p. 303-304)

Therefore, it is possible to understand the way in which cultural constructions rooted in a Hindu 'history' can produce a variety of expressions within different lifestyles, while maintaining similar boundaries, shared understanding, experience and identity.

The concept of culture

In developing a working definition of culture I have taken for my starting point the work of Clifford Geertz, as he has concentrated much of his scholarship on culture and has had considerable influence on scholarly discourse. Roger Keesing suggests that, even when scholars have gone beyond Geertz in their theoretical development, many Geertzian assumptions are still held and critics have 'positioned themselves vis-a-vis 'webs of significance', have used 'thick description' and 'deep play' and other classic Geertz texts' (Keesing 1991, p. 44).

Geertz defines culture as

> ...an historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life. (Geertz 1973, p. 89)

He further suggests that 'Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their actions...' (Geertz 1973, p. 145). In other words, for Geertz, culture is the pattern or fabric of meaning which is inherited and influences actions and practices. Geertz describes culture as something which is cognitive and psychological, as it is within the mind that there exists a 'socially established structure of meaning' (Geertz 1973, p. 1) which influences the responses which individuals will have to particular situations. Culture is established meaning through which the world in viewed. This meaning is expressed or articulated within symbolism which forms part of a symbolic system. This symbolic system can be seen within beliefs and practices and, in turn, represents the pattern of meaning or 'webs of significance' (Geertz 1973, p. 5). As Geertz states

> ...that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (Geertz 1973, p. 5)

As the webs of significance or patterns of meaning are socially constituted, they form part of a greater or wider pattern of meaning, forming cultural systems. These systems involve some common basis or 'degree of coherence' (Geertz 1973, p. 17) which constitutes them as systems.

When summarising the different approaches to culture found within anthropology, Susanne Schech and Jane Haggis describe Geertz's definition as understanding culture as '...the meanings, values, and ways of life of a particular group' (2000, p.21). They further suggest that the emphasis of his approach is on '...interaction between individual and society' with considerable focus upon 'individual agency' (Schech & Haggis 2000, p.21). In the sense that Geertz understands culture, religion can be said to be systemically subordinate to culture. Religion is therefore an aspect of culture. Focussing on the actions or practices of individuals within a particular society can assist an understanding of religious culture generally, and therefore that of the assumptions which underpin the practices. These are assumptions that are embedded in a culture about the nature of the world, the cosmos, society and the individual.

As such it is necessary to go further than Geertz's general interpretation of culture to look specifically at his scholarship focussing on religious culture, based on his field work in Java. He suggests that there is a perceived concept of cosmic order to which human behaviour is aligned within religion, and the symbolism of this cosmic order is, in turn, reflected in the lived experience (Geertz, 1973, p. 90). Religion is not just a description of what is, but what it should be, as it attunes the action of humans to the ideal dimension, that of the cosmic order (Geertz, 1973, p. 90). He goes on to define religion as follows:

> (1) a system of symbols which act to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. (Geertz 1973, p. 90)

Religion provides meaning through which the inconsistencies of the world are rendered consistent and meaningful and '...the symbolic activities of religion as a cultural system are devoted to producing, intensifying, and, so far as possible, rendering inviolable by the discordant revelations of secular experience' (Geertz, 1973, p. 112). It is through ritual that the cosmic and the lived experiences are brought into relationship with each other, reaffirming an understanding of reality based on specific religious construction (Geertz, 1973, p. 112). Therefore, for Geertz, a religious culture is a system of meaning or webs of significance which provide meaning for what occurs on the human plane. This meaning, which incorporates a specific notion of cosmic order, is seen within symbolic systems which are, in turn, utilised in ritual activity, thus bringing the ideal or cosmic and the natural world into harmony.

However, culture needs to be defined as it affects people in their practical lives as well as their own interpretation of this. As Schech and Haggis suggested, culture, for Geertz, not only involves meanings and values but also the practical life of a particular group (2000, p.21). It is a way of living as well as of thinking, therefore involving both assumptions and practices and the manner in which they interrelate and have meaning for the group.

To suggest that there is 'a culture' which can be described as a Hindu culture is, of course, a gross over-simplification, and not what Geertz is suggesting. To reduce any group of people to a particular stereotype or common denominator overlooks the individual

differences which exist, such as language groups, gender, age, place of birth and family experience. As Roger Keesing states when discussing Asian culture

> There is no Asian 'culture' we can characterise without oversimplifying the picture: exaggerating the boundedness, discreteness, and homogeneity of a way of life, glossing over internal cleavages of class and gender (and usually ethnicity as well); camouflaging conflicting interests and silencing dissenting voices; and essentialising and eternalising, then disguising radical changes that have differently affected rural communities and urban settings. (Keesing 1991, p. 46)

The same can be said of a Hindu culture or cultures, as many of the same problems exist. However, with these constraints in mind, it is still important to note that Geertz states that 'Cultural systems must have a minimal degree of coherence, else we would not call them systems, and, by observation they normally have a great deal more' (Geertz 1973, p. 17).

Joel Kahn (1991) refutes that concept of culture, stating that

> Cultures, as conceived by early anthropologists and more recently by social scientists and non-academics alike, do not exist out there in the world, defining neat and sharp boundaries between isolable human groups. (Kahn 1991: 53)

and he describes culture itself as 'an intellectual construct' (Kahn 1991, p. 52). James Clifford (1986) also warns against portraying culture as a fixed entity. He says that 'Cultures are not scientific 'objects'...' (Clifford 1986, p. 18) neither are they a '...unified corpus of symbols and meanings that can be definitively interpreted. Culture is contested, temporal, and emergent' (Clifford 1986, p. 19). Any attempt to describe culture, according to Clifford, will only result in a partial truth.

Roger Keesing, however, after warning against constructions of an Asian culture, goes on to state that

> ...it would be vain to imagine that by some wave of an academic wand we could eliminate 'culture' from either popular or scholarly discourse about Asia. It is not only that these usages are now too deeply ingrained to be magically sanded away they also become incorporated in Asian people's discourse about themselves and their collective identities. (Keesing 1991, p. 47)

Keesing concludes that common roots and shared traditions do exist and that 'There are contexts where the violence we commit in characterising 'Japanese culture' or 'Balinese culture' may be worth the cost' (Keesing 1991, p. 47). Although anthropologists have been accused of perpetrating the concept that culture as fixed and determinative (Bottomley

1991, p. 304), they have, in fact, provided many examples of the 'historical specificity and fluidity of cultural practices and beliefs' (Bottomley 1991, p, 304).

The concept of culture has indeed changed over the years and can no longer be seen as a fixed, unchanging entity, nor does Geertz interpret culture as a static entity, for he states that '...human life takes shape within a moving and diversified frame of socially constructed meanings worked out in time and reworked there as well' (Geertz 1984, p. 513). Geertz's scholarship has often been concerned with change and in his work *Islam Observed* (1968), he is primarily focussed upon the way in which the Islamic religious experience has altered over time.

The cultural 'Other'

Not only can the presence of a static Hindu culture be denied, but also problems occur with the assumption that women from a particular ethnic background form an homogeneous group. Any such assumption would lead to an essentialisation of the group, thus rendering them the 'Other'. The manner in which the Other has been historically constructed is well documented, especially when it has dealt with Third World communities. Edward Said, in his work *Orientalism* (1978), documents the history of the construction of various groups as the Other in opposition to the European community. According to Said, the Orient is a 'constructed entity' (1978, p. 322) and, far too often, Third World communities also suffer this fate. Said does not suggest, however, that western scholars always construct Third World communities in this manner. He cites the work of Clifford Geertz as '...discrete and concrete enough to be animated by the specific societies and problems he studies and not by the rituals, preconceptions, and doctrine of Orientalism' (Said 1978, p. 326).

The construction of the Other goes well beyond many of the obvious Orientalist texts. It also pervades the work of scholars attempting to avoid the process. This is the danger for any scholarly work conducted with a specific group, such as women from a Third World community. The problem is compounded when the researcher comes from the dominant Western community. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, when discussing the problems, states

> Scholars often locate "third world women" in terms of the underdevelopment, oppressive traditions, high illiteracy, rural and urban poverty, religious fanaticism, and "overpopulation" of particular Asia, Africa, Middle Eastern, and Latin American countries. Besides being normed on white, Western (read

> progressive/modern)/non Western (read backward/traditional) hierarchy, these analyses freeze third world women in time, space and history. (Mohanty 1991, p. 5-6)

Not only can the problem exist with Western scholars writing about Third World communities but also, as Mohanty asserts, within Asian and African scholarship, middle-class urban women can construct their own cultures in a manner which sets them up as the norm, in relationship to working class rural women, thus constructing these rural women as the Other (Mohanty 1991, p. 52). Mohanty identifies the problem as one of defining the subject group – such as women as a coherent group – as an entity. She states that

> ...it is only in so far as "woman/women" and "the East" are defined as *other*, or as peripheral that (Western) Man/Humanism can represent him/itself as the center. It is not the center that determines the periphery, but the periphery that, in its boundedness, determines the center. (Mohanty 1991, p. 74)

Kalpana Ram takes up the same issues in relation to immigrant women when she states that

> Immigrant women from the Third World are more than used to being labelled 'traditional' (or to being congratulated for being 'non-traditional'), to be 'traditional' was to be consigned to the past, to be excluded from what is normative, and to be valued, not substantially but merely as an icon of difference. (Ram 1993, p. 9)

It is important, therefore, to avoid representing the subject as different and hence Other, from what is normative. At the same time it is important to acknowledge the diversity or difference within the subject group without assuming a 'homogeneity of practice' (Bottomley 1987, p. 1).

The issue then becomes one of representation. Should researchers merely create a medium which the subject can utilise, or should their role be more active? Said has argued that the construction of the subject of the study as the Other has rendered their voice passive (Said 1979). He also contends that the question of the observer is '...remarkably underanalysed in revisionist anthropological currents' (Said 1989, p. 212) and questions such as '...who speaks? For what and to whom?' (Said 1989, p. 212) are often left unanswered.

The Post-modern critiques of anthropology and the development of the new sub-discipline of cultural studies has produced attempts to grapple with these questions and, according to Jennaway, has resulted in an number of developments (1990, pp. 170-171). These include

collaborative writing, the use of multiple voices and decentering the researcher, in an effort to highlight the voice of the subject of study.

There are dangers, however, in the decentring of the self which may only result in a recentring (Jennaway 1990, p. 173). It also allows the question of 'whose voice?' to be unaddressed, as Ram concludes

> The shift in the active voice of the 'orthodox' question to the passive voice of the new question is a symptom of retrogression. At least the old question required the ethnographer to grapple with the tension between the native as spectacle and the native as autonomous maker of meaning and speech. (Ram 1993, p. 23)

Ram argues that identification of one's position is inadequate, also. She states that

> Metaphors of identity and identification ('a woman studying women', 'Tamil studying Tamils') are inappropriate to my experience as is the language of objectivity and neutrality. Instead, I experienced my cultural and sexual identity as shifting and makeshift, varying with my strategies of survival, which emphasised my status now as 'foreigner', now as 'native'. The category of 'native' itself explodes into fragments under such circumstances...(Ram 1991b, p. xvi)

Ethnographic accounts which deny the researcher an active voice stifle the reflexive process. As Geertz suggests, cultures can be read by the observer (Marcus & Fischer 1986, p. 26). Not only can the observer 'read' the meaning of social activities and symbols, but the observed can also 'read' each other for meaning (Marcus & Fischer 1986, p. 26). The researcher and the subject, therefore, can participate in the ethnographic process, in an active role, while avoiding the pitfalls which produce an account of the subject which confines them to Otherness.

Cultural change and maintenance: the religious context

In *Islam Observed,* Geertz deals with the manner in which cultural change occurs within a religious context. When discussing religion, Geertz comments that

> Without collectively evolved, socially transmitted, and culturally objectified patterns of meaning - myths, rites, doctrine, fetishes, or whatever – it [religion] would not exist. And when these patterns alter, as given the impermanence of terrestrial things, they inevitably and indeed continually do, it alters with them. (Geertz 1968, p. 19)

Geertz places religion firmly within its social perspective by stating that, 'As life moves, persuasion moves with it and indeed helps to move it. More bluntly, whatever God may not be - living, dead, or merely ailing - religion is a social force' (1968, p. 19). Therefore, Geertz understands religions as continually changing and evolving in relationship with the social environment in which they operate. Not only does religion change but the study of religion, according to Geertz, has gone from one which focussed upon 'subjective life' or 'outward behaviour' (Geertz 1968, p. 95) to a focus on 'socially available 'systems of significance' - beliefs, rites, meaningful objects - in terms of which subjective life is ordered and outward behaviour guided' (Geertz 1968, p. 95). It is through these 'systems of significance' that religion, religious culture and cultural change can be understood.

When discussing religion, Geertz states that

> It is not only difficult to discover the ways in which the shapes of religious experience are changing, or if they are changing at all, it is not even clear what sorts of things one ought to look at in order to find out.
>
> The comparative study of religion has always been plagued by this peculiar embarrassment - the elusiveness of its subject matter. The problem is not one of constructing definitions of religion. We have had quite enough of those; their very number is a symptom of our malaise. It is a matter of discovering just what sorts of beliefs and practices support what sorts of faith under what sorts of conditions. Our problem, and it grows worse by the day, is not to define religion but to find it. (Geertz 1968, p. 1)

Geertz concedes that the identification of what can be termed 'religious' is indeed difficult. However, it is within shared systems of significance that boundaries are formed which provide a common religious identity, while still providing for diversity and change within the practice of religion. It then becomes a question of finding the contributions within these 'shared systems' that facilitate change.

Culture, including religious culture, does not become reproduced, or indeed evolve, in isolation from the physical and social environment in which it operates. Religion and religious concepts only survive if they are reaffirmed in daily life. Geertz states that it is when the reality of life as it is lived is not a reflection of, or reflected in, 'the world as imagined' (Geertz 1968, p. 39) that confusion can occur, resulting in change. Religions change and systems of significance alter when reality is no longer rendered intelligible through the existing systems. Therefore, for Hindu women in South Australia, reality needs to be rendered intelligible through the existing system of significance or this system will

indeed change. Geertz, however, is less concerned with the reality than he is with the manner in which the reality is interpreted in systems of significance.

It is through the actions and assumptions of individuals and groups that a specific religious worldview can be found. On a primary level, it is through '...religious observances that religious conviction emerges on the human plane' (Geertz 1973, p. 112). Even where actions and rituals may not be primarily or overtly religious in orientation, they may be multivalent and incorporate religious symbolism covertly. Actions, including ritual actions, embody a symbolic system which connects them to a specific understanding of the world. This symbolism can be either explicit or implicit. When discussing ritual symbols, Evan Zuesse suggests that 'Each symbol is multivalent: it refers to many things, which may not be clearly present to consciousness but which exists in a kind of preconscious halo around it' (1987, p. 411). Likewise, Ronald Grimes discusses the way in which ritual action displays both tacit and explicit values, and he contends that ritual action '...consists of messages unwittingly transmitted alongside those deliberately enacted' (1987, p. 423).

Links to a specific system of significance can be found in the overt and covert symbolism in ritual actions, daily practices and the assumptions which guide action and attitudes. Geertz argues that, in order to understand the interconnectedness of systems of significance and the lived experience, one must understand the distinction between culture and social systems (1973, p. 144). He understood culture as '...an ordered system of meaning of symbols, in terms of which social interaction takes place' (Geertz 1973, p. 144). Alternatively social systems are '...the pattern of social interaction' (Geertz 1973, p. 144). Geertz goes on to state that

> On one level there is the framework of beliefs, expressive symbols, and values in terms of which individuals define their world, express their feelings, and make their judgements; on behaviour, whose persistent form we call social structure. Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action; social structure is the form that action takes, the actually existing network of relations. (Geertz 1973, p. 144-5)

Geertz's work develops the interconnectedness of beliefs, symbols and actions. He provides a framework for understanding what constitutes culture, including religious culture, and the way in which change occurs. This can be directly applied to the South Australian context.

Pierre Bourdieu and the practice of religion

Whereas Geertz's work provides a method of understanding the meaning underlying the practices of individuals and groups and the manner in which these practices articulate assumptions within a specific worldview, the scholarship of Pierre Bourdieu focuses upon the way in which practices occur. Geertz is concerned with the 'universal human need for meaning and significance' (Berard 1999, p. 141), while Bourdieu concentrates upon practical life (Harker, et al, 1990, p. 3). Bourdieu is not interested, however, in practical life in the sense that phenomenologists are concerned with it, as he goes beyond the concept of the world which portrays it as 'self evident' (Bourdieu 1990, p. 25). He is concerned with how practical life comes about, that is, the circumstances which produce it. Therefore, by looking at both the way that Geertz seeks to find meaning underlying assumptions and practices, and the way Bourdieu suggests practices occur, a greater understanding of the assumptions and practices of a specific group can be gained.

Bourdieu describes belief and, by implication, systems of belief, as 'belonging to a field' (Bourdieu 1990, p. 67). For him, membership of the field, or the 'game', depends upon

> ...undisputed, pre-reflexive, naive, native compliance with the fundamental presuppositions of the field...[and] one cannot enter this magic circle by an instantaneous decision of the will, but only by birth or by a slow process of co-option and initiation which is equivalent to a second birth. (Bourdieu 1990, p, 68)

Individuals belonging to the same 'religious' field or game share similar symbolic systems, and may be categorised as being part of a specific religious tradition. Their habitus incorporates the assumptions, meaning and symbols of that specific field. It is not something which can be acquired easily. Generally, a religious belief is part of the primary habitus, which is due to the influence of the environment of the early years in life. If it is not, the acquisition of the presuppositions takes place over an extended period of time in order for the individual to join the field or the game, and to share in its 'taken-for-granted' aspects, including its symbolic system.

Although Bourdieu's work emphasises the practical aspect of life, he is interested in symbolism as

> For him, symbolic forms such as language, dress codes and body postures are important in understanding not only the cognitive function of symbols but the social function of symbols. Symbolic systems are instruments of knowledge

> and domination, which make possible a consensus within a community as to the significance of the social world as well as contributing to the reproduction of the social order. (Harker et al 1990, p. 5)

Symbolism is a visible form of shared knowledge, with consensus demonstrating membership of the field. Bourdieu writes about the symbolic interconnectedness of body, cosmic and social space - symbolism being the way in which these three levels are brought into relationship with one another (Bourdieu 1990, p. 77). Actions which are performed '...in a structured space and time are immediately qualified symbolically and function as structural exercises through which practical mastery of the fundamental schemes is constituted' (Bourdieu 1990, p. 75).

He further suggests that, where the environment in which 'dispositions' are formed resembles the environment in which the individual operates, '...the more socially successful, and therefore unconscious, these practices will be' (Bourdieu 1990, p. 145). To extend this thesis, a symbolic system, or system of significance formed under specific circumstances, will be more successful, and more taken for granted under circumstances which resemble the conditions in which they were formed. Hence, when the social and physical environment alter, meaning may no longer be accommodated through the existing systems of significance or symbolic system. Therefore, it could be suggested that the altered environment of the South Australian diaspora may mean that the 'dispositions' which were formed elsewhere for the Hindu women may not be successful and taken for granted in the changed conditions.

Pierre Bourdieu, has concentrated much of his scholarship on an exploration of '...a hermeneutic representation of practices' (Bourdieu 1977, p. 1), including the manner in which practice adapts with a changing environment. He is concerned with going further than theories which suggest that practice is non-reflexive and mechanical, determined by 'models' (Bourdieu 1977, p.73). Theorists such as Clifford Geertz have certainly done this; however, Bourdieu's work does go further in developing an understanding of the way in which actions take place.

For Bourdieu, history, as understood as past experiences and environments, is a component of his theory, as it influences the way in which practice occurs, as no action takes place outside the context of time. Bourdieu proposes that a mechanism he has termed habitus

regulates practice. Habitus is a complex term which has developed in complexity over the course of Bourdieu's scholarship and has been synthesised by others as meaning

> ...the strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations...a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, function at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to the analogical transfer of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems. (Garnham & Williams 1986, pp. 119-120)

This strategy-generating principle, in essence, mediates or negotiates specific situations. Habitus is formed and reformed. It is not a static entity but it is dynamic. It is the product of historical circumstances and continues to develop, change and modify.

Bourdieu discusses primary and secondary habitus, the primary being formed through the earliest experiences, while secondary habitus is constantly being modified through historical circumstances. Initially, the formation of habitus occurs through both the material world, which is directly experienced by the child, and the world as mediated by way of the habitus and, therefore, the logic of practice of adults, most significantly parents (Garnham & Williams 1986, p. 120). Once the child's experience of the world alters, so will the 'habitus's logic of practice' (Garnham & Williams 1986, p. 120); however, the child's pre-existing habitus and logic of practice will mediate the alteration as,

> ...the habitus is a family, group and especially class phenomenon, a logic derived from a common set of material conditions of existence to regulate the practice of a set of individuals in common response to those conditions. (Garnham & Williams 1986, p. 120)

Habitus is derived from the historical circumstances of life. It is 'embodied history, eternalized as second nature' (Bourdieu 1990, p. 56) and, therefore, on a practical level, habitus assumes a continual dialectical relationship between '...circumstances, actions and perceptions' (Bottomley 1991, p. 306). Practices are the interactions between habitus, and the social environment in which individuals operate, which itself is a product of history.

The earliest habitus is the most influential, as it is through this that subsequent situations and histories are assessed. Habitus ensures

> its own constancy and its defence against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question

> its accumulated information, if exposed to it accidentally or by force, and especially by avoiding exposure to such information. (Bourdieu 1990, p. 60)

It is by minimising the situations which will challenge the existing habitus that individuals will attempt to operate within the existing habitus. Habitus is adapted to the environment in which it is produced. By avoiding situations which would place pressure upon the existing habitus, a relatively harmonious interaction between the social and physical environment and the existing habitus can occur (Bourdieu 1990, p. 60). Major changes in the objective conditions may necessitate extensive changes to the habitus in order for practices to retain an internal logic. As conditions alter, habitus negotiates within differing situations and environments. Different situations provide for different histories and habitus. Circumstances which can be made sense of within the existing framework result in only minor adjustments. Where the social field differs radically from the circumstances which produced the dispositions, major changes may occur. Both habitus and the situations are products of historical circumstances. According to Gillian Bottomley, a combination of both ethnographic and historical research and analysis is required in order to understand the dynamic interaction between habitus and social fields (1991, p. 307).

As, for Bourdieu, habitus functions according to 'the logic of practice' (Garnham & Williams 1986, p. 120), practices must appear to be logical for both the individual and the community. He places emphasis on the material conditions or physical environment, and suggests that the logic of practice will alter with the alteration in the environment but only within the 'structure of the existing habitus' (Garnham & Williams 1986, p. 120). He states

> ... technical or ritual practices are determined by the material conditions of existence (that is, in this particular case, by a certain relationship between the climatic and ecological conditions and the available technique) as treated in practice by agents endowed with schemes of perception of a determinate sort which are themselves determined, negatively at least, by the material conditions of existence. (Bourdieu 1977: 116)

Therefore, when conditions of existence alter in a similar manner for those with a primary habitus which is developed in similar environments, you would expect that habitus would develop in a similar way, and that practices would display a similar internal logic. As Bourdieu suggests

> The practice of the members of the same group or, in a differentiated society, the same class are always better harmonized than the agents know or wish...the habitus is precisely this immanent law *lex insita*, inscribed in bodies by identical histories, which is the precondition not only for the co-ordination of practices but also for practices of co-ordination. (Bourdieu 1990, p. 59)

Co-ordinated practices result from habitus which has developed within similar circumstances, providing a matrix for practices. When the social world is altered similarly, co-ordinated practices will again occur. Therefore, for a specific group in the diaspora, whose primary habitus has the same internal logic, and who belong to the same field, it would be expected that co-ordination of practices would be retained within similar conditions. There should be an accepted logic of practice for the group within the new environment of the diaspora.

The approaches provided by Geertz and Bourdieu are compatible. As they place emphasis on different aspects of lived experience the approaches can be synthesised. The two different theoretical models can combine to provide a framework for understanding the meaning and significance of the assumptions and practices of a specific group, while understanding the way in which practices occur and are shaped by the particular environment in which they occur. For the Hindu women of South Australia, their cultural construction is something which not only provides meaning for them, within a specific framework, according to Geertz's work, but also allows them to operate in the wider social and physical environment in which they are located. It is Bourdieu's concept of habitus which

> ...is the process whereby those who occupy similar positions in social and historical space come to share a certain 'sense of place' and develop categories of perception that provide a commonsense understanding of the world, especially what is natural, plausible, or even imaginable. (Bottomley 1991, p. 307)

Therefore, Bourdieu's work allows us to understand the way shared boundaries are created, which indicate shared meaning for a group or a community. When examining a specific group, the theories of both Geertz and Bourdieu can be integrated. Geertz points towards the existence of webs of significance which may be held by members of a community, while Bourdieu urges the scholar to look at the logic of practice, where history and the material environment are important determinants.

Hinduism

As this thesis is based upon an exploration of Hindu assumptions and practices, it is necessary to attempt to define Hinduism. To use the term Hinduism is to use a term with its origins in a construction which has been imposed from outside. P. T. Raju, in describing the origins of the term, comments that it was one which derives from a foreign

'misunderstanding' (1971, p. 31). Originally used to describe the people living in the region around the Sindhu River, later known as the Indus River, the word came to be used to describe the assumptions and practices of the majority of inhabitants of the subcontinent. However, Raju suggests that 'There was no religion called Hinduism' (1971, p. 31). Hinduism is, therefore, a term which has evolved out of a desire, by outsiders, to classify a variety of assumptions and practices which they encountered within the subcontinent. This is not to suggest that the term has not evolved into something greater than this, as a Hindu self-awareness has developed (Weightman 1984, p. 192).

Although the term Hinduism did not arise directly out of these assumptions and practices, it has come to represent them and it is important to highlight their diversity within the definition of Hinduism as a specific religious tradition. Simon Weightman does this when he defines Hinduism as

> ...the complex religious tradition which has evolved organically in the Indian subcontinent over several thousand years and is today represented by the highly diverse beliefs and practices of more than 500 million Hindus (Weightman 1984, p. 191)

He goes on to state that

> ...Hinduism displays few of the characteristics that one generally expected of a religion. It has no founder, nor is it prophetic. It is not creedal, nor is any particular doctrine, dogma or practice held to be essential to it. It is not a system of theology, nor a single moral code, and the concept of god is not central to it. There is no specific scripture or work regarded as uniquely authoritative and, finally, it is not sustained by ecclesiastical organization. Thus it is difficult to categorize Hinduism as a 'religion' using normally accepted criteria. (Weightman 1984, p. 191)

Although Weightman states that Hinduism is so diverse that it is '...impossible to identify any universal belief or practice that is common to all Hindus' (1984, p. 192), he does stress that, in the midst of this diversity, Hindus do acknowledge a common tradition. He states 'It is Hindu self-awareness and self-identity that affirms Hinduism to be one single universe, no matter how richly varied it contents' (Weightman 1984, p. 192).

Although it is important to acknowledge the diversity within Hinduism, there has been a tendency by scholars to emphasise diversity over the 'unifying patterns' (Biardeau 1994, p. 4) within it. Madelaine Biardeau attempts to demonstrate unity within her text *Hinduism:*

the Anthropology of Civilization (1994), in which she analyses Hinduism at a deeper level than the apparent diversity. She suggests that

> Unity is sought not so much in a synthesis whose harmony derives from the scholar's 'idea', but rather at a deeper level of the analysis of the data, on the basis of the explicit or implicit norms which every Hindu carries in his head. (Biardeau 1994, p. 4)

These 'explicit or implicit norms', which are part of a Hindu way of understanding the world, form the basis of a Hindu cultural construction. They may be implicitly or explicitly evident within the assumptions and practices of individuals.

Probably the most important concept within Hinduism, which influences many of the presuppositions of it, is that of *dharma.* P. T. Raju has described *dharma* as a term which is often used for religion, as it is something which is a basis, a support, which is sustaining (1971, p. 26). He goes on to comment that it has

> ... come to mean the law, and then the law of life. Existence depends upon the laws of its being. If they are violated, existence becomes non-existence. *Dharma* is therefore the law of life, the way of life, that keeps it running in union with the foundations of our being. In this sense, *Dharma* is a way of life in accord with reality. (Raju 1971, p. 26 -27)

Madeleine Biardeau describes *dharma* in similar terms, emphasising its necessity for cosmic and social order and harmony (1994, p. 41). Klaus Klostermaier, while emphasising harmony and the all-encompassing nature of *dharma,* goes on to suggest that '*dharma* coincides with Hinduism' (1989, p, 48). The notion of socio-cosmic order has diverse implications and, as Biardeau suggests, it 'resonates at different levels' (1994, p. 42). The different levels of *dharma* include the cosmic (*sanatana dharma*), which is concerned with 'the unchanging universal law of order which decrees that every entity in the universe should behave in accordance with the laws that apply to its own particular nature' (Weightman 1984, p. 209); the general ethical code (*sadharana dharma*) to which is all individuals should adhere; *varnashrama dharma,* the *dharma* appropriate to life stage and class; and the individual specific *svadharma.* (Weightman 1984, p. 209, Biardeau 1994, p. 45, Zaehner 1966, p.108, Klostermaier, 1989, pp. 163-4). Thus, groups and individuals, by adhering to *dharma,* contribute to harmony on a cosmic level. *Dharma* is '...a complex set of teachings to be understood and practiced from the beginning to the end of one's life' (Mudge et al 1993, p. 284) and, as such, it is incorporated into daily life.

Perhaps these scholars, indeed, have been able to identify a connecting thread or threads within Hinduism. What needs to be kept in mind, however, is both the distance between assumptions and practices as well as their interconnectedness within what is termed Hinduism. Heinrich von Stietencron defines Hinduism as

> ...a geographically defined group of distinct but related religions, that originated in the same region, developed under similar socio-economic and political conditions, incorporated largely the same traditions, influenced each other continuously, and jointly contributed to the Hindu culture. (von Stietencron 1991, p. 20)

Therefore, when using the term Hinduism, the complexity of the term needs to be kept in mind as well as the manner in which differing assumptions and practices can be understood to have evolved in similar circumstances, and not in isolation for others within the sub-continent.

Hindu Women

Within this section I explore some of the work which has focussed upon Hindu women. This has been undertaken in order to establish concepts, assumptions and possibilities which may constitute part of the 'field' available for women. Rather than taking models from which the practices and assumptions of the women can be explained, my intent is to outline concepts within the 'field' or 'game', which have been identified in other studies. Much of the available scholarship explores the link between gender and Hindu practices and assumptions, and an examination of these highlights possibilities for Hindu women, thus possibly providing a key to understanding the assumptions underlying specific practices within the diaspora.

In spite of the immense diversity found in India, generalisations as to expected roles and attitudes for women have been made. Although it is not my intention to analyse the women in terms of models, as I have stated, it is important to outline the different constructions of Hindu women. One model, arguably the most prominent ideal which has been projected, is that of the brahmanic ideal of woman as *pativrata* (Wadley 1976, p. 161, Obeyeskere 1984, p. 430, Kapur 1979, p. 128, Leslie 1991, p 185 and Magee 1991, p. 86). The *pativrata* has commitments to '...virginity at marriage, chastity as the wifely goal, unassertiveness and submissiveness and unquestioning loyalty to the husband' (Obeyeskere 1984, p. 430). Paul Courtright describes the duties of a *pativrata* or *pativratadharma* as

> ...those morally significant actions, duties, and attitudes that are appropriate to the status of a married woman, the central focus of which is the welfare of her husband and all that adheres to him: household, reputation, kin, ancestors, descendants, deities, and life circumstances. (Courtright 1995, p. 186)

Courtright continues to discuss what he terms '...the ethos of the *pativratadharma*' (Courtright 1995, p. 187) and suggests that this concept locates the

> ...power and responsibility for the husband and his social context in the hands of his wife. Through ritual acts of devotion such as prayer, fasting, and service, the wife gathers together her inherent generative power (*sakti*) and focuses it toward the well-being of her husband. (Courtright, 1995, p. 187)

This model or ethos constructs the role of the woman, once married, as being focussed on the wellbeing of her husband, and it places her as part of him and his world (Courtright 1995, p. 188).

Mary Magee also acknowledges a woman's duties towards her family, especially her husband, as essential. A woman is to take care of the everyday needs from the household duties to providing a son (Magee 1991, p. 87). The performance of these deeds is not only a duty in life but, according to Magee, their completion enables her to fulfil her *stridharma*. She suggests that 'Marital felicity and liberation (*saubhagya* and *moksa*) go hand in hand' (Magee, M, 1991, p. 87). Consequently, the fulfilment of a woman's duty in life is directly linked to the prospect of liberation. Julia Leslie comments that 'In religious terms, the only answer to being female is to become the perfect wife' (1991, p. 189) and, therefore, in orthodox Hinduism, it becomes a woman's primary religious practice. Prabhati Mukherjee takes up this theme in her text *Hindu Women: Normative Models* (1978). She also suggests that the ideal woman is understood in terms of the ideal wife, one who takes as her model Sita, Savitri and Parvati (Sati) all of whom demonstrated the primacy of their husbands within their lives (Mukherjee 1978, p. 51).

Sandra Robinson suggests that the brahmanic model for women has been expressed, throughout history, in both mythology and sacred texts, including the epics the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, as well as in Indian social history, where the practices relating to women have highlighted their marital status (1985). The culmination of this construction of women can be found in the much-quoted section from the *dharmasastras* (Robinson 1985, p. 183), which states that

> A girl, a young woman, or even an old woman should not do anything independently, even in (her own) house. In childhood a woman should be under her father's control, in youth under her husband's, and when her husband is dead, under her sons'. She should not have independence. A woman should not try to separate herself from her father, her husband, or her sons, for her separation from them would make both (her and her husband's) families contemptible...when her father, or her brother with her father's permission, gives her to someone, she should obey that man while he is alive and not violate her vow to him when he is dead. (The Laws of Manu 1991, 5, 147-151)

Robinson sets out an alternative from this brahmanic construction which is discussed below.

The ideal brahmanic or orthodox model of women can be seen to have developed within a specific symbolic understanding of the power of women and the necessity for this power to be controlled and directed. Susan Wadley has taken up this idea by focussing on the dual symbolism of women in Hinduism (1977). What is understood as the positive aspect of women can be seen in their portrayal as fertile and benevolent while, conversely, they are seen as aggressive and malevolent (Wadley 1977, p. 113). It is by control of women's power that these opposites are reconciled and the dangerous aspect of women is restrained and, indeed, turned to advantage. Hence the model of a devoted wife under the control of a husband, or *pativrata,* has emerged as an ideal framework for women to render their power as positive, life giving and life supporting. It is also a model that allows for liberation within an orthodox framework.

The brahmanic model is not confined to the past or 'tradition', but has been actively reformulated for middle class women in more recent times. The relevance of looking at it in this way, as a reformed ideal, may assist an understanding of diasporan Hindu women, as middle class women constitute the majority of the relevant immigrants within South Australia. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, suggest that

> The Vedic (and later, the Puranic) model becomes both a part of popular consciousness as well as of organized reform such as that of the Arya Samaj and is fed into the compassionate models of the middle class family. The recovery of tradition throughout the proto-nationalist and nationalist period was always the recovery of the 'traditional' woman – her various shapes continuously readapt the 'eternal' past to the needs of the contingent present. Religion is the medium first for middle class and then for nationalist reform in the deepest sense. Selection from scriptural texts, and the construction of canons are not

> only serviceable in building an identity opposed to the colonial but are also related to the inegalitarian social structure. The reconstruction becomes ideological when highly selective and exclusive versions are sought to be universalized. The formation of desired notions of spirituality and of womanhood is thus a part of the formation of the middle class itself, wherein hierarchies and patriarchies are sought to be maintained on both material and spiritual grounds. The Vedic woman, both in her own time, and after her appropriation by upper castes and classes in the nineteenth century, is built upon the labour of lower social groups and is also a mark of distinction from them. Nowhere is the class character of middle class and nationalist reform of women more apparent than in the differential construction of the private and public sphere in the colonial period. (Sangari & Vaid 1990, p. 10)

As this model has been used at various times of transition and adaptation, and utilised in the past in order to make sense out of the present and to fulfil changing needs, it was important to understand whether or not the same had occurred within the diaspora. As the diaspora presented differing circumstances and challenges, were these challenges met though a reformulation or activation of a Vedic or brahmanic model?

Madhu Kishwar, the editor of the Indian journal *Manushi*, discusses what she calls the cultural ideal for women, relating it to a contemporary understanding for Indian women. For her, the brahmanic model has implications for women today and its importance cannot be dismissed. She suggests that this ideal woman is one who accepts her husband and his family as having a position of complete authority over her, including decisions concerning her person, assets and labour (Kishwar 1989, p. 7). Although Kishwar asserts that this ideal '...is rarely sought to be forced on a woman in an undiluted form' (1989, p. 7), the '...woman who appears to have lived up to the cultural ideal is held up as a role model to others, not just in film and popular literature, but also in real life' (Kishwar 1989, p. 6). Therefore, the ideal has implications for contemporary Indian women.

The brahmanic model, however, is not the only construct of women which is projected within Hinduism. Scholarship which focuses on the women's perspective can highlight alternatives and as Julia Leslie suggests

> ...it is not to assume that women have a radically different world view than the one allocated to them by men or male-oriented texts. It is the small deviations from the norm which may be crucial, perhaps the way the apparently negative is transformed into something positive and powerful. (Leslie 1991, p. 3)

These are produced within popular Hinduism, including devotionalism, and the possibilities which are inherent within the Goddess. More recent developments for middle class women, in India, have also highlighted alternatives for women. Julia Leslie and the contributors to her text on *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women,* are amongst those who construct an alternative picture (1991). I am not attempting to identify or construct a model for women, as I have previously stressed, but to look at the diversity and possibilities in this area that are available for them. As Sangari and Vaid suggest, when constructing only a positive image for women you are in danger of both '...legitimizing and simplifying the 'model' women' (Sangari & Vaid 1990, p. 18).

Susan Wadley contends that the oral and folkloric traditions are more inclined to portray role models for women relating to other women, such as '...mother/daughter; sister/sister; mother-in-law/daughter-in-law; husband's sister/wife' (Wadley, 1977, p. 117), rather than women relating to male relatives. Therefore, although the model of women as wives is said to be foremost in Hinduism, and salvation can be seen to be dependent upon duty and devotion towards a husband (Wadley 1977, 119-118), alternative relationships between women are often the theme of women's oral tradition (Wadley 1977, p. 117). This is a theme which is also taken up by Gloria Goodwin Raheja who states that the symbol of the *pativrata,* which is found in the 'Authoritative South Asian textual traditions, composed or performed by males' (1995, p. 19) is, in fact, contested in women's oral tradition. The distance that the model places between woman and their natal kin, especially their brothers, is rejected (Raheja 1995, p. 50).

In Susan Wadley's article entitled 'Brothers, husbands, and sometimes sons: kinsmen in North India ritual' (1976), she describes the way in which a number of annual calendrical rituals reflect women's concerns for the welfare of their families (Wadley 1976, p. 154). Apart from this general concern, Wadley suggests that brothers and sons are selected for specific focus, alongside husbands. As she concludes, 'Brothers, husbands and sons are valued kinsmen' (Wadley 1976, p. 166) and, although the brahmanic model portrays the *pativrata* as the ideal woman, in reality alternative relationships remain important for the women in her study. Wadley has also discussed the ways in which the dominant religious practice by women, *bhakti*, although not sanctioned textually, provides alternative and powerful opportunities for women (1977).

Devotional Hinduism can provide a non-brahmanic, or extra-brahmanic alternative. This is a theme taken up by Sandra Robinson, who compares the 'brahmanic paradigm' of women

with a paradigm stemming out of the devotional Hinduism, which she terms 'not only essentially pre-brahmanic but also largely extra brahmanic' (1985, p. 195). Robinson sets out the major aspects of devotionalism, including devotion and hospitality to the deities invoked within images at both home shrines and temples, pilgrimage to sacred sites, and dancing and singing for the deities (Robinson 1985, p. 195). To summarise Robinson's thesis, it is through devotionalism that women are able to '...have control over their own domain and acquire influence' (Robinson 1985, p. 201). Although women's devotional practices may occur along with brahmanic rites, they can also occur independent from them.

The examples Robinson uses within her own study, are *vratas*. These rites, Robinson describes as being '...domestic rites which Hindu women perform in the fulfillment of specific desires. These rites are consistent with traditions of sacrifice, asceticism and penance pervasive in Hinduism more generally' (Robinson 1985, p. 199). Men also participate in devotional practices however, Robinson suggests that, although some practices which men and women undertake may be '...contextually as well as substantively linked' (Robinson 1985, p. 199), other women's practices are radically different. Some of the rites which women perform, according to Robinson, are '...adjunct to brahmanism and others are independent of brahmanic influence' (Robinson 1985, p. 196). She further contends that, within devotional Hinduism, men and women are 'functional[ly] equivalent' (Robinson 1985, p. 197), which is not the case in '...devotional practices which coincide with brahmanic institutions' (Robinson 1985, p. 197). A woman's role in the brahmanic devotional ritual is adjunct to her husband, in the preparation of food, for example, or making the social arrangements. It is in the women's rites, which occur, distinct from those of men, that they are seen to be in control. As Robinson concludes,

> By contrast, the alternative paradigm suggested by devotional Hindu traditions, here drawn from Bengali expressions, presents a view of women as efficacious agents of action whose religious domain retains self-legitimating integrity and value. Where self-denial is found it is not gender specific and therefore reflects a more general Hindu value of renunciative generosity. While Hindu women remain socially subordinate to men, women's devotional traditions are religiously coordinate with those of the male brahmanic establishment. (Robinson 1985, p. 211)

Robinson enables an understanding of a variety of practices within Hinduism and the way in which they may indicate or symbolise alternatives for women, providing active control for them, over their lives and those within their influence. Although many women's rituals

could be understood to be part of the duty of the *pativrata*, they may, alternatively, be part of a devotional framework, which provides for a different interpretation. As Mary Hancock has written, 'Devotion can be a vehicle for women's resistance to one set of norms [although]... acts labeled [sic] as forms of resistance and complicity are only such within specific contexts and that agency can involve different degrees of knowledge and intentionality' (1995, p. 83).

It has been suggested that through the symbolism of the Goddess in Hinduism women can contest the image of woman as wife. It is here that the potential of women can be fulfilled. Robinson suggests that the mythology depicts the importance of controlling the power of the Goddesses, at the same time presenting possibilities and alternatives for women. Penelope Magee focuses on the mediating function of the Goddess (1991, p. 15): not only is the Goddess full of possibilities, but she mediates between the brahmanic and popular traditions. Magee quotes Kamala Ganesh who states

> The goddess is a powerful symbol of linkages. She bridges realms and levels, hierarchies and schisms: between the autochthonous and alien, conquerors and conquered, between brahmanised and lower ranking castes and between caste and tribe, between mainstream sophisticated theology and living cults, between reified ritual and the immediacy of local practice; hook swinging, fire-walking, blood, meat and liquor, between classical sanskrit text and oral tradition, between materials; metal, stone and clay. Inverted, neutralised, absorbed, mainstreamed, she still exists as a disturbing presence; daring to exist, she begs to differ. (Magee 1991, p. 15)

What Kamala Ganesh terms the 'mother-goddess tradition' (1990, p. 58) can be seen to express '...ideas of power, autonomy and primacy in the widest sense of the term' (1990, p. 58). To reduce the mother-goddess to a symbol of physical motherhood would, however, according to Ganesh, be incorrect. The Goddess represents the centrality of the creative energy of women rather than being a model for women as mothers. The mother-goddess, therefore, does not present an alternative model of women as mothers as such, and hence the title of Ganesh's article 'Mother who is not a mother' (1990). For Ganesh and Magee, the mother-goddess presents opportunities rather than a model for behaviour.

More recent developments have modified and redefined the role of women, primarily those of the urban middle class, or western educated women. Considerable scholarship has focussed on the changing attitudes of this, albeit minority, section of society. These studies

include works by Aileen Ross (1961), K. M. Kapadia (1982), Alfred de Souza (1975), M. N. Srinivas (1976), Jana Matson Everett (1979), Promilla Kapur (1979) and R. L. Blumberg and L Dwaraki (1980). Although these studies cannot be considered recent, they do provide considerable insight into the way in which trends were occurring with migration to urban areas and access to western style education. It was during the period that many of these studies were being conducted that a number of the women involved in the interview process were being educated and immigrating to Australia. Therefore, they provide valuable information as to the changes that were occurring for women of this class.

My intention in using these studies is to demonstrate the way many of the attitudes that are found within the diaspora community developed prior to immigration. It is important to correct the assumption that modernity and westernisation are solely the province of the west and to deny the colonial and post-colonial processes which have taken place and are still occurring within India, as well as in other diaspora communities.

It is also important to understand that, although the traditional / modern oppositions have been used when discussing the differing attitudes and practices of individuals or groups, the terms are themselves, as Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid suggest, '...eminently colonial constructs' (1990, p. 17). The term 'modern', when contrasted with 'traditional', can act to construct an opposition in western terms, alienating the traditional from the modern. Therefore, to describe the predominantly urban western educated women as 'modern' and the rural less-educated women as 'traditional', would be to essentialise these two binaries in western terms.

The term 'traditional', is problematic, as it is can be understood in a variety of ways. Susanne Schech and Jane Haggis, when discussing Raymond Williams report which states that, traditions can be developed within two generations but the images evoked by the term have much more ancient connotations (2000, p. 123). Women, according to Partha Chatterjee, are often assumed to have the responsibility for "...protecting and nurturing the spiritual quality of the national culture" (Schech & Haggis 2000, p, 127), while at the same time men are able to be involved in the external material world, participating in change and the process of modernity. Thus, the modernity of women takes on a different profile from that of men. Hence, change for women needs to be achieved while retaining an essential spiritual quality. In the diaspora, this may lead to a misapprehension that women are maintaining tradition within the domestic sphere while men are adapting to the outside,

modern world, when in would appear that change is occurring within differing parameters for men and women.

Changing attitudes have been understood by some scholars to be the culmination of a chain of events which commenced with the rise in the marriageable age of women (Blumberg & Dwaraki, 1980, p. 41). The authors suggest that, by increasing the desirable age of marriage for girls, a period of time between the previous levels of education and marriage existed. Where work was not customary, for example, for middle class women, this period was filled with what had become affordable and accessible - higher education. This, in turn, created an educated group of women as prospective brides and, ultimately, education became a requirement for middle class potential brides (Blumberg & Dwaraki 1980, p. 41).

Another factor that may have influenced the desirability of further education for women was economic. The high cost of marriage may have required more time in preparing for marrying off a daughter (Blumberg & Dwaraki 1980, p. 41). Education was a means of keeping a young woman in a safe environment while funds to finance the marriage were acquired. They could attend female colleges and when, living away from home, could reside in female hostels. It appears that higher education was not always a choice which was made from an academic perspective, but it may have been the best alternative (Blumberg & Dwaraki 1980, p. 44). It has further been suggested that once education came to be valued in and of itself, this reinforced the desirability of delaying marriage to enable further education (Blumberg & Dwaraki 1980, p. 44, & Kapadia 1982, p. 165).

Education, once gained, provided economic advantages for women with the acceptance of educated women in the work force. The earning power of women also became a desirable asset for marriage (Blumberg & Dwaraki 1980, p. 75, 77). Women could use their education to assist with their dowry and add to the family income, both before and after marriage.

Education was certainly a contributing factor influencing a change in attitudes; however, it has been suggested that, more specifically, the influences which resulted from participation in higher education had considerable impact on these women. They often left home at a relatively early and impressionable age and were housed in hostels with a mixture of different women (Ross 1961, p. 48). Aileen Ross concludes that

> Education could, therefore, not be said to be responsible for all new change as such. It is rather the combination of the exposure to new ideas and patterns of behaviour along with peer group support and/ or control that lead to changed behaviour. (Ross 1961, p. 216)

This process had often commenced with early education for middle class girls in Christian schools where they had mixed with girls from differing castes and religious backgrounds and were certainly exposed to different ideas (Ross 1961, p. 239).

The changes that resulted from this process have been summarised by Ross. She suggests that changes in dress, diet and religious expression occurred through mixing with different castes. She states that

> ...new ways of behaving that had been added included choosing their own husbands, marrying out of caste, having men friends, going to Christian schools, not sitting out for monthly periods, breaking caste rules such as eating meat and eating meals in the homes of people of other castes, attending parties... (Ross 1961, p. 215)

As far as religious practices were concerned, Ross comments that religious expression changed with the women no longer following their mothers' forms of domestic and temple worship, although she adds that this did not mean that they had lost their beliefs, but that their religious expression changed (Ross 1961, p. 214-5).

Blumberg and Dwaraki have concluded that the impact of higher education can be seen to have '...created conditions for a woman to be self-reliant' (Blumberg & Dwaraki 1980, p. 38), as well as establishing stronger emotional ties between husband and wife (Blumberg & Dwaraki 1980, p. 38). They suggest that 'The educated wife is expected to be a companion who will share his interests, go with him to clubs and films, sports and parties, and thus be united emotionally with him' (Blumberg & Dwaraki 1980, p. 38). In other words, the emerging ideal for a woman in these circumstances is one who is more a partner sharing with her husband (Kapur 1979, p. 129). Promilla Kapur concludes that

> Women's higher education, professional employment, and occupational status have contributed considerably towards changing the role of the married woman from that of a housekeeper and obedient servant to the master of the house to that of a companion to her husband, sharing with him the problems and experiences of professional work, while he, to an increasing extent, is helping with the work in the household. (Kapur 1979, p. 129)

Although the concept of an ideal model may exist within India, for the educated middle class women considerable changes have occurred due to the diverse influences brought about by the process of participating in education.

It is evident that, over several thousand years, a brahmanic cultural ideal or paradigm has developed which has influenced the lives of many Hindu women, and as stated in the introduction, this model has been reactivated and reformulated in recent times of upheaval and change. This cultural ideal, however, has not stood uncontested, as the oral and folk traditions, and devotional Hinduism, have provided alternative paradigms. Perhaps popular understanding and interpretation of the Goddess has provided a mediating framework for women between the differing paradigms. It may provide different opportunities for women to re evaluate their practices and assumptions, especially in the context of a changing environment. By examining these elements, an assessment may be made as to which of them derive meaning from a Hindu worldview. These different interpretations may assist a greater understanding of these assumptions and practices, in relationship to Hinduism.

Hinduism and the Diaspora

The theoretical work of Geertz and Bourdieu relates specifically to the interpretation of a system of meaning behind the practices and assumptions of the women, and the manner in which practices occur in relation with the lived environment. The work which has been conducted on the diaspora, also, has relevance to the analysis of the data. By examining the work of scholars and theorists specifically dealing with the diaspora, an indication is given as to the areas of cultural assumptions and practices which may undergo change and adaptation and the manner in which this process has occurred. This work provides a refinement enabling specific comparisons to be made.

Research focussing on specific religious diasporas has been neglected within Religion Studies, but its significance is emphasised by Ninian Smart in his article 'The importance of diasporas' (1987). Smart suggests that there are three important elements of this research. Firstly, according to Smart, such work

> ...can provide a clue to patterns of religious transformation. You may find similar developments in different communities, which reflect parallel solutions

> to parallel problems. Such changes may also pinpoint problems in the religion which make its adaptation to a new environment difficult. (Smart 1987a, p. 289)

Secondly, the diaspora may affect the homeland (Smart 1987a, p. 289) and, thirdly, its importance is due to the prevalence of diasporas in major cities around the world, amongst which cities he includes Sydney (Smart 1987a, p. 289).

Smart points to a number of research issues: the way in which individuals and religious communities operate within specific environments; special problems in adaptation; the ability of different religions to function outside their country of origin; and the applicability of comparisons between diaspora communities.

There are recognised commonalities for all members of the group within this study: they are all women; all identify themselves as Hindu; and they have an ethnic background rooted in the Indian subcontinent. Scholarly works on similar groups often use the term 'diaspora community' in order to describe such groups.

Martin Baumann suggests that within the academic study of religions the term diaspora is generally restricted to Jewish and Christian studies. Diaspora is given a religious meaning within these communities. Thus the Jewish experience of exile, recounted within the sacred texts, is interpreted either as a punishment, or an opportunity for teaching and learning, or as testimony to God's presence, amongst other interpretations. The Christian understanding of the New Testament stresses that Christians are 'pilgrims on a home-bound journey, i.e. towards the final assembly in the heavenly city...the Christian existence in the world is in itself of a diasporic nature' (Baumann 1995, p. 21). This suggests that there is a firm relationship between the understanding of diaspora and '...theological and soteriological concepts' (Baumann 1995, p. 21), within these traditions. Even where studies of diaspora have gone beyond Judaism and Christianity, Baumann understands a religious context, within the conceptualisation of diasporas, as being primary rather than secondary. He argues, however, that the religious aspect is undervalued and, indeed, often ignored by others.

For Baumann, the term diaspora must specifically be applied to a group with a shared religious identity. He suggests that

> Surveying social and political scientific literature it becomes obvious that the 'factor of religion', to my mind indissolubly linked to the concept, has become

> relegated to second place in favour of ethnicity and ethnic adherence. (Baumann 1995, p. 20)

Baumann's own definition of diaspora reflects his concern with religion:

> ...a diaspora is made up of a religious, often ethnic group which lives as a minority outside its land of origin. The immigrant minority has a religious orientation different to that of the members of the host society. (Baumann 1995, p. 22)

Therefore, the religious beliefs and practices of a community take prominence within Baumann's understanding of what constitutes a diaspora.

Although the term diaspora originates from the Jewish experience, and for Baumann it should retain a religious focus, it has been subsequently redefined in a number of different ways, with ethnicity becoming an important aspect (Safran 1991. p. 83). In the opening article of the first edition of the journal *Diaspora*, William Safran firmly places Indian migration within the category of diaspora. He states that it is a genuine diaspora in a number of aspects, but that it also differs from the Jewish and Armenian diasporas in as-much-as

> ...an Indian homeland has existed continuously, that homeland has not been noted for encouraging an "intergathering" ...and Indian diasporia [sic] status has not always been associated with political disability or even minority status. The homeland myth is not particularly operative where the Indian diaspora is in the majority (as in Fiji) or where it constituted a long and well established, and sometimes dominant minority (as in Trinidad and Tobago, Nepal, Guyana and Sri Lanka). (Safran 1991, p. 88)

Although some aspects of the Indian diaspora do, in fact, differ from a notion of diaspora constructed upon the Jewish experience, the definition of diaspora has been sufficiently broadened to include other groups. Definitions of diaspora today range from very generalist interpretations such as Walter Connor's '...that segment of a people living outside the homeland' (Safran 1991, p. 84), to more specific interpretations. Safran's own understanding of what constitutes a diaspora appears to pivot on the fact that these groups

> ...continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. (Safran 1991, p. 84)

Therefore, the relationship with homeland is an integral aspect of these definitions.

Writing in 1997, Steven Vertovec laments what he regards as the under-theorisation of the term diaspora by scholars such as Safran (Vertovec 1997, p. 277). He suggests that there are three current usages of the term diaspora, including '"diaspora" as *social form*, "diaspora" as *type of consciousness,* and "diaspora" as *mode of cultural production'* (Vertovec 1997, p. 277-8). Those descriptions of the diaspora which highlight its negative aspects he categorises as '"diaspora" as social form' (Vertovec 1997, p. 277). He suggests that a number of scholars have written about diasporas as a negative experience, constructing it in passive terms of 'forced displacement, victimization, alienation, loss' (Vertovec 1997, p. 278). Vertovec has formulated this category, which he suggests is the one most commonly articulated, from the available literature.

Vertovec suggests that although Martin Baumann's work has developed out of the model of 'Diaspora as Social Form' (Vertovec 1997, p. 278) it has also gone beyond the negative aspects of diaspora. According to Vertovec, Baumann has concentrated on three different aspects of diaspora. Firstly, he suggests that there are distinctive social relationships which are reinforced by a shared history, a collective identity with links to homelands, as well as problems in being '...fully accepted by the "host society"' (Vertovec 1997, p. 279). Secondly, a conflict may exist between the loyalties to both the host community and the homeland, which may result in a mediating position for individuals. Finally, according to Vertovec, Baumann includes in his description of diasporas, their ability to function as economic forces in the world, due to international networks being established. Other scholars also emphasise the triadic nature of the relationship between the specific diasporas, other similar diaspora communities and the homelands (Vertovec 1997, p. 279). Therefore, Vertovec suggests that many scholars work within this framework, while some have gone beyond a purely negative understanding of diaspora.

Vertovec's other categories place more emphasis on actions or agency within diasporic communities. '"Diaspora" as type of consciousness', describes a sense of identity which contemporaneously associates the individual with their ethnic heritage, transnational communities and their present social environment. As Vertovec describes it, the diaspora consciousness produces an 'awareness of decentered attachments, of being simultaneously "home away from home" or "here and there"' (Vertovec 1997, p. 282). However, combined with a sense of the reality of living within the diaspora is an attachment to the

concept of home. Within this understanding of diaspora, the individual is not a passive victim of historical circumstance but is active in defining his/her position within the diasporic community, as well as within the host community. Vertovec suggests that, rather than producing diasporic identities which are consolidated, the construction of identity is more complex. He comments that,

> Compounded by the awareness of multi-locality, the "fractured memories" of diaspora consciousness produce a multiplicity of histories, "communities," and selves. Yet instead of being represented as a kind of schizophrenic deficit, such multiplicity is being redefined by diasporic individuals as a source of adaptive strength. (Vertovec 1997, p. 282)

Therefore '"Diaspora" as type of consciousness' is concerned with methods of adaptation rather than maladaption, and an examination of how this is achieved.

Finally, Vertovec's category of '"Diaspora" as mode of cultural production' is described in terms of globalisation and is understood as a

> ...worldwide flow of cultural objects, images, and meanings, resulting in a variegated process of creolization, back-and-forth transferences, mutual influences, new contestations, negations, and constant transformations. (Vertovec 1997, p. 289)

The way in which the periphery influences the centre and vice versa, is important in this model.

There is, of course, considerable overlap between these categories: for example, understanding the individual contestation of identity or consciousness within the broader context of a global 'flow of cultural objects, images, and meanings' (Vertovec 1997, p. 289) is possible. The point for this thesis is that there is an awareness of the multi-dimensional aspect of diaspora. As Vertovec suggests, 'Clearly, diasporic phenomena need to be approached by way of both structure (historical conditions) and agency (the meanings held and practices conducted, by social actors)' (Vertovec 1997, p. 292-3).

It is evident that Hindus in Australia and the women within this study can be accommodated within the concept of diaspora. The concept of community is problematic, however, as Gillian Bottomley points out (1991, p. 311). Bottomley describes the politically advantageous manner in which 'imagined constituencies [such] as the local community, the gay community, or the Muslim [community]' (Bottomley 1991, p. 311)

have been used to indicate homogeneous groups for specific purposes. She rejects this construction of the term and alternatively suggests an anthropological definition of community, describing it as being 'marked by face-to-face interaction, multiplex ties, and shared common values' (Bottomley 1991, p. 311). Therefore, it is important when focussing on shared values, ties and interaction, to also acknowledge the diversity within communities.

Roger Ballard discusses the search for a concept of community within the South Asian population in Britain (1994, p. 4). He suggests that

> If one regards a community as a body of people whose feelings of mutual identification are strong enough to precipitate an active and ongoing sense of solidarity, the great majority of Britain's ethnic colonies rest on much more parochial foundations than is commonly supposed. (Ballard 1994, p. 4)

Within these parochial foundations, religious affiliation is seen by Ballard as being one of the most effective sources of identification. This religious affiliation is, however, often solidified around specific issues and therefore, only surfaces at specific times. Within Britain, where the Indian immigration experience is centred around chain migrants, individuals who have immigrated through the sponsorship of family and caste members or close contacts associated within natal villages and regions, a sense of identity is often expressed in terms of *jati* and *biraderi* (Ballard 1994, p. 4). This is unsurprising, due to the nature of chain migration, which draws sponsorship for immigration from these groups. Chain migration and other related terms will be discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

Diasporas are generally conceptualised as homogeneous groups; however, this is not always the case. To suggest that there is a homogeneous Indian culture is to overlook significant internal difference and variation, just as it is difficult to find a single thread or concept which can be used to define Hinduism, due to its diversity (Weightman 1984, p. 191). In fact, Amitav Ghosh goes so far as to suggest that Indian culture is, indeed, constructed upon difference (1989). He suggests that

> If there is any one pattern in Indian culture in the broadest sense it is simply this: that culture seems to be constructed around the proliferation of differences (albeit within certain parameters). To be different in a world of differences is irrevocably to belong. (Ghosh 1989, p. 78)

Paul Gilroy also picks up the theme of difference when examining 'urban social movement, "race" and community' (1987, p. 235). Gilroy examines the symbolic aspects of community and suggests that 'Community is as much about difference as it is about similarity and identity' (Gilroy 1987, p. 235). The boundaries between communities, according to Gilroy, are demarcated symbolically and, therefore, for a community, group or movement '... a broad range of meaning can co-exist around it reconciling individuality and commonality and competing definitions of what the movement is about' (Gilroy 1987, p. 235). Therefore, individuality can be accommodated within groups or communities, providing a common, overarching framework or ideology exists.

Gilroy's description can be used as a basis for understanding what constitutes a Hindu community. What it means to be Hindu and being part of a Hindu community within the diaspora may be understood differently by different individuals. However, symbolic boundaries exist, within which shared values, ties and interactions can be found alongside individuality and difference. The symbolic ties act to define the group as a community so that it is possible, therefore, to speak of a Hindu community where these ties exist. This is the case in Australia, where in spite of internal individuality and diversity a Hindu community is formed through symbolic ties.

To speak or write of a Hindu diaspora community in Australia is to emphasise the concept of the Indian subcontinent as 'home', and to understand this diaspora as being part of the wider Australian community. The concept of 'home', although important in establishing a framework for commonality, does tend to camouflage the varying experiences, identities, values and assumptions of the individuals within the group or community. For example, with those whose families have emigrated from the Indian subcontinent, differences may include language, regional or caste practices and rural/urban distinctions. Most importantly, perhaps, for this community, 'home' may be a concept distanced from experience. For those Indians who have emigrated from another diaspora community, such as Fiji, Malaysia or South Africa, the concept of India as 'home' may be an ideal rather than a concrete understanding of the term or, to use Safran's interpretation, the myth of homeland may not be particularly operative (1991). India is, however, a point of identification, a place of belonging, even when individuals may not have visited the subcontinent or intend doing so. For early immigrants, living away from India was often understood to be a temporary state for a specific purpose, often economic. As the prospect of return fades, often the ideal remains, but without the same conviction. The identification

with 'home' remains as a myth rather than an intent. This is not to deny the inherent power which the myth retains, however.

The Hindu diaspora, I suggest, is one specific diasporic community or configuration which is part of a broader Indian diaspora. Identification with the Indian diaspora has different symbolic borders than does the Hindu diaspora. Identification may change in different circumstances. For example, in South Australia there are situations where the Indian diaspora, including Hindus, Christians and Muslims, will participate in joint activities while, at other times, Tamils, Bengalis or Hindus may form individual communities. Identification with a specific diaspora, itself, shifts in response to differing situations.

Not only is the relationship between individuals and the diaspora communities with whom they share symbolic boundaries shifting, so is their position within the wider community. Avtar Brah suggests that it is how the 'journeys' which establish the diaspora community take place and how they '...conclude and intersect in specific spaces, and specific historical conjectures...' (Brah 1996, p. 182) which determine the way '...in which a group comes to be "situated" in and through a wide variety of discourses, economic processes, state policies and institutional practices...' (Brah 1996, p. 182). The different journeys which have established a Hindu diaspora community within Australia have contributed to a specific image and position of the community within Australia, the current image being that of an educated professional group. This diaspora is not only, using Brah's terminology, 'differentiated internally', it is 'situated' in relation with the wider community. As the 'journeys' which have constituted the subcontinental diaspora are indeed varied and have extended over a considerable period of time, fluctuations in the way in which the diaspora has been situated within the wider community have continually occurred. The diaspora is, therefore, not constant, but changing both internally and in relation with other groups.

While being mindful of the differing definitions and understandings of the terms 'diaspora' and 'community' and the way in which they are not static entities, it is possible to categorise the women interviewed as part of a Hindu diaspora in South Australia. As such, the women can be treated as having a number of common boundaries which construct them as part of a Hindu diaspora community, while recognising their individual experiences, histories and 'journeys'. The women can be discussed as a group and, because of that fact, the study has broader implications for studies of religion within diaspora communities,

although I am not suggesting that the study represents a 'part for the whole' but, rather, a 'part within a whole'.
One of the main aims of this thesis is to attempt to determine whether Hindu assumptions form part of the framework and are one of the shared boundaries for the women in the Hindu community in South Australia.

Methodology

The development of my theoretical perspective provided the framework for the way I approached and undertook my specific study. I chose to undertake qualitative research in order to understand whether a Hindu culture provided meaning for the assumptions and practices of a group of women within the diaspora. Qualitative ethnographic research stems naturally from the theoretical framework through which I am working. It provides a space for the voices of the individual women and the ways in which they articulate themselves. It was important to understand the individual histories of the women, as well as to look at the ways in which they related to the environment or social field of the diaspora.

Qualitative research incorporates participant observation and in-depth interviewing and, because the detail which the research uncovers, small samples are undertaken (Bogdan & Biklen 1992, p. 3). The sample is then placed within both the current and the historical context (Bogdan & Biklen 1992, p. 29). Qualitative research is by nature descriptive and concerned with process, rather than purely outcome, as meaning is important (Bogdan & Biklen 1992, p. 31). As Robert Bogdan and Sari Biklen suggest, 'Qualitative researchers' goal is to better understand human behaviour and experience. They seek to grasp the processes by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are' (Bogdan & Biklen 1992, p. 49). Qualitative research which is concerned with an '...attempt to describe culture or aspects of culture is called ethnography' (Bogdan & Biklen 1992, p. 38). Ethnography involves undertaking field research, and can draw upon a variety of different sources such as interview, archival research and quantitative research. George Marcus and Michael Fischer describe the ethnographic process '...as modern anthropology's major intellectual contribution to scholarship' (1986, p. 20), and they further suggest that both the depiction of cultural diversity and the reflection on our own culture as being its two most important aspects.

Clifford Geertz compares quantitative data with qualitative data, describing them as being divergent and convergent respectively (1984, p. 522). He compares the two by suggesting that

> By convergent data I mean, measures, observations, what you will, which are at once diverse, even rather miscellaneous, both as to type and degree of precision and generally, unstandardized facts, opportunistically collected and variously portrayed, which yet turn out to shed light on one another for the simple reason that the individuals they are descriptions, measures, or observations of are directly involved in one another's lives; people who in a marvellous phase of Alfred Schutz's 'grow old together'. As such they differ from the sort of [divergent] data one gets from polls, or surveys, or censuses, which yield facts about classes of individuals not otherwise related: all women who took degrees in economics in 1960...(Geertz 1984, p. 522)

Therefore, by collecting convergent data through the ethnographic process some light can be shed on both the individual and the group.

The ethnographic process is ambitious and can only be partial (Agar 1980, p. 41), but it attempts to piece together data and to discover its interconnectedness and the meaning behind it. Ethnography involves the researcher in the lives of the participants, over a period of time and involves questioning, watching, listening and recording (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983). The collection and interpretation of data occur simultaneously (Burgess 1985).

The collection of data does not occur in a vacuum and, as Geertz suggests of the writings which result from the process, it is 'our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to' (Geertz 1973, p. 9). Qualitative research results in a specific construction of 'reality'. To look at the process from the perspective of Bourdieu's theory, the habitus of the researcher mediates the research process. It is necessary for a researcher to bring to the surface, as much as possible, their bias or to identify the way in which their own habitus is mediating the research project. This I have attempted to do in the Introduction under *My relationship with the research.* The limitations in the collection of data must be kept in mind during its analysis. Although the data will be incomplete and constructed, as Geertz states, 'It is not necessary to know

everything to know anything' (1984, p. 523). In cross-cultural ethnography, the researcher becomes a mediator 'between distinct sets of categories and cultural conceptions that interact in different ways at different points of the ethnographic process' (Marcus and Fischer 1986, p. 31). As stated in the Introduction, ethnographic research and analysis is a viable method which allows for mediation to take place between different cultures and to foster cross-cultural understanding.

Observation, which includes simultaneous analysis, followed by subsequent reflection and analysis, is an integral aspect of qualitative research. For this reason, I have set out, at some length, the theoretical perspective from which I have conducted my analysis of the data which I collected.

Ethnography has been used for many studies focussing on ethnic and religious groups, including those within the diaspora, as has been demonstrated in the literature review. Indeed, both Clifford Geertz and Pierre Bourdieu, who have been drawn upon heavily for my theoretical orientation, have utilised ethnographic work. Geertz's work relies upon an ethnographic approach of 'thick description'. Therefore, ethnography became an integral aspect of my study of a group of women within the Hindu community.

The areas in which caution is required, as well as the qualifications and limitations of this type of approach, have been discussed within the Introduction and the earlier section on the cultural 'Other'. Although these needed to be borne in mind before the study was developed and while it was being undertaken, the study was nevertheless undertaken as an ethnography.

My Own Research

Contact with the community was initiated and maintained through attendance at the temple; at the cultural events of specific groups including Sruti, Rasak Ranjani and the Indian-Australian Association; and at a number of Sai Baba functions. I also followed through contacts which had been mentioned by colleagues and friends. After my initial contact, I gained written permission from both the Hindu Association and the Indian-Australian Association to distribute questionnaires and conduct interviews. In short, I made clear my ethnographic intentions to the community generally and my motives for attending specific

functions. Ultimately, I was invited to a number of private occasions within the homes of individuals, and observations during this time were invaluable in developing an understanding of the functioning of the Hindu community in South Australia, as well as of the individuals who constituted it.

At a later stage, I was invited to become the Assistant Secretary of the Indian-Australian Association from mid1995 to mid1996. I was also asked to write a short article for the Association's newsletter explaining my research and interest in the community. Overall, a considerable number of South Australian Hindus, both men and women, became aware of my research, and a number have made informal enquiries as to its progress over the years. I commenced collating the information gained though this process in a journal in 1993 (referenced as Personal Journal). The process is continuing today in the year 2001, albeit in a reduced form. It is a process which is difficult to bring to a conclusion, as contact with the community and individuals continues to produce rich material to add to and modify my work.

After the initial contact had been made, the more specific ethnographic work commenced. In order to obtain ethics clearance from the University to conduct the research, I needed to present a clear outline of my methodology. I had decided to start my inquiry with the women in the community in a broad sense and, after gaining general information, to refine the study to a smaller group. I initially looked at the practices of the larger community, followed by a survey of the practices of 50 women, then I refined my study to a smaller group. Although the study was ultimately confined, it remained within the context of the wider group and the community. I commenced by conducting informal interviews with a number of individuals within the community, both men and women, in order to assist my formulation of appropriate questions. This commenced in the second half of 1993. Of the women who assisted at this early stage, only one participated in the questionnaire and formal interview process. These primary interviews were of considerable assistance in putting together the questionnaires and interview structure.

The questionnaire and the structure of the interview needed to be formulated at an early stage in order to provide the community with adequate information to enable them to assess my project and to debate their own involvement in it. This was also a requirement in order for the University's ethics committee to assess my proposal. Once approval had been

gained from the Indian-Australian Association and the Hindu Association, as bodies which were representative of the community, and the ethics committee of the University of South Australia, questionnaires were distributed, together with information sheets and invitations to participate in interviews. The information sheet for the questionnaires is provided as Appendix 2, and the questionnaires which were used are included as Appendices 3 and 4. Appendix 5 is the invitation to participate in the interview process, while the semistructured interview format has been included as Appendix 6. The initial questionnaire which was distributed to a small number of women was found to be ambiguous and was subsequently revised, although the information which was provided within this refinement was not used specifically. The questionnaires provided information from a larger group, many of whom were willing to give some information, but did not wish to participate in an interview. All the women who participated in the interview process answered the questionnaire. In total, 50 questionnaires were collected. Through the general ethnographic work, the collection of 50 questionnaires and, finally, the conducting of 30 interviews, I have attempted to commence with a wider view of the community, narrowing the study down to a more specific group.

It was not until June 1995 that I had reached the stage of being able to commence distribution of the questionnaires. The initial distribution took place at the A. G. M. of the Indian-Australian Association. Distribution then took place at cultural events. I also distributed information sheets, questionnaires and invitations to participate in the interview process by post to individuals whose names had been given to me by others within the community. I also utilised referrals from non-Indians who were aware of my thesis. The women in Whyalla were initially contacted through this source. As I was keen to gain another separate contact in Whyalla, I did this by contacting a woman who had written an article for the Indian-Australian Association's newsletter, and who had supplied her name and address.

It was not my intention to use the questionnaires in order to conduct a quantitative study. As I have already stated, my sample is not designed to be representative of the community, and the sample was not random. Instead, I was dependent upon finding a group of women who were willing to participate. Not all the women who were contacted either personally, or by others in the community, were willing to do so. As the women were primarily accessed through cultural and religious organisations and events, the study is biased

towards those who actively participate within the Indian and Hindu community. Personal contacts were valuable in accessing women who were not involved in communal activities. One woman, particularly, knew very few Indians in South Australia and did not participate in community or cultural events. Her close friends in South Australia were all non- Indians. Therefore, I was able to balance the group to a limited extent. As I was not familiar with the Hindu or Indian community in South Australia prior to the commencement of my study, I was reliant upon my own networking and the contacts I was able to make. In short, my study depended on the cooperation of the women. If this had not been forthcoming, the study would not have been possible.

Though the questionnaires, I attempted to gain an understanding of the basic public and private rituals which the women performed, and their involvement with the community in general. By gathering information concerning this while taking into account the age of the women and their marital status, I hoped to piece together a profile and understanding of the practices of this group of women. Although the process was not quantitative, some of the information which was discovered has been set out in this form within the discussion of the findings, as it provided a wider profile of a group of women within the Hindu community, and demonstrates that the women interviewed were, in fact, similar to a wider group.

The Interviews took place between August 1995 and July 1997. They were conducted at venues designated by the interviewees. Generally speaking, this was in the homes of the women. Two interviews were conducted at the interviewee's place of employment. A further interview was conducted at the home of a friend of one of the women, while one was at my own home. One woman was interviewed over the telephone while she was temporarily interstate, although I had previously been invited to her house for an initial discussion. As the majority of the interviews were conducted in the women's homes, I was given an opportunity to understand their home environment, and was able to observe a considerable amount about the women and the way they lived. I was often shown the location and composition of the home shrine and a variety of religious artefacts and paintings. I could observe individual customs such as the removal of shoes before entering the house. When husbands or other family members were in the house, I was able to extend my contacts, engage in more general conversation prior to the interview, and observe family relationships. This was certainly a very valuable aspect of the interview process.

As the interviews were conducted using a semistructured set of questions, these questions were often used as a basis for discussion, and I was frequently guided by what the women 'wanted' me to know, as well as covering the basic questions. The interview outline was divided into two specific sections covering practices and assumptions, with the final two questions concerned with the women's perceived relationship with the wider Australian community. As previously stated, the questions were developed in an attempt to understand the assumptions and practices of the women and to ascertain whether a Hindu framework existed through which the women made sense of their lives. As the environment in which they operated differed significantly from that in which Hinduism developed and was maintained or, to use Bourdieu's terms, in which their primary habitus developed, the questions were designed to attempt to uncover the current situation. Questions which underpinned the interview structure included: what were the current practices and assumptions of the women, and, did these practices derive meaning from a Hindu framework, or a habitus which incorporated a Hindu understanding of the world? Was there a misadaption or adaptation to the physical and social environment of the diaspora? The questions which were posed were formulated in order to understand the systems of significance, the practices which occurred, and the relationship between them.

The interview process was not isolated from interaction within the community. My involvement has been ongoing. I have kept in contact with a number of the women with whom I made contact through the study, as I have with others in the community. This has enabled me to understand the dynamic nature of the community and the lives of the women. Marital status has changed for some and interstate moves have taken place. Others have joined the community in South Australia. As recently as the end of 1999 and early 2000, while the writing of the thesis was taking place, I was invited to attend lifecycle rituals and celebrations. Therefore, the questionnaires and the interviews were conducted within the wider context of ethnographic observations. Although the voices of the women have been highlighted within the findings, this has been done within the more general context of the community.

CHAPTER 4

A HISTORY OF INDIAN IMMIGRATION TO SOUTH AUSTRALIA: A focus on Hindus

Introduction

What I found from my research was that little information had been published and details were often inaccurate. No detailed history of Hinduism, or indeed, of Indian immigration, in South Australia had been undertaken. It became obvious that the early stages of Hinduism in South Australia had no apparent impact on the Hindu women who took part in my study. An historical understanding of the early stage of Hinduism was important, however, to identify a lack of influence. It was also important in indicating specific instances that were not conducive to establishing a Hindu culture in a region, in spite of the presence of Hindus, and at what point Hinduism could be sustained. An historical survey also highlights the attitudes of the broader community towards the different stages of Indian immigration to South Australia.

Reluctantly, I have chosen to incorporate only a summary of the history of early Indian immigration into the body of the thesis, while a complete discussion is included as Appendix 7. A summary is adequate to establish a lack of continuity between two distinct periods of immigration to South Australia, while the more complete history presented in

Appendix 7 provides an insight into the conditions within the then colony of South Australia, as well as the attitudes and values of the period.

In order to understand Indian immigration to Australia from a wider perspective this chapter will set out the different phases of emigration from the subcontinent. A summary of nineteenth century Indian immigration to South Australia will lead into a summary of the developments which took place in the twentieth century. A final summary will bring together these individual sections in order to provide an overall picture of the history of Indian immigration to South Australia, in which the experiences of the women involved in the study can be understood.

Three phases of Indian immigration

Indian immigration has taken on three distinct profiles since the beginning of British colonial domination of the sub-continent, and Indian immigration to Australia can be located within this general framework. Australia, initially, became a destination for Indians when organised labour recruitment commenced after the British looked to India as a supply of cheap agricultural workers for its other colonies, especially the West Indies, Mauritius and British Guiana. Although immigration was not the intention of most Indians who participated in indenture schemes, as return passage was theoretically provided, it was often the ultimate result when return passages were not forthcoming or when additional indenture contracts were undertaken. As Australia was one of the destinations for indentured labourers, some of the first Indians who entered Australia did so under this system, while a number of free labourers immigrated at a later stage. A few Indians had been transported to Australia as convicts (de Lepervanche 1984, p. 36).

Indenture, either Government controlled or privately sponsored, involved workers being contracted for a specific length of time, usually three or five years, to work in a foreign country. Varying conditions and remuneration packages applied, but return passage was, as previously stated, theoretically pre-paid and permanent immigration was not the original intention of those promoting the indenture system. The commencement of the system in 1834 coincided with the abolition of slavery, according to I. M. Cumpston in *Indians Overseas in British Territories* (1953). Very few women were involved in this system,

especially in the early period. Cumpston states that, during the initial five-year indenture period, only 100 women were indentured to every 6,000 men (Cumpston 1953, p. 21). Tinker suggests that the women who were initially involved were from minority and poorly-valued groups such as widows and courtesans (Tinker 1977, p. 4). In later days when equal numbers of women and men were supposed to be indentured, women were kidnapped in an attempt to make up the numbers (Tinker 1977, p. 5). After an interruption to the indenture system in India between 1840 and 1843, family units, including women, became involved with the supply of indentured labourers, but only to Mauritius (Tinker 1977, p. 69).

The number of Indians involved was not insignificant. Between 1834 and 1849 alone, some 128,000 Indians had left India for Mauritius and the West Indies (Cumpston 1953, p. 140). Cumpston states that before August 1838, 89 men had emigrated to Australia under this system (Cumpston 1953, p. 15). Of these, the majority went to New South Wales with 'A few...to the Swan River Colony, and fifteen or twenty to South Australia' (Cumpston 1953, p. 27).

It would appear that the majority of Indians who participated in the indenture system were Hindu. L. Mansingh suggests that 90% of all indentured labourers to Jamaica were Hindu (Mansingh 1987, p. 301), while Chandra Jayawardena states that 83.6% of the indentured labourers who went to British Guiana were also Hindu (Jayawardena 1965-66, p. 213). Although the indenture system theoretically provided for the return passage of the labourers, strong evidence exists to suggest that many remained behind. Cumpston gives the figures for Jamaica: 'By May 1853, 1,185 had gone home and 664 had commuted their right to a return passage for a grant of money' (Cumpston 1953, p. 145).

In the Australian context, labourers arrived in Australia, but not only through the indenture system, although the alternative forms of immigration appear to be less applicable to Hindus than they were to Muslims and Sikhs. The introduction of camels to the more remote areas of Australia and, especially, to South Australia, was accompanied by labourers who specialised in handling them. This commenced in the early 1860s, although the first significant group of 31 camel handlers arrived in 1865 (Cigler 1986, p. 11). These men were know by the term 'Afghan' or 'Ghan', despite the fact that they were generally Muslim 'Pathans from the Punjab, Sind, North West Frontier Province of Baluchistan, and

Afghanistan' (Bilimoria 1996, p. 8), although some were Hindus and Sikhs. Christine Stevens, in her book *Tin Mosques and Ghantowns* (1989), writes that

> The Sikhs and Hindus were physically and psychologically excluded from the general Afghan community, alienated on religious grounds and despised as traditional enemies. They lived on the peripheries of Ghantowns in small lonely groups, or camped alone near their wagons. (Stevens 1989, p. 206)

Although Cigler has estimated the general number of Afghans involved in camel handling over a sixty year period as 3,000 (1986, p. 3), it is difficult to ascertain the number who were Hindus, as these men were constantly moving between states. It is apparent that their numbers were small and they kept themselves apart from the Muslims and endeavoured to retain their culture whenever possible. Intermarriage had occurred between the 'Afghans' and sections of the wider community, although no evidence is available to suggest whether Hindus intermarried. Sons soon became involved with the work, and the estimated number involved does not represent immigration levels. The Muslims not only married locally, they also built mosques, the first in Australia being built in northern South Australia in the early 1880s (Cigler 1986, p, 119).

The nineteenth century saw small numbers of labourers arriving in Australia. Amongst these were a number of Sikhs and Muslims from the Punjab, who were escaping the economic downturn being experienced in that region (de Lepervanche 1984). Through the maintenance of family and village contacts, these men established their own families in the Punjab while working in Australia. A number of these eventually coalesced in specific regions of New South Wales, becoming landowners and later, transferring their families to Australia, in the pattern of 'chain migrants'.

In 1920, just prior to the end of the indenture system generally, Indians began to emigrate in groups throughout the world. This process has continued through sponsorship, so enabling family, caste and village members to join former immigrants. These so-called 'chain migrants', many of whom were traders, included a significant number of Sikhs (Hess 1976, p. 157 & 165). The literature indicates that Africa, Fiji, Britain, and Mauritius were the main destinations, with smaller numbers immigrating to regions such as New Zealand and North America (Tambs-Lyche 1980, p. 36, Desai 1963, p. 1, Delf 1963, p. 8). R. Desai

points out that men were often the initial immigrants, with women and children joining them once they had become established (Desai 1965, p. 7). This type of immigration was applicable to some groups within Australia, most notably the Sikh community in northern New South Wales, although Hindu communities generally did not come to Australia as chain migrants. It would appear that Australia's chain migrants grew from late 19th century immigration (de Lepervanche 1984).

Australia did not receive large numbers of chain migrants due to the introduction of the Immigration Restriction Act in 1901; however, Indian men who were established in Australia prior to this date were able to bring out sons. After 1918, wives and minor children were also given entry. Marie de Lepervanche, from her research on the primarily Sikh community at Woolgoolga, in northern New South Wales, concludes that the men chose to support their families in India, although sons were brought to Australia by their fathers (de Lepervanche 1984, p. 34). De Lepervanche suggests that 'with few exceptions, the wives and daughters remained in India; only recently have women emigrated in numbers' (1984, p. 60).

Neither the 'Afghans' nor the Woolgoolga Sikhs will be dealt with in any detail as, not only have extensive studies already been undertaken on these groups, few Hindu 'Afghans' were reported and no Hindus were present in Woolgoolga (de Lepervanche 1984, Cigler 1986, Stevens 1989).

The final group, and chronologically the last to commence immigration generally, consists of those who, more or less, immigrated as individuals or small family units, a process which is still continuing. These immigrants tend to be urban Indians, predominantly professionals. Although some immigrated to Britain earlier, the main diaspora of Indian professionals took place in the 1960s, according to Tinker (1977, p. 8-9). This professional group has immigrated to a variety of countries, including the United States of America and Australia. The group will be referred to below, as they constitute the majority within the Indian community in South Australia.

Although, I am suggesting that the urban professional group constitutes the majority within South Australia, the profile of individual immigrants has started to change in line with the Australian immigration requirements of more recent years. The initial urban professionals filled a niche within Australian society. This was specifically within those professions in

which insufficient numbers of Australian graduates were available in such fields as medicine and the university system. In more recent times, it would appear that the niche has changed, and Indians have been allowed to immigrate in order to fill positions within the computer industry, as well as in semi-skilled positions in the automotive industry. From my observations of the community in South Australia, these changes are beginning to impact upon the Indian community as a whole, as the semi-skilled Indians differ in background and experience from the professional group. The changes may be short-lived, however, as I was informed, when contacting one of the automotive manufacturers in South Australia that, with the downturn in the industry, recruitment had stopped some time ago. What is obvious is that the specific immigrants who are accepted are driven by economic imperatives, and the profile of the Indian community in Australia may well be determined by Australia's future requirements. These issues, however, are beyond the scope of this thesis, although they could constitute a valuable area of study in the future.

To summarise the major trends, it can be suggested that Indian immigration to non-Asian countries can be divided into three types:

1) indentured labourers who were recruited for a specific period of time (concurrently with them - free labourers who also arrived in Australia to fill specific niches with the colony)

2) chain migrants who immigrate in extended family or regional groups

3) urban professionals who immigrate as individuals or in nuclear family units.

All three types are applicable to Australia, albeit to varying degrees.

Nineteenth century immigration

It is difficult to piece together a detailed history of Indian residence in South Australia or, indeed, in Australia as a whole. This is due to several factors, including the incomplete nature of the records which have survived, as well as the way in which records were originally kept. The manner in which servants were dealt with in the records frequently resulted in a lack of individual detail or often, in the case of Indians, any acknowledgment of their existence. Identifying those Indians who were Hindu is even more difficult. Unless religion was mentioned, which is rare, or the name is specifically Muslim, it is difficult to be certain. Therefore, a more general look at Indians in Australia and, specifically, in South Australia, is necessary, giving special notice to Hindus, wherever possible.

A solid overview of Indian immigration to Australia, generally, has been given by Marie de Lepervanche, who brings together much of the information which is available for the nineteenth century, some of which is contradictory (1984, p. 24). It is unnecessary, for the purpose of this thesis, to repeat more than a summary of the findings in order to give an historical context for Indian immigration to South Australia.

One of the scholars whose work is drawn upon by de Lepervanche is Charles Price, who provides some detail of the very early Indians present in Australia in *The Great White Walls are Built* (1974). He states that

> In all, persons of Indian race in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland in 1861 totalled about 400 males and forty females, some fifty in Sydney, thirty in Melbourne, 150 in the mining districts and 200 or more scattered through the rural townships and pastoral districts, mainly in New South Wales and south Queensland. These represent the survivors of the coolie migration of 1837-44, the Eurasian migration of 1852-4, and a number of later arrivals attracted to the colonies as individuals by the gold-diggings and the associated expansion of trade. (Price 1974, p. 44)

Bilimoria and Bapat suggest that the labourers who were brought to Australia in the 1830s were 'most likely Hindus' (Bilimoria & Bapat 1988, p. 335), although it was common to refer to Indian Sikhs and Muslims as 'Hindoos' (Bilimoria & Bapat 1988, p. 335) and, therefore, it is difficult to ascertain the religious configuration. They conclude, however, that later immigrants reduced the overall percentage of Hindus amongst the Indian immigrant population and that

> The overall number of Indians ('Hindoos') in Australia reached 4106 by 1911 (about 1000 of whom were Hindus) despite severe restrictions, under the then 'White Australia Policy', on the admission of the families of those already residing here. (Bilimoria & Bapat 1988, p. 336)

In a later work, Bilimoria refines his estimate from 1,000 to 414 Hindus in Australia in 1911 (1996, p. 45), hence the number of Hindus present within Australia prior to 1901 was small. These early Indian migrants, according to Bilimoria and Bapat, did not establish centres of worship, although they did continue cremation practices.

The earliest archival material indicates that Indian indentured labourers were present in South Australia in 1838 (*South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register* (*SAGCR)* 1838, Sept 8, p. 6). As the Colony of South Australia had only been founded two years prior to

this, Indians were part of the early profile of the colony. There are sources to confirm that two individuals, Joseph Bruce and E. B. Gleeson, both of whom had spent time in India, brought Indian labourers with them to South Australia under indenture arrangements (*SAGCR* 1838, Sept. 22, pp. 3- 4 & State Records, GRG 24/90/267, no. 64, Feb. 7, 1843). There is speculation that a small number of Indians may have been brought out by other settlers but, as can be seen in Appendix 7, the information concerning this is inconclusive. The number of indentured Indians brought to Australia by Bruce is thought to have been 17 or 18 (*SAGCR* 1838, Sept 8, p. 6), while those accompanying Gleeson totalled 24 (State Records, GRG 24/90/267, no. 64, Feb. 7, 1843). Gleeson also brought with him a young Anglo-Indian girl, Mary Thomas, as a governess to his children (unpublished correspondence from Jack Cross). Many descendants exist, however, and, as Mary was brought up as a Christian, her descendants followed this tradition.

Although return passage was theoretically guaranteed for the young men who were contracted as indentured labourers, in effect there is no evident to suggest that this occurred. Joseph Bruce died in 1838 of a drug overdose, and Gleeson took over the young men who were left stranded by Bruce's untimely death. Gleeson's fate took an unexpected turn when he became insolvent, once again creating problems for the indentured Indians. When Gleeson's fortunes improved, he appears to have given employment to a number of Indians, although it seems that, under the insolvency conditions, he was under no obligation to arrange a return passage for those men who had been under contract to him.

There is considerable information to suggest that Bruce's indentured men suffered from maltreatment, although the authorities in charge of investigating sudden deaths were unable to attribute direct blame. There was considerable concern expressed at the time of the death of one young man and to the treatment of indentured labourers generally, as well as of their terms of indenture, but no action was taken. The young men were both Hindu and Muslim, although the exact numbers of each are difficult to estimate; however, I have attempted to provide some indication of this in Appendix 7.

Although it has been suggested that none of the indentured labourers who remained in Australia married, this does not appear to be the case. Charles Price, when discussing the indentured labourers who came to Australia, suggested that, although some returned to India, '...those who stayed apparently mixed very little with European-Australians, and

intermarried not at all - the eight known to have wives with them by 1854 had brought them from India' (Price 1974, p. 42). I was able to confirm, however, that two of the South Australian men did marry into the broader community, and that children were born from one of these marriages (Registrar of Marriages Ref 47, 3 July, 1861, p. 235-6, Registrar of Marriages Ref 47, 3 July, 1861, p. 235-6 & *SAGG*, 1901, p. 376).

Apart from the indentured labourers, and the Afghan camel handlers previously mentioned, some of whom were Hindus, there were other isolated instances of Indians arriving in South Australia, before the end of the nineteenth century. Certainly, all those within the indenture system were young men, most of whom died without issue. No communal Hindu culture was established, although it would appear that the men who survived may have retained their own culture on an individual basis, and certainly attempted to do so while living together as a group (see Appendix 7).

The Twentieth Century

Asian immigration to Australia in the twentieth century has been covered in a number of substantial works (Palfreeman 1967, Yarwood 1964, Price 1974, Willard 1923). The authors focus, to varying degrees, on the issue of Indian immigration; however, they do give a good coverage of the major developments affecting Indian immigration to Australia. Marie de Lepervanche, in her extensive study of a specific Indian community in New South Wales, pulls much of the information together to provide an overall discussion of Indian immigration to Australia. Indian immigration to South Australia has only been touched upon by scholars, due to the small numbers of immigrants involved.

Much of the work which has been published on Asian immigration to Australia focuses on Chinese immigration, as it constituted the most significant Asian group and, in a sense, many of the laws which were passed concerning immigration were driven by a desire to control that immigration. Even in South Australia, where the numbers of Chinese were small, the landing of 20,000 Chinese in 1856-7, at Guichen Bay, 200 miles from Adelaide, *en route* to the Victorian goldfields, sent shock waves through the colony of South Australia and stimulated parliamentary action (Price, 1974). Indian immigration to Australia, generally, did not seem to be of great concern (apart from the debates through the latter half of the nineteenth century which were concerned with the possible use of Indian 'Coolies' for tropical regions) and, as Yarwood states

> The infrequency of reference to Indians in the 1901 debates reflects the lack of specific concerns felt about the immigration of this race. So small were the numbers already domiciled in 1901 that significant economic competition was experienced by no local group, and there was no prospect of this situation being altered by natural increase (in the absence of Indian women) or by a military invasion. (Yarwood 1964, p. 125)

Prior to the twentieth century, the individual colonies of Australia were responsible for making their own rules. Immigration had been, therefore, a local affair but, as South Australia included the Northern Territory from 1863 until 1911 (Price 1974, p. 151), South Australian policies had to take into account the Territory. The area covered stretched from the Great Southern Ocean to the Timor Sea, and there were attempts made, certainly, to introduce Indian labourers into the northern tropical areas. Federation put an end to these moves, as well as to the individual discretion of the states in making immigration policy.

In December 1901, during the first session of the new Federal Parliament, the Immigration Restriction Bill was passed, effectively curtailing Asian immigration to Australia and, of course, Indian immigration to South Australia. Initially, two loopholes existed which allowed for

> ...the entry of wives and children of Australian residents under certain conditions, and also any person who 'satisfies an officer that he has formally been domiciled in the Commonwealth or in any colony which has become a State'. (Palfreeman 1967, p. 6)

The first loophole was closed in 1902 and the second in 1905 (Palfreeman 1967, p. 6).

The Immigration Restriction Act, which included the dictation test, was designed to 'control the entry of exotic non-Europeans and reduce the coloured minorities resident in Australia' (Yarwood & Knowles 1982, p. 327). Several incidents attest to the way in which colour was used to discriminate against potential immigrants. Anglo-Indian immigrants were often chosen on a colour basis. At times, those accepted for immigration at the point of departure were refused entry to Australia either at a mid-point or on arrival. A. C. Palfreeman cites the case where three passengers from the steamer *Stratheden,* which was carrying 69 Anglo-Indians from India and Ceylon, were refused entry at Perth as 'they did not meet the racial requirements' (Palfreeman 1967, p. 49).

The dictation test, which was introduced with the Immigration Restriction Bill, was used to restrict individual groups from entering Australia, but without specifically mentioning race. It allowed for a written test to be given, in any European language designated by officials, as a means of regulating immigration (Rivett 1975, p. 17). For non-whites who were proficient in English, obscure languages with which they were unlikely to be familiar could be used. Yarwood and Knowling report that Scottish Gaelic was even used for the dictation test in one particular instance (1982, p. 234-5). The test appears to have been more leniently applied prior to 1904. In 1902, 33 people are reported as passing the test while 618 failed (Yarwood 1964, p. 49). Between 1904 and 1909, the year in which the last successful applicant passed the test, only six passes were recorded, although the last applicant appears to have passed due to the inability of the government officer involved to administer any alternative language (Yarwood 1964, p. 49). Two 'Hindoos' were amongst the early successes (Yarwood 1964, p. 48).

Re-entry of Asians into Australia also proved to be difficult after 1901, as it depended upon establishing previous domicile. Indians often suffered through not having property or a family in Australia, although the definition was relaxed slightly after 1903 (de Lepervanche 1984, p. 56-57 & Yarwood 1964, p. 68). The negotiation of a passport system in 1904 did allow for temporary visits to Australia by 'merchants, students or tourist travellers' (Palfreeman 1967, p. 12), although the extent to which these provisions were utilised is questionable as, by 1937, no Indian student had attended an Australian university (Palfreeman 1967, p. 13). In 1921, a proposal to admit wives and children of Indians domiciled in Australia was finally accepted, although it is also thought that few took advantage of this change (Palfreeman 1967, p 18).

Little else changed in law before the end of the World War II, although attitudes to the Immigration Restriction Act were changing. The restrictions which were in place from 1901 effectively curtailed Indian immigration to Australia, and the numbers of Indians in Australia remained relatively stable from 1901 until after the war (de Lepervanche 1984, p. 58). Indians made up only a small percentage of the Australian population, and an even smaller minority was women. Yarwood estimated that, by using the information which was available, there were 4,681 Indians and 'Cingalese' in Australia in 1901, with 439 living in South Australia (including the Northern Territory), 99.2% of whom were men (1964, p.

163). By 1921, he suggests that there was a total of 3,150 Indians in Australia, with the percentage of men decreasing slightly, to 94.3% (Yarwood 1964, p. 163). Palfreeman, in contrast, gives a much higher figure of 7,637 Indians in Australia in 1901, the number having declined by 1921 to 3,562 (Palfreeman 1967, p. 146). Palfreeman's figure included Australian- and foreign-born who were both what were termed 'full blood' and 'mixed blood'. The statistical information, supplied by Palfreeman for the presence of Indian women in Australia, demonstrates their limited numbers. They were as follows:

Table 3

Indian Women in Australia, 1901-1961

(Natives of Indian and Pakistan)

1901	Women not listed separately	
1911	Australian born 68	Foreign born 30
1921	Australian born 98	Foreign born 38
1933	Australian born 150	Foreign born 38
1947	Australian born 140	Foreign born 62
1954	Australian born 174	Foreign born 143
1961	Australian born 228	Foreign born 367

(Palfreeman 1967, p. 146)

With just under 100 women of Indian origin in Australia in 1911, not only would their influence be limited and confined, but the potential for increasing the overall Indian community was curtailed.

There were a number of specific gains for Indians in Australia over and above other non-European groups. Voting rights were given in 1925, and in 1926 they were able to receive pensions (Lepervanche 1984, p. 61). Although there were small gains federally, individual states were able to impose selective restrictions on Asians, including Indians. De Lepervanche cites the case of Asians in South Australia not being able to 'acquire leases of crown lands in irrigation areas of South Australia after 1914' (de Lepervanche 1984, p. 62), and the South Australian Government, together with the Western Australian and Victorian Governments, prohibiting the acquisition of liquor licences (de Lepervanche 1984, p. 63).

The situation started to change mid-way through the twentieth century. According to Palfreeman, by 1954 both Australian- and foreign-born Indians present in Australia totalled 2,647; however, by 1961, a substantial increase had occurred, in line with changes to immigration policies, and the total rose to 4,065 and, as was seen with the list of Indian women in Australia, their numbers also increased at this time (Palfreeman 1967, p. 146). A number of amendments made to the Immigration Restriction Act after World War II account for this increase, including the abandonment of the dictation test in 1958 (Rivett 1975, pp 25-28). However, the changes which were brought about in 1966 and 1972 were the most influential in increasing the level of Indian immigration to Australia. The 1966 changes included easing the path of close relatives to join family members in Australia and also permitting entry of not only '"distinguished and highly qualified" non-Europeans' (Rivett 1975, p. 29) who had been permitted entry since 1958 but also 'well qualified' (Rivett 1975, p. 29) non-Europeans. The changes which took place after the Australian Labor Party gained power in December 1972 went even further, with the Minister for Immigration stating that 'race was to be disregarded when applications from prospective migrants were considered' (Rivett 1975, p. 42).

The percentage of Hindus amongst the Indians present in Australia prior to the major changes appears to be small. Although in 1988 Bilimoria and Bapat estimated the Hindu population of Australia to be about 1,000 individuals in 1911 (p, 336), as previously suggested, in a later publication Bilimoria gives the much lower figure of 414, with the number dropping to 212 in the statistics of 1933 (1996, p. 45), a figure also confirmed by Philip Hughes (1993). In 1991, there were 43,580 'ethnic' Indians who identified themselves as Hindus within the census. This group not only included those born in India and Australia, but also individuals who immigrated to Australia from other parts of the world, such as former British colonies.

Just as the estimation of the number of Indians in Australia in the early part of the century is difficult, it is also hard to gain an accurate indication of the numbers of Indians, or indeed Hindus, in South Australia, as the statistical information which was compiled varies considerably. What does come through clearly is that there was a continual, albeit small, flow from India but, also, emigration to India. For example, in 1911, 239 immigrants are listed as arriving in South Australia from India and Ceylon, while 253 people emigrated to India and Ceylon (*SASR* 1919-1920, p. 10). Although it must be assumed that these

statistics pertain, also, to Anglo-Indians and those of British descent, it demonstrates that India was not completely isolated from South Australia, as continual contact was indeed a possibility.

The information on religion does not include specific numbers of Hindus. The only information that can be used comes from the *South Australian Statistical Register* (SASR), which states that, in 1901, there were a combination of 3,190 Buddhists, Confucionists and 'Pagans' in South Australia (including the Northern Territory) and 184 'Other' than those religions specified (*SASR 1919-1920*, p. 4). In 1911, there were 25 Buddhists, 28 Confucionists, 3 'Pagans' and 170 'Others' (*SASR 1919-1920,* p. 4). As 1911 was the year in which the Commonwealth of Australia took over the administration of the Northern Territory, it could be assumed that the decrease in the overall numbers would be due to this development, as the number of Chinese present in the Northern Territory was high. The Australian Bureau of Statistics was unable to verify whether Hindus were classified under 'Pagan' or 'Others' (Personal communication 13th November 1996). Later census reports were no more specific, as they list 'Other Non-Christian religions' (excluding Hebrews). The figures supplied in the 1961 report lists 695 males and 307 females in this category and, by 1966, 678 males and 413 females (*SASR* 1966-67 Part II, p. 5).

Although religion is not specified within the early South Australian statistics, the term Hindu is given as a racial group, presumably indicating immigrants from the subcontinent, as this was the more general use of the term. The statistics for 1911 list 439 Hindus as present in South Australia at this time, plus 35 'half caste' Hindus (*SASR* 1930 -31, p. 25). In 1921, 649 Hindus are listed, 643 males and 6 females, with 25 'half caste' males and 19 'half caste' females (*SASR* 1930-31, p. 25). By the 1961 census, there were 951 males from India, Pakistan and Ceylon in South Australia, and 654 females (*SASR* 1970, part II, p. 5). These figures had increased by 1966 to 976 males and 844 females (*SASR* 1970, part II, p.5) and, by the end of 1972, there were 1199 males and 853 females (*SASR* 1975: II-7). More recent statistics do provide a clearer picture of the number of Hindus present within South Australia. The 1996 census identified a total of 2095 Hindus in South Australia, with 999 being female (ABS, 1996, table B 10)

Summary

No evidence exists to link the current Hindu community to the nineteenth century or early twentieth century immigration. Basil Dennis's 1971 report, which was discussed earlier, stated that only a few Hindus were present in South Australia, comprising of a 'few doctors', 'several lecturers' and 'about 12 research scholars' (Dennis 1971, p. 44), most of whom had arrived within the last 10 years. The majority of Indians who are resident within South Australia immigrated after 1972, a small number only arriving prior to this date. Therefore, there is currently a slow but steady increase in the size of the Hindu community in South Australia, a situation which seems unlikely to change in the near future.

A Hindu culture or framework did not survive from the earlier stages of immigration due to insufficient numbers of immigrants, who soon died or became dispersed. With the lack of Indian women for the men to marry, they often remained single. In their very isolation and powerless state, they lacked both the means of establishing a Hindu culture within South Australia and the ability to transmit it. Indeed, ultimately, there was no one to whom Hinduism could be transmitted. For post-war immigrants, a Hindu framework was absent in South Australia. The development and establishment of this culture is a post-war phenomenon, and it is reflected within the individual stories of the women who participated in the interview process, the earliest of whom arrived in Australia in the late 1960s. The lives of the longer-term residents follows the early development of a Hindu community and culture in South Australia, while the stories told by subsequent arrivals adds to this picture.

The small number of Hindu men who came to South Australia as either indentured labourers or camel handlers did not establish a Hindu culture or temple within the region. This may indicate that their numbers were too small for this to occur and/or it may also indicate the need for the presence of Hindu women within a community for this to become established and to develop. The stages of development of Hinduism is a theme that will be taken up further in the thesis and the work of Raymond Williams (1991), which was discussed in the Literature Review, will be drawn upon.

It is clear that in the early stages of South Australia, Indians were seen as a source of cheap labourer for the colony. Their small numbers initially posed little threat to the wider community, unlike the Chinese immigrants. When the desire to keep Australia white took

hold, Indians were seen as undesirable, although they often received better treatment than did other Asian groups and there was certainly frequent contact between India and South Australia. The more recent stage of immigration, of which the women within the study were part, was one where the 'elite' nature of the Hindus was emphasised. They came into the community in an educated position and provided much-needed services to the community. Many Hindu doctors went to country regions where they were able to fill a void created by an insufficient number of local graduates. They, therefore, often gained a certain amount of gratitude and respect within the local community and were a welcome addition to it.

A history of Hindu immigration to South Australia helps to illuminate the evolution of the majority Australian attitudes to Hindus. Indians and Hindus were originally brought to South Australia in order for their labour to be exploited within the newly developing colony. These young men were in a powerless position with little individual acknowledgment or power, being on the periphery of the community. Indian migration was then caught up in the attempt to protect Australia from large-scale Asian migration and, ultimately, the desire to ensure a predominantly white community. The more recent Indian and Hindu immigrants arrived in a radically changed environment from that of their earlier compatriots. As highly educated professionals, they entered within a different social class, and therefore took a different place within the general community. The changed circumstances led to a climate which was conducive to the establishment of a Hindu culture.

CHAPTER 5

HINDUISM:
The women's understanding

Introduction

The presentation of data is always a difficult task. As my intention is to develop an understanding of whether or not Hindu assumptions provide a framework for specific practices amongst the women participants in the research, the data must be presented in a manner which assists this process. It is important to highlight the women's own views, perspectives and voices. As Julia Leslie stated, 'this is not to assume that women have a radically different worldview than the one allocated to them by men or male authored texts. It is the small deviations from the norm which may be crucial...' (1991, p. 3). Their position within the family provides a unique perspective.

Promilla Kapur writes

> ...woman is the pivot of the family and the basic unit of psychological change in any society, and since she is one of the first socializing agents for the upcoming generations and the psychic factor in all cultures and civilizations, her role and status in a particular society play a very significant part in moulding the social system, including the family and family relationships. Moreover, since woman's role is very important in teaching the new human entrants to this world the first lessons of life, and making them accept values which later affect their ways of thinking, feeling, and acting, and since women are the arbiters of social change, it is very essential to know about them - their rights and privileges, their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour, and also their movement from traditional values to modern ideas. This knowledge will enable us to understand the past, present, and future of the family in India. (Kapur 1979, p. p. 108-109)

Women adapt and change, and this influences the values and practices they display to their families. Their influence and importance within the family can not be overstated. It is, therefore, important to understand the practices and assumptions the women have within both the domestic sphere, distanced, to some extent, from the expectations of the wider community, and within that wider community itself. To attempt to understand the practices undertaken by the women, their assumptions concerning Hinduism must be examined. Therefore, this has provided a starting point for the study.

When asked what Hinduism was, the women tended to refer to practices rather than discussing Hinduism in terms of beliefs. There are, of course, assumptions underlying these practices and so the practices are symbolically connected with these assumptions. I have commenced with the women's own understanding of Hinduism, followed, in subsequent chapters, by an examination of many of the different practices which are understood to be part of Hinduism, focussing on the maintenance of specific practices and their connection to Hindu assumptions. In is not my intent, however, to set up a model of Hinduism against which the assumptions and practices of the women are measured. As I have stressed, Hinduism is diverse, and it is important to highlight this diversity rather than to present Hinduism as a unified tradition.

When approaching potential interviewees, the information that I supplied, in both written an oral forms, set out my intention to interview ***Hindu*** women concerning their practices and assumptions. Those women who agreed to participate in the study did, on one level, identify themselves as Hindu. What this identification meant to the individuals did vary, however.

Being a Hindu was one way in which the women constructed their identities, but it was just one of many different aspects of the individuals. Most frequently, Hinduism was described by the women as a way of life, and, therefore, something which influences their behaviour while providing a framework for understanding and making sense out of their lives. As part of this, a specific understanding of Hinduism influenced the relationship between the individuals and the divine, and the way in which the latter could be approached.

Although Hinduism was generally described as a way of life, it was discussed in terms of being a culture and/or a religion. Therefore, although all the women identified themselves initially as Hindus, their understanding of what this identification involved differed between them, depending upon their assumptions concerning Hinduism. On one level the women associated themselves with the other women as having aspects of a shared culture and cultural values while, on another level, the way in which this understanding informed their lives, was seen to be at variance. Whereas a woman may have described herself as being a Hindu 'culturally', as far as her being 'religious' was often another matter.

John Fenton used the term 'Cultural Hindus' (1992, p. 263) and suggested that

> Hinduism as far as it pertains to them, is equivalent to the customs of the ethnic group accompanied by broadly Hindu or Indian moral principles. Hindu ritual survives for them as a second-hand celebration of ethnic heritage and as festival (fun and games). (Fenton, 1992, p. 263)

Hence, identification as a Hindu may have been within this specific 'cultural' understanding of Hinduism, although other women considered the term to encompass much more than this. While a number of women described themselves as being Hindu but not religious, others clearly understood the spiritual aspect of Hinduism as an integral aspect of 'being Hindu'. It is important for my study to ascertain the different meanings the term Hinduism had for the women, and to understand what being Hindu meant to them on a personal level.

Assumptions regarding Hinduism

It is not surprising that the women had not always thought in terms of being Hindu. They may not have reflected upon what Hinduism was to them, or the way it influenced their lives. Vijaya emphasised that

> In India, if you are Hindu, it means nothing, it is as natural as being a human being because only non-Hindus, a Muslim or a Christian, identify themselves as something different, but others don't even call themselves Hindus, just people that's all. (Interview 5)

It is clear from Vijaya's statement that being a Hindu, within India, was taken for granted rather than being a conscious identification.

The need to define and understand Hinduism was seen as being imposed upon Hindus by others. Mita emphasised that Hinduism was, in fact, a term which had been imposed upon them from outside (interview 8). When asked what Hinduism was to her, rather than defining herself as Hindu, she suggested that there was a certain way she felt about things (her assumptions), which determined her actions in life.

Meena and Kumkum, although initially defining themselves as Hindu, later contested the label (interviews 6 & 10). Meena commented that 'Even though I am not Hindu as such, traditionally and culturally I'm very Hindu' (interview 6). She had divided Hinduism into cultural and religious components. Although Meena did not keep up the ritual aspects of Hinduism, she was always searching for the divine in herself and she was able to recognise the way in which many of her actions stemmed from her Hindu culture. Hinduism had infused her life, which was concentrated on the 'here and now' rather than anything in the future. Meena measured her Hinduism against those women, both within her family, and in the wider community, who regularly worshipped at a home shrine and the temple, and undertook fasts on behalf of the family. She understood herself as being quite different and, therefore, not Hindu. Although she had abandoned the ritualistic Hinduism, she had not turned her back entirely on what she considered to be the spiritual aspect of Hinduism. She asked questions and continually searched for answers which, to her, were not to be found in rituals, nor had she discovered them within meditation or alternatives aspects of Hinduism. Although she questioned her religious affiliation with Hinduism, she understood her cultural connection with it. She had not redefined Hinduism, in Hindu terms, to accommodate her search, but appeared to have separated Hinduism into compartments. The confinement of the religious to one aspect of life is something that the women often suggested had occurred within the Christianity of the host community.

Most of the women, however, presented a more straightforward description of Hinduism as being something which was lived, a way of life (interviews 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30). As it was understood as a way of life, there was a belief that action and behaviour needed to reflect Hindu assumptions. Aparna's comments typified the women's understanding when she insisted that what you believed should be reflected in your daily life

(interview 28). For her, and for most of the women, assumptions or beliefs could not be separated from actions.

It was clear that most of the women understood Hinduism as being more than just a religion, it was a way of life. For them, to use the term 'religion' was to limit Hinduism to spiritual beliefs and worship. It was clear that most of the women distinguished Hinduism from other religious traditions which appeared to compartmentalise religion as an aspect of life, rather than permeating all aspects of life, although Hinduism was also described by a number of women as both a religion and a way of life. While making the statement that Hinduism was a way of life, however, two of the women also reflected that this should be the case with any religion, and therefore Hinduism was no different from other religions (interviews 10, 24).

Part of the women's general understanding of Hinduism, as a way of life informed by Hindu principles, appeared to encompass assumptions about the divine. The right way of living could involve a 'relationship' with, or awareness of, the divine. This relationship could vary from, for example, being a devotee of a god or goddess, which was expressed through worship at a home shrine, temple or festival, as a form of *bhakti*; a search for knowledge of the divine through meditation; the fulfilment of *dharma* through the performance of duty; or a combination of these. The activities involved in these orientations towards the divine were all part of the overarching assumptions of Hinduism. For a number of the women, the activities specifically oriented towards a relationship with, or an understanding of, the divine, appeared to constitute a more 'religious' aspect of Hinduism. Therefore, although Hinduism was understood as a way of life, within this general concept it was subdivided, to a certain extent, between religious and cultural aspects, and women were described in degrees of religiosity.

Although, on one level, Hinduism was a way of life and something that you took for granted, on another level it appeared that it needed to be fostered. When, for example, Kavita suggested that she was not a 'real' Hindu devotee, and that she was still trying to learn, it reflected her concern about the adequacy or otherwise of her own actions (interview 3). There appeared to be levels of 'being' a Hindu. Those women who were considered by others to be very religious were thought to spend considerable time in religious activities, often involving devotional practices, such as *bhakti*, but, also,

gaining self knowledge and an understanding of the divine through meditation, or fulfilling their *dharma* through appropriate actions at a community level. Therefore, although Hinduism was considered to be a way of life, there was an acknowledgment of differing degrees of 'spirituality' or 'religiosity' within Hinduism. What constituted the very 'religious' or very 'spiritual' woman was not fixed but variable, from service to the community or devotion to Sai Baba, to renunciation of marriage and a family for the opportunity for spiritual advancement. There were many different actions that could indicate a spiritual or religious Hindu to the wider community. The women who undertook these activities were referred to in terms of being ***more*** Hindu or ***strict*** Hindus, or even ***fanatical*** Hindus.

These terms, were sometimes used in a negative sense to describe women whose daily lives, it was considered, were ruled by rituals. Hema's description demonstrates the complex nature by which the term 'religious' could be understood (interview 18). She described herself as being a religious person, but in a quiet and liberal way rather than being a 'fanatic' (interview 18). Hinduism, for her, was the way in which her life was governed by religious principles, but it was also focussed towards the divine. Quite what a fanatic was, she did not specify, but it differed from her own religious practices which, to my observation, were conducted in quiet devotion and with a specific demeanour towards others. She was clearly recognised as being religious by others. The search for knowledge was foremost for her, but she also suggested that devotion and duty were important aspects of her life. As Hema considered herself to be religious, her level of involvement with the divine was strong.

Rupa, on the other hand, stated that she was not very religious but felt she was a Hindu (interview 12). Although she described herself in this way, she still paid for a special *puja* to be performed each month, in India, for her late husband, and she fasted for him weekly. It was through her dancing that she suggested that she expressed her 'spirituality', rather than through other ritual activities. Poonam described herself as being 'quietly' Hindu, but she suggested that she was becoming more Hindu the older she became (interview 13). Kumkum, the youngest woman interviewed, reflected that she would probably turn towards religion at some stage in her life, after initially contesting the label 'Hindu' (interview 10).

Although there were different levels of involvement with, and forms of orientation towards, the divine amongst the women, identification with the term 'Hindu' applied at some level for all of the women. The great variety of assumptions and practices that are found within Hinduism were understood by those women who reflected upon it to stem from its very nature, which was often described as flexible.

Some of the women articulated this understanding of Hinduism by suggesting that it allowed the flexibility to retain or discard what you wished. For example, Devi's views were most interesting. She suggested of Hinduism that,

> It gives you a way of life that you can maintain even if you're not living in India and I think one of the reasons why you'd find Indian women or Hindu women being more adaptable where ever you go...One of the reasons I think Indian women or Hindu women have advanced and they've sort of taken up so many careers and they have gone into public life is because, you know, [the Hindu] religion gives you the freedom to do things. (Interview 4)

For Devi, Hinduism could adapt to different physical environments, while retaining meaning for the individual and providing a framework for living. It not only adapted to different cultural and religious settings it provided the flexibility for women to operate in both the domestic and public spaces.

Lata emphasised the way in which Hinduism accepted everything and everyone (interview 23). She described it as being broad and, therefore, it did not clash with other traditions within non-Hindu countries. Promila stated that it was important to live the principles you were taught, but she also said she was able to mould her own ideas (interview 1). It was important, within the diaspora, that Hinduism could be adapted or moulded in a manner that would allow for its principles to be upheld, in symmetry with the environment. For both Lata and Promila, Hinduism offered flexibility for the individual to adjust to different environments. For Madhu, Hinduism was more than merely a flexible worldview or framework, it could be taken for granted due to its maturity (interview 27).

Alternatively, Indra, the Buddhist/Hindu, did describe Hinduism as a religion (interview 14). She found that there were many rules within it. This may be the impression that Hinduism gave to someone coming in from outside, rather than to someone growing up as a Hindu. She perhaps lacked the in-depth knowledge of Hinduism which allowed for

flexibility. This was, indeed, a different understanding of Hinduism from the one given by most of the women interviewed.

Rather than discussing, in detail, an ultimate goal or aim within Hinduism, this aspect tended to be assumed in their conversations, or only touched upon. For example, there were passing comments concerned the importance of searching for the divine (interview 6), and the desire to reach *moksha* (interview 25).

Asha summed up the general feeling expressed in the interviews by stating

> There's a right way of living...that's what it tells us the right way. Living out life and reaching Ultimate or what ever it is. So that is a way of life ... lead your life on the right way. That's what Hinduism tells us I think. (Interview 17)

She continues by placing it into a practical perspective when she says 'You take from it what you feel at that particular time in that situation, what is important to use' (interview 17). Once again, there is an acknowledgment of the importance of Hinduism, or Hindu principles, in providing a framework for living, but its flexibility is stressed. As Asha says, you take what you need at a particular time in your life.

Few of the women described Hinduism in terms of selecting a particular path in life, such as following *Bhakti* Yoga. This was not surprising, as the philosophical understanding of any religion is not always evident within the practices of individuals, and practices and assumptions often tend to be eclectic and individualistic, especially in non-dogmatic traditions. Although I asked about *Karma* Yoga, *Bhakti* Yoga and *Jnana* Yoga, I considered that I was often imposing these concepts on the women, who did not themselves necessarily think in these terms. Pria summarised the sentiments of many of the women by suggesting that she did not think in terms of paths but Hinduism, to her, was more all-encompassing, a combination which did not involve exclusive choices (interview 25). Another example of the lack of conscious reflection upon practices was given by Kuna (interview 7). She suggested that she did not have an understanding of Hinduism from the scriptures, but although she had a particular way of living her life, she did not know why she did what she did (interview 7). She said it could be *dharma,* but she believed that God was everywhere and was controlling her life. For her, everything she did was just part of her life.

Some of the women did, however, describe their own practices in terms of a more specific path or journey towards the divine. Vijaya, Kulpana and Sunita described themselves as followers of *Raja* Yoga, advanced meditation practices (interview 5, 9 & 30). They were all interested in the philosophies of Vivikananda, and were active within different religious groups in the community, in Vedanta societies and/or, meditation groups. Kulpana described Hinduism as something that evolves, without a start or an end (interview 9). She described herself as concentrating on her spiritual development and the decision she had made not to marry or to have children was a conscious choice towards a particular goal. In effect, she was renouncing sexual activity in order to assist spiritual development and, as Lawrence Babb has suggested, 'Renunciation is associated with the acquisition and control of power' (1975, p.208).

Ritualism was often addressed by the women when discussing their understanding of Hinduism, as well as when specifically asked about home shrines, temple worship and a variety of practices which have been discussed under the relevant sections. Rituals were generally referred to as relating to devotional worship. Sandra Robinson's (1985) summary is helpful in understanding the range of activities which could be included as part of these. She states that

> Central features of devotional worship include the reverence of images as meditational aids, the offering of hospitality rites to deities invoked in those images, the presentation of food and other offerings to the deities, the conduct of pilgrimage to temples and other sacred sites, the observance of song and dance vigils, and the performance of other diverse gestures of servitude. All such acts are to be performed in a mood of devotion (*bhakti*). (Robinson 1985, p. 195)

She goes on to state that

> Hindu devotionalism is not only essentially pre-brahmanic but also extra-brahmanic, requiring no priestly mediation between deity and devotee. However, many devotional observances occur in tandem with brahmanical ritual, separated often only by content, personae, location, sequence, or symbolic demarcations. Other devotional practices take place in formats quite apart from brahmanic contexts. Hindu women perform rites in both settings, some women's practices are adjunct to brahmanism and others are independent of brahmanic influences. (Robinson 1985, pp. 195-6)

Robinson's description provides a clear summary of those practices the women referred to as rituals.

The ritualistic aspects of Hinduism were often addressed by the women both directly and indirectly. Kavita summed up the place of ritual in her life by commenting that 'Ritual helps give a base for good things - good thoughts' (interview 3). Although Mahdu performed very few rituals, she understood the need to be aware of them and to give them respect (interview 27). In other words, although rituals were not an important aspect of her own life, she was not dismissive of their role and importance for others. Malati said that it was important not to become lost in rituals (interview 29) and, although they were important, other aspects such as *dharma*, leading a disciplined life, were important, also. For her, the repetitive nature of ritual activities could detract from a deeper involvement in living Hindu principles. Sunita, who had a very detailed knowledge of Hinduism, stressed that rituals were not really *bhakti*. She went on to suggest that *bhakti* could not really be eliminated from other paths, such as *Raja* Yoga, as it formed part of them. She suggested that all paths needed to be undertaken through love and devotion. Her description differentiated between *Bhakti* Yoga, which involved ritual activities, and *bhakti* as a means of approaching different paths.

Whether or not they performed rituals was not an important issue for most of the women. Devi described the ease of changing from not performing rituals at home to doing so when visiting her mother in India - it was not a difficulty for her (interview 4). It was something which could be undertaken or not, without any guilt or contradiction. As the women considered that you could pick and choose the activities which were undertaken changing from one practice to another was often not an issue.
That stated, the degree to which home shrines were maintained, as can be found in the chapter 8, would indicate that most women opted to perform rites at home shrines. As was clear from Sunita, ritual practices are part of the discipline which can be understood to be an important stage in spiritual development (interview 30). Three of the women who seemed to be advanced in their own spiritual development placed less emphasis on rituals than did other women, although they indicated the importance of them generally (interview 5, 9, 30). Other women who were also thought of as deeply religious, however, maintained ritual activities to a much greater degree (interview 1, 15, 26, 28). Both groups contained a variety of age groups and women from the diaspora as well as from India and there was no discernible pattern to link a particular group with any practice. It appears that personal choice is important in regards to specific practices.

For some women, worship was an important aspect of their lives. Yashoda, a Sai Baba adherent, emphasised the importance of worship and complete reliance on god (interview 15). For her, devotion was all that was needed, and she had placed her life firmly in the hands of god. This was certainly reflected in her life: she described how she had never made an independent decision in her life, and that god had made all decisions for her. She had been extremely helpful to me with my research, because she believed that god had sent me to her. Asha was also concerned with devotion but, for her, it was the appropriate behaviour for that particular time in her life (interview 17). Worship was also important for Savita (interview 22) and Chanda, although the latter did not think in terms of this being a conscious choice (interview 26). Worship, however, did not appear to be an important aspect in the lives of some of the other women such as Nishthha (interview 24).

Karma Yoga was mentioned by a number of women. Indra and Anjali said actions were important because everything you do will come back at you (interviews 14, 17). Anita also understood the importance of actions (interview 20). She had been influenced by the Bhagavad Gita and the teachings found within it on disinterested action. She believed that her actions would influence her next birth. In acknowledging her own concerns, she emphasised that nothing was incorrect, she suggested that you chose what is right for you. Lata made very similar comments concerning the Gita and disinterested action and the importance of *Karma* Yoga (interview 23).

Meena said that she did not believe in the concepts of *karma*, *dharma* and *samsara* (interview 6). Although she was searching for the divine within, she was concerned about the here and now and not the future. It did appear that future lives were not something that were generally considered, even if the basic philosophy of *samsara* was part of a worldview. Promila, for example, although discussing the cycle of life, did make the comment at one stage that you only live once (interview 1). Generally, the women were concerned about this life, and the way in which *karma* was understood to operate within their current lives as well as affecting future lives.

Service was important for Aparna, a Sai Baba adherent (interview 28). She suggested that, it was important that what you claimed to be was reflected in your daily life. She

believed that what people chose was not important as long as their lives reflected their worldview, and she discussed the many different paths to the divine.

Summary

Although the degree to which the women understood themselves as being religious did vary, none of the women denied a cultural connection with Hinduism. Hinduism could be a religion, a way of life, or both. Mostly, it was understood to be a way of life, as it was important for assumptions to be reflected in actions. Lawrence Babb reported that in Chhattisgarh, where he undertook field work, '...religion is a thing done, not a thing "believed," and as a result any effort to uncover the assumptions and principles underlying this religious system must seek them in ritual activity' (1975, p. 31). As the women considered Hinduism to be a way of life, the examination of practices including rituals is an important aspect of understanding the underlying framework for the Hindu women in South Australia.

For a number of the women, a relationship with the divine was part of being a Hindu, although not for all. This theme will be taken up more fully when devotional practices are examined. There was an acknowledgment of degrees of being Hindu or religious, amongst the women.

For others, Hinduism was reflected through cultural practices. Even where the women did not undertake practices focussed upon a relationship with, or an understanding of, the divine, there was an understanding of maintaining Hindu culture and cultural practices. Therefore, there was an acknowledgment of the way in which Hinduism was incorporated into other aspects of life that were not focussed upon the divine. The assumptions and practices which were not directed towards the divine could be as much a part of Hinduism as those which were.

For those who were focussed upon the divine, there was seldom a conscious choice made to follow a specific path within Hinduism, except for those following *Raja* Yoga. Women were eclectic in choosing what aspects of Hinduism to incorporate into their practices. At times, *Karma* Yoga, *Bhakti* Yoga and *Jnana* Yoga were said to be important and to influence the practices of the women. Rarely, if ever, were these paths

thought to be exclusive. Even when specific practices were not followed, their general importance was not denied. The focus was most often on this life rather than the next.

The women had constructed their own understanding of Hinduism and developed their worldviews in relationship to their own desires and needs at a particular time. It was a way of living out what they thought was important at different stages of life, in the circumstances in which they found themselves. Hinduism provided a symbolic system and framework, which gave meaning on an individual level. It was evident that, although there were different assumptions concerning Hinduism, it was seen as being flexible. Hindus were free to choose what they wanted to practice. Hinduism was personal and fluid. It was continually evolving and the women were active agents in this process. It was able to change and adapt to individual circumstance rather than providing a rigid system which was difficult to work within. However, many of the women understood Hinduism to provide a basis for the practices in life. It was not a set of beliefs to be followed but a way of understanding the world and how to behave in it.

CHAPTER 6

ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS: Women as wives, mothers, singles, daughters and daughters-in-law

Introduction

In this chapter an examination will be made of the assumptions and practices relating to the roles the women undertake in relation to other family members. This has been undertaken in an attempt to ascertain whether or not the ways women understand their roles, and those of others, are constructed in relationship with a Hindu worldview. If Hinduism is a way of living, being a woman - for example, as a wife, mother, sister, or daughter - may well be part of this.

In this section, I will look at the relationship between the women and the constructs or possible alternatives, changes and adaptations, within a Hindu worldview. This will be undertaken in order to examine a relationship between ideas about the roles women play within the family, and the role the women choose to undertake. An assessment will be made as to whether a Hindu framework underpins the actions of the women in the context of the family. In other words, is a Hindu understanding of the world reflected in the assumptions and practices of the women in their roles within the family? Following on from this, it is also important to identify any connection between the roles of women in the family and the practicalities of living within the diaspora. These questions will be dealt with when assessing the attitudes of the women interviewed as to their roles as wives, mothers and daughters, and also their views on marriage, children and divorce.

The different constructs that have been outlined, in Chapter 3, in order to understand the behaviour of Hindu women, may provide an insight into the practices of the women in

the diaspora, or indeed the possibilities which are open to them, within a Hindu framework. These possibilities relate to more than women's attitudes to their roles, however, and may be useful for an overall understanding of the women's practices under examination in subsequent chapters.

Women as wives

There was a strong awareness, amongst the women interviewed, of the ideal Hindu woman. In reality, although they understood the model and placed their own behaviour in relation to it, they generally saw themselves as substantially differing from it. They did not consider that their husbands should be treated as gods. In fact, duty as a mother was generally considered to be more important than the duty of a wife. The general views expressed were in line with the changes that had occurred for the educated middle class women in India. Marriage was seen as a partnership and, although duties within that partnership may vary, reciprocity and equal commitment to each other and the children were important. Over half the women interviewed discussed marriage in terms of a partnership with shared responsibilities (interviews 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 14, 16, 18, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30). Only Shamila expressed an understanding of her role as assisting her husband, especially in his religious duties (interview 11).

She was the only woman who had not embarked upon any tertiary studies and had not undertaken work outside the home, having married straight from school. Although originally from Sri Lanka, she did not appear to have the same exposure to education or external influences as the other women. At the time of the interview her mother-in-law was staying with her family and her interview was 'supervised' by other family members and a friend, including, initially, her brother-in-law, in the absence of her husband. Throughout the interview process Shamila tended to provide answers which were consistent with what could be expected from a women upholding many of the duties of the *pativrata*. She was the only woman who appeared to be strict in upholding purity rules. For her these included refraining from visiting the temple and conducting *puja* while menstruating, and after contact with death and birth, even when it pertained to family members interstate or overseas. When asked if she had duties towards her parents, she suggested that she had duties towards her mother-in-law. As you will note, in the subsequent chapters, her voice was often the one that differed from the other

women. Whether or not her answers were influenced by the 'audience', it is difficult to tell, but as they drifted away her answers remained consistent and my observations of her at other times were also consistent with her discussion during the interview. The circumstances of the interview certainly placed an added stress on me and therefore, it would be surprising if Shamila had not felt stressed or intimidated. The fact that the interview was 'supervised' would, however, support the conclusion that there were certain expectations of her which were reflected in the answers she gave.

When the women were asked about a wife's duty towards her husband, reactions were interesting. Some women assumed that I was trying to ascertain a relationship between the texts and the way in which women treated their husbands. Two women specifically cited the model for women that is found within the texts, and dismissed it (interviews 26 and 30), while a further two made similar statements. Kuna did not believe in standing at the feet of her husband while Hema said that she did not believe her husband was a god or should be treated as one (interviews 7, 18). On the other hand, Kavita thought it would be good for a husband to be a god but regretted that it is not the case for her (interview 3). She may have been expressing a longing for what did not exist in her disappointing and difficult married life, as she had idealised the marital state.

Others answered the question concerning the duties of a wife by describing what they thought were the duties of a mother. Some of the women understood the questions in much more general terms, as concerning the family as a whole. It appeared that duty was not always clearly defined or compartmentalised. The concept of women behaving in a specific manner within the household came through, rather than having defined roles or duties that were specific. That said, the idea that a mother had extremely important duties towards her children, both daughters as well as sons, especially during their formative years, came across very strongly.

A number of the women when asked about the duties of a wife prioritised their duties towards family members. Vijaya, who was from a matrilineal community, and Asha, both stated that a woman's duty towards her children was greater than towards her husband (interviews 5, 17). When answering the question in regard to the duty of a mother a further six women stated that they were greater than the duties towards a husband (interviews 4, 6, 8, 12, 15, 16). In total, eight of the women placed duties

towards children higher than duties towards husbands, even when not specifically asked to prioritise them. A specific question on the topic was not asked, however these women automatically made the point that their duties were greater towards their children, indicating the importance of the issue for them. There was no pattern for this group as they were a variety of ages, had been in Australia for differing lengths of time, and one was from Fiji while the others were from different parts of India, with one having been educated as a single woman in the west. They (and their husbands) were all well educated.

Savita, on the other hand, placed her husband first, as she suggested that the children would eventually leave home, while the husband will stay (interview 22). She also commented that, if she did something that her husband expressed disapproval of, she would not repeat the act.

A number of specific duties for wives were mentioned. They were: supporting (interviews 1,5); being loyal (interview 19); trusting (interview 12); sharing (interview 2); caring (interviews 2,15); respecting (interview 3); being a care-giver (interview 6); giving food nicely (interview 3); looking after the house (interviews 7, 21, 22); ensuring a happy home (interview 29); making social links (interview 27); and keeping the family running smoothly (interviews 12, 17, 20, 26).

Pria, who was brought up in Australia, mentioned procreation as being an important duty and further emphasised the importance of having children (interview 25). A duty to have a responsible sexual relationship was also mentioned, with the insistence that this was a mutual responsibility (interview 8). Love was mentioned by two of the women, Sita and Yashoda (interviews 2, 15). Sita immigrated to Australia from Malaysia as her unmarried status had been an embarrassment to her family, and her subsequent marriage was of her own choosing. On the other hand, Yashoda's marriage was arranged by her parents. It is difficult to say whether love was not articulated as one of the duties of a wife by the other women due to its lack of importance, or whether it was something which was taken for granted. As it was only mentioned once as a duty of a mother (interview 26), it may be considered natural, or taken for granted, rather than being a duty. Only Kuna did not think that there were any specific duties of a wife (interview 7).

The sacred models of the wifely ideal, such as Sita, were never discussed. Although this is not surprising, it does not necessarily mean they had not been internalised. However, apart from Shamila (interview 11) they did not appear to form an overt framework for conduct. Rather than basing their behaviour upon a sacred model, many of the women seemed to have thought through their own position as to their duties within the family. This may be due to living in the diaspora where negativity surrounds perceived traditional women. A number of women compared their view of the treatment of their husband and children with that of their parents and other more 'traditional' members of the community. Education and contact with differing ideas may indeed have caused a reflection. The point was made by three of the women that attitudes towards the duty of wives had changed over the generations. Devi commented that her mother and mother-in-law viewed their duties in a different way from her (interview 4). Nishthha also made a distinction between her own attitude and that of her mother, the latter viewing her husband as a god (interview 24). Aparna's own attitude has changed, but she suggested that it is too late to expect her husband to follow. She has concentrated on bringing up her children differently, much to her own mother's concern (interview 28). The women who suggested a change had occurred for them attributed their different attitudes to a number of influences: wide contact with others, westernisation, modernisation, living in Australia, being working wives or the lack of domestic servants. These were indeed, important observations as they point to developments which have occurred in both India, and other diaspora communities, as well as in the Australian context.

The women interviewed had adopted behaviour that they felt was appropriate for their own families for that specific stage in their lives. This was not static, but changed as the family changed. An acknowledgment that the stages of life entailed different things came through on a number of occasions. As previously mentioned, the youngest woman interviewed thought that she would probably become more religious when she was older (interview 10), while another thought that she was becoming more religious as she aged (interview 23). Some important duties were, however, discernible, especially when attitudes to divorce were discussed.

Women were understood to be more flexible and to have a duty to make a marriage work, especially if there were children. Although marriage was understood to constitute

a partnership when the marriage was in trouble more emphasis was placed on the role of women as appeasers. Women were thought to have superior strength, adaptability and flexibility (interviews 3, 5, 6, 19) and it was considered to be their duty to bend within a marriage. These characteristics also meant that women were able to keep harmony within the family. However, the women did not think that a marriage should be kept together under continued domestic violence.

The ability of women to create and sustain a harmonious environment was an area where perhaps a link may be covertly drawn between the brahmanic model and the practices and attitudes of the women. Where individual attitudes were described as being opposed to the ideal model, there was an understanding that 'other' women valued it, even though they did not. Alternatively, it may be women's *sakti* – their power – unassociated with male control that enabled then to adapt and bend. Does the Goddess provide a more salient model for the women?

It would appear that a brahmanic model could be either disregarded, provide a partial covert framework for behaviour, or be seen to relate to the behaviour of others. It did appear, however, to provide a reference point for the women. Alternatively, other more popular notions or models may provide a reference for women within marriage, as the power of women came through strongly. It was this power which enabled women to take a sustaining and negotiating role within a marriage. Arguably, the women may, in fact, understand themselves in relationship to female power, as evident within the Goddess. As Lindsey Harlan and Paul Courtright suggest, 'The veneration of goddesses, as virgins, mothers, and warriors, and its attendant valuation of the female suggests certain important assumptions about the character and abilities of women in society' (1995, p. 9). It is the *sakti* of the Goddess, which is available to women, and provides them with a superior strength within the marital relationship? Although this understanding is incorporated into the brahmanic model for women, which suggests that this power needs to be rendered positive by being controlled, it can also be understood to be the basis for an alternative analysis, which is based upon popular assumptions concerning the role of women and the power of the Goddess.

Divorced women

Within the model of the ideal woman, no space is provided for a divorced woman. Ralph Nicholas contends that '...the nature of Hindu marriage and the assumptions on which it is based would appear to make divorce impossible if not altogether unthinkable' (1995, p. 141), and it is seen as '...symptomatic of the poor moral condition of a country where it is commonly practiced' (Nicholas 1995, p. 142). Nicholas does go on to suggest, however, the perceived 'impossibility' of divorce may be an ideal rather than a reality.

As can be seen from the description of women in Chapter 3, women's powers are described within the brahmanic framework as being rendered positive when associated with, or controlled by, a male relative - father before marriage, then her husband and, after her husband's death, her son. Women, especially from urban or the middle classes, who are either divorcees or widows are severely restricted in their participation in religious events such as marriage ceremonies, due to their inauspiciousness. Taking into account the negative connotations that are associated with divorced women, it is, therefore, interesting to examine the attitudes of the women interviewed towards divorce.

The idea of the 'traditional other' was present within the consciousness of a small number of the women when they discussed attitudes of the 'community' or 'other' women, towards divorce. These women conceived the broader Indian community in 'traditional' and negative terms. They seemed to have aligned themselves with a perceived western/modern view of the 'traditional' community. Those who understood the attitudes of others in negative terms saw themselves as being different from the general Hindu community in terms of attitudes. Pria, who had been brought up in Australia, suggested that the impact of divorce was too much to be contemplated (interview 25), while Promila suggested that the implications of divorce were devastating (interview 1). Both Pria and Promila appeared to be suggesting that the consequences for women would be devastating and that the idea of divorce could not be contemplated if the women wanted to remain part of the Hindu community in Adelaide. Both women were married to non-Indians and may have had experiences that have made them conscious of their decisions to marry outside the community. I gained the strong impression that these women believed that their husbands were treated

differently from Indian husbands and consequently they were also. Pria and Promila tended to speak in terms of the 'traditional other'. They spoke of others in the community who condemned behaviour which did not fit with their own expectations. Both women suggested that the behaviour of some of the 'other women' in the community was hypocritical. It is interesting to note that Promila continually mentioned how modern she was in comparison to many of the other Indian women, however, she was meticulous in keeping many practices which other women had relaxed attitudes towards. One example was the large sign at her door which required that all who entered remove their shoes. She explained that she often had trouble with workmen who objected to the practice. She was from Malaysia and had studied as a single woman, in the west. She provided a demonstration of the complexity of the women and their positions within the diaspora. While aligning herself with western/modern attitudes she kept practices which other Indian women described as 'traditional'. Perhaps it was because she had challenged expectations of her family (her father was initially against her marriage) and the community that other practice took on a heightened importance.

Pria and Promila's reactions, together with Kavita's comment that there was 'shame' attached to divorce (interview 3), were the strongest from the women. It is interesting to note that, some time after the interviews, two of these women initiated divorce proceeding against their husbands. Their opinions may have reflected a fear of the community's reactions and have represented an internal struggle rather than a belief in the community's attitude to divorce. A notion of difference from others who the women often described as traditional, however, was expressed by a minority of those who understood themselves as having challenged the model in some way.

In contrast to the negative understanding of the wider community's attitude to divorce, the majority of women emphasised their perception of the community as being accepting of divorce. The more general belief that the community did not like divorce but was accepting of it seemed to be substantiated on a practical level.

Poonam, the one divorcee who was interviewed, did not feel that she had been ostracised, but on the other hand avoided contact with the Indian community in Adelaide and had not attended any cultural functions or the temple, but did so with

relations when visiting Melbourne (interview 13). I wondered if this was, in part, to avoid any potential problems that her marital status may have caused. She was not generally isolated from her culture as she kept a home shrine and was very proud of her Hindu heritage, teaching various aspects of it to her daughter. Brought up in Fiji, she completed her education in Australia and undertook an arranged marriage. She was extremely proud of her grandfather's Brahman heritage and had been on a pilgrimage to India. She explained to me, at length, that she socialised with her peers from work, with whom she felt that she had much in common, although she enjoyed socialising with family and other Indian friends interstate. She felt that she did not need to seek out the community in Adelaide after coming to the city to work.

The most significant occurrence when considering the diaspora community's attitude to divorce was found in one specific example. Kavita separated from her husband sometime after being interviewed (interview 3). I had remained in regular contact with her, and it was interesting to observe the way in which, after her separation, she was treated by the wider diaspora community. It appeared that many within the community, other than those related to her husband, not only supported her after her decision to separate, but a number actively encouraged it. Several people within the community perceived Kavita's arranged marriage as being 'unfair' and sympathised with her situation. Since leaving her husband, she has been included in a number of informal social and religious activities arranged by women, and attempts have been made to arrange a more suitable marriage (Journal 112). Far from being ostracised, Kavita felt that she has been included by a number of the women who had considered her husband as an obstacle to a deeper relationship with her.

It has been clear, in listening to women discuss Kavita's arranged marriage and her subsequent separation, that the community does not condemn women who end what is considered to be an unfair marriage, even when children are involved. Before her own separation, Kavita had suggested that there was shame in divorce and it was bad for the children involved (interview 3). It would appear that she had considered her actions for some time before taking the final step to end her marriage, although her years of deep unhappiness were known to many. For both Kavita and Poonam, leaving their husbands was certainly not an action that was taken without considerable effort and anxiety. It

occurred only as a last resort when they considered that no reasonable solution to their problems could be found.

Apart from these two specific instances, much can be learnt from the statements that the women made concerning divorce. Six stated that divorce was a very bad thing (interviews 7, 11, 15, 19, 20, 25). It was also considered hard to accept (interview 24), frowned upon traditionally (interviews 5, 6), and bad for children (interviews 3, 4, 1,7 27, 29, 30). Several women commented that women must try very hard before divorcing (interviews 13, 14, 17, 25). It appeared that it was, once again, a woman's responsibility to keep a marriage together.

Alternatively, a further six women thought divorce was not such a major concern (interviews 4, 8, 9, 12, 17, 26). These women represented a cross section of the women interviewed as far as age, education and residence in Australia were concerned although two had studied in the west as single women and three were from other diaspora countries. Other women discussed it in different terms, commenting that it was better than conflict (interview 6), a step that should be taken only if the situation were very bad (interviews 19, 23, 28), or that women should not accept violence in a relationship (interview 30). While Devi thought that divorced women were not ostracised, Sita believed that widows and divorcees were covertly ostracised (interviews 4, 2). Both Sita and Poonam mentioned that they had actively supported divorced friends (interviews 2,13). Only one woman stated that she was neither for nor against divorce (interview 22).

The 'traditional other' has become a point of a reference for at least two of the women, Pria and Promila both of whom were married to non-Indians (interview 25, 1). They appeared to have defined themselves in western terms in opposition to other members of the Hindu community. They tended to use the 'other women' in the community as a point of reference in a similar way to that in which the texts were used as points of reference for some of the women when discussing the duties of a wife. It could be suggested that the power of the Goddess is perhaps evident, once again, in the superior strength of women and their power to keep a relationship together. A final point of reference that was used was the variation that had occurred from the behaviour and

assumptions of the older women within the family, indicating the influence of modernity and education on attitudes.

Women as mothers

The duties of a mother were generally understood to be most important for the women and, as previously stated, eight of the women suggested, without being asked, that duties towards their children were greater than towards their husbands. Motherhood was a role they took seriously, with two of the women reflecting they did not think they had been good mothers (interviews 3, 23). Their comments were not flippant, but appeared to be genuine reflections, one on hindsight, while the other expressed problems she felt she was having with her daughter at that time.

Two of the women emphasised the equal responsibilities both parents have concerning children (interviews 8, 28), while the complementary nature of parenting was mentioned by another (interview 21). Many of the statements concerning the duties of a mother concerned the physical welfare of the children such as feeding (interviews 5, 8, 30), looking after (interviews 5, 8,11, 17, 26, 28, 30), and protecting and providing security (interviews 3, 12, 24). Others were more specifically concerned with the overall development of the children such as nurturing (interviews 2, 8, 25), teaching (interviews 2, 21, 22, 24, 25, 30), instilling values (interviews 1, 8, 15, 17, 19, 21, 24, 28, 30), guiding (interview 5), moulding character (interview 15), guiding to the right path (interviews 15, 26), helping them practice a spiritual path (interview 2), helping them to achieve (interview 17), and importantly for the diaspora, helping the children negotiate between two cultures (interview 19).

Being there for the children was mentioned as being important (interview 22), spending time with them (interview 21), loving (interview 26), making them happy (interview 29), and giving your best to them (interview 14). Practicing values and setting a positive example was mentioned as an important aspect by three of the women interviewed (interviews 8, 14, 26), but it was also implied by others, especially Sunita (interview 30), whose actions often involved setting an example, not only for her own children, but for younger members of the Indian community.

The importance that was generally expressed about the duties of a mother was striking. Yashoda stated that the mother's role was the most important and that mother was the first god (interview 15). Vijaya emphasised the extra strength of women and the primary importance of the role of mother (interview 5).

Motherhood had been understood to be too great a commitment and responsibility for Promila, who did not feel that she would be able to devote the effort which was needed and, therefore, decided against having children (interview 1). Sita felt that her relatively late age at marriage would have been negative for raising children and, therefore, she devoted much of her time to teaching the children of others rather than having her own (interview 2). In both circumstances it appears that providing children, specifically a son for their husband, was not an important element in their decision, rather their responsibilities as mothers appeared to be the crucial factor.

It did appear that motherhood was not a role that was taken for granted, but one of great responsibility. Equal emphasis was often placed on daughters as well as sons by the women, who often expressed pride in their daughter's achievements (interview 8, 13, 27, 29, 30).

Other than Yashoda's comments concerning the connection with mother being the first god who deserved obedience and respect above all others, no religious connection was made for the mother role. This is not surprising. However, combining the understanding of the mother's role with ideas concerning the role of a wife and the emphasis which was placed on mothering by a number of the women, it would appear that the *pativrata* ideal was not dominant.

Women as daughters

When asked about the duties of a daughter, answers were frequently vague, the topic often being brushed over. It was difficult to gain any firm concept of what the women felt on this topic. The question was answered in a variety of different ways. It was understood to refer to their own daughter's duties towards their parents, or their own duties towards their parents. Two women answered that their duties were towards their parents-in-law rather than their own parents (interview 6, 11). There was no clearly defined role which daughters were understood to have that came across. For a few

respondents, the model of the daughter entering the family of her husband was salient. Others were aware that distance had placed severe restrictions on the physical assistance that could be given to parents. A number of the women had understood their responsibilities towards their parents differently from the brahmanic model, devoting as much time, if not more, to their own parents as to their parents-in-law.

For the group of women within the study, family relationships were often shifting due to the peripatetic nature of the group. As set out in Chapter 1, the women had often been mobile, living away from home, and living in areas different from their families in India then subsequently moving to Australia. Even though parents and in-laws may have visited at various times, or even stayed for significant periods, an extended family structure did not exist for the women. Therefore, it is not surprising that the concept of a duty towards non-nuclear family members was vague or that it would differ from the brahmanic model.

At times, statements were made which could only reflect desire to be able to have a greater role and not the reality of the situation. Comments such as Vijaya's, indicating that the duty of a daughter was to look after her parents in their old age, followed by wistful comments that she was in Australia and they were in India, emphasised the reality of the situation (interview 5). Surika lamented the fact that she was unable to do much for her parents physically, but that she was constantly by their side in her mind (interview 16).

There were comments that placed duty into a specific time frame. That is a specific time when duty towards family members was important. For Kulpana, it was when she was living with her parents that she felt she had a specific duty to do what was expected of her. Since she now lives by herself and has never married, she considered that her duty was to herself and her own search for self-realisation (interview 9). Yashoda suggested that daughters only had duties towards their parents until they were married, and then their duties were towards their husband and children (interview 15).

Yashoda was not the only woman to discuss the duties of a daughter in terms of the notion of a woman joining her husband's family, and having duties towards her parents-in-law, instead of to their own parents (interview 15). She went on to state that the duty

of a son was more important than that of a daughter. Shamila, when asked about the duties of a daughter, answered initially that it was to her mother-in-law that she had responsibilities, but later added that she had responsibilities to her parents also (interview 11). Meena also answered in terms of her parents-in-law rather than her parents, but confined her discussion to her time in Fiji (interview 6). Savita acknowledged that although, traditionally, responsibility was directed toward the parents-in-law, in reality today, it is also towards your own parents (interview 22). She felt that circumstances and expectations had changed and the idea that a daughter ended her duties towards her parents with her marriage did not reflect the contemporary situation.

A number of the other women understood sons and daughters as having joint responsibilities towards their parents (interviews 1, 2, 12, 24, 29, 30). It was only in regards to duties surrounding death that Sita understood the roles of sons and daughters to differ (interview 2). It did appear that, in practice, this was generally accepted. Madhu indicated that duties were shared when she suggested that the total responsibility for parents did not rest with a daughter (interview 27).

A clear indication of the manner in which women have taken on responsibilities towards their own mothers is seen both within the community and amongst the women interviewed. A number of women had their own mothers living with their family. Nishthha, for example, had a brother living in Australia, but she and her husband had her mother living with them (interview 24). Nishthha indicated that, although she and her husband were both content with this situation, her mother felt that she was imposing on them, and that she had gone against the cultural norms. It was clear that a close bond existed between mother and daughter. This was also evident in a number of analogous situations even outside the research group.

A number of women indicated that there were few duties or responsibilities for daughters (interviews 8, 10, 21). Alternatively, Rupa understood daughters, as well as sons, to have very important responsibilities towards their parents, and she placed these firmly within a religious context by discussing duty towards parents in terms of the concepts of *dharma* and *karma* (interview 12).

Although a number of women discussed specific duties, no clearly defined role of a married daughter towards her parents was apparent. Duties, or behaviour, towards parents did appear to take on a less formally defined structure. A number of comments were made that indicated an understanding that daughters had an obligation to the physical support of their parents, while other statements tended to be in non-material terms such as giving respect, giving moral support, understanding, and affection (interviews 5,12, 16,17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 26, 28), while being successful and doing one's best were also mentioned (interviews 1, 25).

Poonam broadened the notion of duty (interview 13). She did not think in terms of duties towards individuals in specific relationships, but believed that everyone had a duty towards all human beings.

There was some indication that the concept of a woman joining her husband's family after marriage, and having duties towards them rather than towards her own parents, is relevant. On a practical level, however, women are taking more responsibility for their mothers, although this could be seen to be going against the 'cultural norm'. The model of a woman joining her husband's family did not seem to be challenged in the same manner that the duties of a wife had been.

Unmarried women

As with the comments concerning the duties of a daughter, when asked about duties of a single woman, no clearly define role emerged. The time before marriage was also understood in vague terms. A 'single woman' was generally taken, by the women, to mean a young woman prior to marriage, as there still appeared to be an implicit assumption that women marry. Although, as interviews were conducted with a divorcee and a widow, as well as with a woman who had chosen to remain single, responses did vary. One woman expressed the reality of life by suggesting that many women ultimately became single again (interview 30), although few women never married.

When the duties of a single woman were discussed, the answers tended to be in terms of obligations to her family, to the community and to herself. No clear picture of duties came through. What was evident was the belief that single women in India and other diaspora communities were in an unenviable position, but they were able to escape

some of the problems in Australia. Sita had, in fact, migrated to Australia, where she subsequently married, in order to avoid the embarrassment she had caused her family due to her single status (interview 2). Yashoda suggested that it was very difficult for single women, as no woman could be independent and so had to depend upon her parents or brother (interview 15). Hema's comments were similar, as she stated that single women were considered to be a burden on their family; however, she added that, in Australia, they could be independent (interview 18). There was a general understanding that single women historically had a difficult life, but with the increase in career possibilities, and the social security Australia provided, the situation was changing, as were attitudes towards single women.

It did appear that the women who had daughters who had grown up in Australia were more relaxed over their daughter's unmarried status, or indeed, were forced by their children to be so. On the other hand, from her own description, Yashoda, who migrated at a late stage, after her daughter's marriage in India, had gone to great lengths in attempting to arrange a marriage for her daughter (interview 15). It had been difficult due to a skin condition and ultimately her daughter had decided upon her own partner. It would appear that in India and other diaspora countries a greater pressure exists to have daughters suitably married, while in Australia the comment was often made that the girls will do what they want in regards to getting married. The same sense of urgency did not appear to exist within the South Australian community.

There were very few older Hindu women in South Australia who had never married. This is probably due to the way immigration to Australia is restricted and works against uniting sisters with siblings. I was involved in a successful appeal in 1998 against the rejection of a residence visa for an unmarried sister of an Indian Australian. It was clear from the evidence given at the hearing, and my own discussions with the brother that, rather than considering his sister a burden or unpleasant obligation, he credited his sister's selfless sacrifices and support to his own success. She had deliberately chosen to give up her own marriage prospects in order to help her younger siblings after the early death of their parents. She believed this was only possible if she did not marry. Her brother was motivated not only by duty, but by a genuine desire to show his appreciation towards his sister. Therefore, although there is a general impression that a single woman is a burden on the family, in reality this is not always the case. It was,

however, the eldest brother who had taken responsibility for his sister, rather than her sisters or indeed her younger brother.

Aparna had her sister-in-law living with her for some time, although she was not in Australia permanently. When I asked why her sister had never married, no definite answer had been forthcoming (interview 28). As her sister-in-law had been in a well-qualified, high status profession, I queried if this could have contributed to her unmarried status. The answer was no. The family had at times attempted to match her, but it had never come to fruition.

These two cases are interesting, in as much as the first woman was considered to have been a major asset to the family, and the second had the financial security which many of the women were suggesting was essential to the changing prospects and attitudes towards single women. The third case, involving Kulpana, an interviewee who had chosen a spiritual path (interview 9), demonstrates that, on one level, the position of single women within society does not match the negative understanding of them. It was also evident, however, that in the two cases of the older single women, their brothers has taken responsibility for them in later life, thus conforming to Hindu cultural expectations.

Women before marriage

When speaking generally of the duties or responsibilities which single women had, including during the period prior to marriage, a considerable number of the women who answered the question directly indicated that single women were either free from responsibilities or indeed had few duties (interviews 3, 4, 8, 11, 14, 23, 24). A further four women mentioned that single women had responsibilities towards themselves (interviews 22, 25, 27, 30). Sunita felt that single women benefited by working (charitably) in the community. She suggested that 'you have to make your life rich, and one of the things is to be active and doing service, being unselfish' (interview 30). Service to self, community and family were not always mutually inclusive or exclusive. Service to family was mentioned specifically by six of the women (interviews 12, 17, 20, 21, 23, 26) as was service to the community (interviews 5, 12, 13, 16, 23, 26).

The time before marriage was one that had no clear aims or duties, although several duties were mentioned by the women after some thought or clarification of the question. I was given the impression that the women felt this was quite an odd question, perhaps indicating that there was no clear understanding of this period. A few of the women stated that it was a time of learning (interviews 26, 28, 29) and, indeed, it does appear that most of the women had married once studies were completed, and it seemed to me that, for most of the women, marriage was the natural culmination of the end of their studies. This is certainly in line with the studies on the education of Indian women, as education appears to be a means of increasing the marriageability of women. This does not mean they did not use their qualification: most did, but not all. As Rupa explained, she was not permitted to work after her marriage, in spite of her university qualifications; however, she was allowed to continue with post-graduate studies (interview 12).

The women interviewed were highly educated, adding to the theory that education has become a necessary aspect of preparation for marriage for those who were most likely to participate in, and qualify for, immigration to Australia, along with their husbands. It would confirm that those who have, until recent times, qualified for immigration to Australia came from a specific section of the Indian community, both in India and from other diaspora communities. Twenty six women out of the thirty interviewed had completed tertiary qualifications, two others had commenced, but failed to complete them, while one other, the youngest interviewed, had recently commenced university. Only one of the women had not commenced tertiary qualifications, nor had she worked. Of the two women who had failed to complete their tertiary studies, Kavita had been married while studying for a Bachelor of Arts degree, and had not continued her studies in Australia because her first year university qualification had been assessed at being equivalent to a year eleven level in Australia. She has since taken various TAFE (Technical and Further Education) courses (interview 3). Pria also failed to complete her tertiary education, which she commenced in Australia, and undertook an alternative career path, although she has recommenced them recently (interview 25).

Although motivation for education may have been due to increasing the marriageability of the women, and to keeping them occupied until they were old enough to marry, this explanation does not go far enough in explaining the high level of education of the

women involved. Four of the women studied and/or worked outside their own country. Three were from diaspora communities while one, who did post-graduate studies in Australia, came from India. Of the four women, three arranged their own marriages while one chose to remain unmarried (interviews 2, 6, 8, 9). As these women were outside the protective environment of their natal countries, it is more than likely that education and/or employment, in and of themselves, were primary motivations for eduction, rather than it being a means of negotiating a good marriage or to keep them 'safe' until marriages could be arranged.

Although most of the women may not have been primarily prepared for participation in the work force, or indeed expected to do so after marriage, the level of education of the women has allowed this to occur. There was a high participation in the work force by the women interviewed. Only three of the women had never participated in the paid work force at the time of the interview nor were looking for work. Considering the age range of the women involved, it is surprising that 17 out of the 30 women were working on either a full time or part time basis, while a further two were undertaking studies at universities. Of the remaining eight women, all had worked at some stage in their lives: four were currently at home with young children; one had retired; another was not looking for work nor had she worked in Australia; and two were looking for work. Of the last two, one had not had her contract renewed due to a financial decision while the other had worked interstate but not since moving to Whyalla (interviews 8, 19).

Therefore, although the time prior to marriage may well have been a time for preparing the individual for marriage and for keeping them occupied prior to this occasion, it was not necessarily understood as such by the women involved. The ways in which individual situations have evolved has enabled the women to make use of their education to further their own working careers, or to contribute to the family income. Therefore, rather than purely operating as a mechanism to assist marriageability, it has certainly not functioned as an end in itself, but as an entree into the workplace. There is also a strong indication that a number of parents valued higher education for their daughters by providing the opportunities for them to study in the west.

Significance of marriage for women

On the general topic of marriage and its importance for women, attitudes often demonstrated that the situation had changed with education for women, and more physical and financial security. When debating this topic, a number of women concentrated on the positive aspect of the emotional side of marriage. This is consistent with the studies that have been undertaken for the urban educated women.

Meena felt that the financial security which marriage supplied was important, while Anjali mentioned security in general (interviews 6, 19). Shamila who often varied from the general attitude, as already mentioned, insisted that women could not live alone (interview 11), while Devi commented on the social pressure to marry (interview 4). Generally, however, the attitudes of the women differed from the model of women which emphasised the need for the security of a husband. This may have been due to the women's increased education, sense of security or independence. Nine of the women stated that marriage does not matter these days (interviews 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 24, 30). Even though Anjali had discussed financial security, she had also acknowledged that it was not as important today as it had been in the past (interview 6). Two of the women suggested that living as a single woman was an individual's choice but it could be difficult (interviews 17, 26). Aparna considered that being single was superior to living in a bad marriage (interview 28).

The nine women who suggested that marriage no longer mattered for women were a diverse group. They were not making flippant comments. Many of them were strong intelligent women who did not understand the role of a woman as being dependent upon her husband or her marital status. Their comments alternatively were concerned with the ability for women to function alone. Mita was one of the woman who did not think marriage was essential (interview 8). She was a highly qualified professional who was currently unemployed. Her recently unemployed status was of great concern to her and she emphasised the fact that had she not been married she would be able to qualify for unemployment benefits. In this respect she felt that married women were disadvantaged. She was a woman who has explored groups for alternative religious expression as her husband took a leading role at the home shrine and in community religious events. She took great pride in her talented daughters and their development,

and was devoted to assisting then in fulfilling their potential. She had studied in the west and had arranged her own marriage.

Meena was another who did believe there was a need for women to marry (interview 6). She had studied in the west but lived in Fiji after her marriage to a partner of her choice. She often questioned the norms of the people around her, including her in-laws. She was a thoughtful woman who was searching for the divine within, as will be seen in later discussions of her. She had both a son and a daughter.

Alternatively Shamila stressing that women could not live alone, differed markedly from those women who suggested marriage was no longer essential. Her lower level of education and lack of work experience have previously been mentioned as has her commitment to purity rules and the manner in which she understood her role as a wife as adjunct to her husband. Yashoda, as previously mentioned had also stressed that women needed to live under the protection of a male family member (although not necessarily a husband) (interview 15). She was a complex woman and a profile of her will be developed within the subsequent chapters. She was one of the two women interviewed who was over 55 years of age but she had only been in Australia for 9 years. Yashoda had also emphasised the importance of the mother as the first god and the primacy of the mother role. Perhaps her belief that women needed to live with a male reflected the Indian situation rather than specifically relating to the diaspora.

Marriage was looked upon by most of the women as being an individual choice today, although it was certainly considered to be fulfilling. As can be seen most strikingly from the women who did not think that marriage was a necessity, they did not think women were somehow inadequate or incomplete if they did not marry. This could be taken further by suggesting that marriage was not necessary to complete a woman, albeit for personal or religious reasons. It could also be suggested that the idea that women's *sakti* needed to be controlled by a male counterpart was not evident within the accounts of these women. Few women understood marriage in terms of being necessary due to the unacceptability of women living alone although, as suggested, this view was not entirely absent. Alternatively, Kulpana emphasised the importance of remaining unmarried as this increased her ability to progress along her personal spiritual path (interview 9).

Significance of children for women

Attitudes towards having children were similar to those towards marriage. Once again, individual choice was important; however, it was also understood to be fulfilling. It was considered to be a 'natural step or stage in life' (interviews 4, 5, 7, 20), but also 'beautiful' 'fulfilling' and 'nice' to have children (interviews 7, 12, 14, 17, 22, 24, 25, 28,29, 30). It is interesting that two of the women had made a decision not to have children although they were married (interviews 1, 2). Devi, who did not have any children although not through choice, suggested that people were understanding and accepted their situation. There did not appear to be the sigma attached to childlessness– which can often be found within literature on it.

Summary

In summary, it appears that, although individuals tend to make decisions based upon their individual circumstances, they often understood their own attitudes in relation to a specific brahmanic model of behaviour. Some of the women indicated that they understood the concept of what a Hindu woman should be and they perceived their own actions as being at variance with it, although, they believed women who adhered to expectations did exist. These women were often thought to be in the wider, more 'traditional' Indian community, amongst the older generation or indeed in the 'traditional' community in India or the other diasporas. Those who viewed themselves as different, appeared to understand the ideal Hindu woman, who they tended to describe as 'traditional', to be a marker from which their own attitudes deviated. Therefore, the women appeared, at times, to understand themselves as being in a specific relationship to the 'traditional other'. This is not to suggest that they constructed their behaviour against the brahmanic model, but they often understood it, and described themselves as being opposed to it. It was interesting to note that many of the women throughout the interview process emphasised that they were not traditional. Therefore to varying degrees, some of the women, appeared to place themselves within the western frame of modernity, and hence, they constructed their own identities in opposition to what they considered traditional.

Penelope Magee, writing about Indian women, suggests that

> The clear separation of 'the west' from that which has been colonised is not possible. In her analysis of the opposition 'The West' 'Third World', Kulpana Ram speaks of 'the pain of ambivalence, confusion and the schizophrenia that is the hallmark of colonial subjectivity'. For her, '"the West" is not an external reality- it invades and redefines the interiority of the colonial subject". (Magee 1991, p. 12)

For most of the women interviewed the west was not an 'external reality', but a constant aspect of their lives from often attending Christian educational institutions at an early age through to tertiary education and the work place.

Magee continues

> Where 'modernity' means 'modern-as-in-the-west', the fragmented colonial subject would seem to have to struggle to resist identification with the locus of power, thereby becoming more alienated still from the 'traditional' as essentialised from 'outside' (Magee 1991, p. 12).

For some of the women interviewed, the stereotype of the 'modern-as-in-the-west' woman appeared to be contrasted with the construction of the 'traditional' woman. This framework was part of their construction of themselves.

Kulpana Ram suggests this is often the case in the literature itself where

> Even the literature on Indian modernity rarely addresses questions of identity and personhood, and tends to rely on the literature or tradition to derive its notions of a base-line from which transformations have occurred. (Ram 1992, p. 591)

A number of the women appear to have used a baseline of the traditional woman in order to describe their actions.

Even though a number of the women expressed their rejection of the ideal of the Hindu woman it does not necessarily follow that aspects of it have not been unconsciously incorporated into expectations. From the information that was available it is it is difficult to say whether or not this has occurred. Expectations derived from the ideal or brahmanic model may have been incorporated into the worldview of some or all of the women at both conscious or subconscious level. Alternatively, the women may have

taken their reference from more popular aspects of Hinduism, with an emphasis on mother, the Goddess, relationships with other women and alternative male relatives, rather than on the primacy of service to a husband. Conversely there may not have been any connection between Hindu concepts or worldview, and the roles and duties which the women undertook.

Although many of the women rejected any religious motivation for the attitudes and values they expressed, it appeared they did understand them in relation to Hindu constructions. General comments such as 'I don't consider my husband to be a god' or 'I don't treat my husband as a god' were firm rejections of a brahmanic construction. The comment that 'mother is your first god' gave an alternative interpretation, although this was only one voice. The importance of the role of a mother did, however, come through most strikingly and it would appear that women concentrated much more on this role than on any other.

A considerable change in attitudes had occurred within the subcontinent for middle class urban women in the decades immediately preceding 1960. However, according to Aileen Ross, this does not necessarily mean that the women have rejected religion, but that expressions and priorities have changed. There has been a reassessment of some assumptions and practices. This reassessment is an ongoing process and has continued after migration, with attitudes, also, continually being reassessed.

It was in the discussions of a woman's role in marriage and the subsequent discussion of divorce that a connection may perhaps be drawn, between Hindu assumptions and an understanding of a woman's role. There was a general belief that women were stronger than men and, therefore, they should be the ones to compromise and bend in a relationship. The inherent and superior power of women – their *sakti* – did appear to be implicit in their understanding of women. This may indeed provide a link to a more popular understanding of Hinduism, perhaps taking the Goddess as a reference. Although *sakti* was recognised to be part of the brahmanic construction of women, the importance of control by men is emphasised in this model, and this did not appear to be part of the women's interpretation of the possibilities inherent in it. The eight women who stated that marriage was not a necessity for women may provide the clue to the ability for women to function outside the influence of men. There were only a few

dissenting voices, declaring women could not live alone, who appeared to support a brahmanic understanding of the role of women in relationship to men.

Rather than needing to be 'controlled' or under the protection of a male family member, women used their strength for the benefit of the family, especially the children. They understood their roles as teacher, appeaser, and provider of an environment for smoothing transition and adaptation to different environments. Even though it could be argued that the activities they undertook fall within the concept of *pativrata*, the focus which the women placed upon their role did not appear to be primarily directed towards their husbands' wellbeing.

In general, changing attitudes towards the role of women had occurred prior to immigration to Australia, although change was a continuing process. In many respects, the brahmanic model was rejected by the majority of the women. The marital relationship was understood as a partnership, something that was identified by the scholars studying urban educated women in India. However, when it came to the duties of a daughter, there were similarities with the brahmanic model as it appears that the concept of a woman joining her husband's family was still relevant. Although, the idea that a woman's responsibilities towards her own parents ended at marriage, was challenged by the number of women who had their mothers living with them. Both within the roles of women as wives and as mothers, the idea of the power of women was evident and there does appear to be an understanding of *sakti,* which may provide a covert connection to the Goddess. Perhaps the power of the Goddess, and the possibilities inherent within her, enables women to recognise their own strength and the possibilities, as well as the responsibilities they have. However, the available information is insufficient to make all but a very tentative suggestion. A greater understanding can be gained in subsequent chapters by considering the practices of the women involved.

CHAPTER 7

THE BODY

Introduction

In Hindu devotional literature, there is a considerable amount of imagery which supports the concept of the body as a temple. It is often found within discussions of women *bhakti* saints who have placed their God in the position that the husband would normally occupy. For example, Sanjukta Gupta describes the 'devotee's single-minded love of God and ecstasy on seeing God – be it in a temple image or in her or his mind' (1991, p.194). She further adds a poem describing the God as the husband within, and the legal husband, the lover outside (Gupta 1991, p.195). Kumkum Sangari, when discussing the *bhakti* saint Mirabai, describes the relationship between the God and the devotee in these words: 'There is inexpressible joy for Mira when her heart, purified by Krishna, becomes his home...with Krishna ornamenting her heart – the *man* (heart) becomes a *mandir* or temple which can centre all activity and desire' (Sangari 1990a, p.1474). Sangari goes on to suggest the other compositions by *bhaktas* emphasise the heart as being the home and the temple (Sangari 1990a, p. 1474). Within devotional practices, themes of the body or heart as the residence of God coincide with the necessity of purification that enables this to occur.

Accordingly, it was important to look at the way the women described themselves in relationship with the divine, and at their own understanding of their bodies and the practices which may reflect their attitude towards them. Some practices relating to the body have been associated with assisting the individual to achieve a state that enables a relationship with God.

Lawrence Babb describes the way in which becoming pure is an important aspect of approaching the divine. He writes that 'Eating, elimination, sexual intercourse, giving birth, being born and dying – all are sources of pollution. Thus, pollution is one of the true inevitables of the human condition' (Babb 1975, p. 50). According to Babb, purity and purification are necessary in order to undertake ritual activities (Babb 1975, p. 70). He further suggests that pollution causes separation between the individual and the deity. Therefore, communion with the deities can only be achieved if the individual is not separated from them.

This has implications for all areas of worship. Where the divine is thought to reside within, communion may take place on that level. The domestic sphere and the temple are other areas where worship takes place. The body (or the heart), the domestic sphere and the temple must all be in an acceptable state and, as Babb suggests, 'Purity carries the potential for beneficial contact with deities, and purity of person and place are the main prerequisites for ritual acts' (1975, p. 70).

The way in which activities surrounding these areas takes place will, therefore, provide an insight into the assumptions underlying the practices. With respect to the body, such activities include eating and bathing, while practices surrounding the functions of menstruating, sexual intercourse, birth and death may provide an insight into assumptions regarding purity.

In this section, I will outline the women's views about their bodies, being an abode of the divine. This will be followed by discussions of practices surrounding the maintenance of the body. These include ablutions as a means of maintaining a state of ritual purity, followed by an assessment of the practices of vegetarianism and beef eating, in order to ascertain whether or not a connection exists between these practices and a concept of purity within Hinduism. This is followed by a discussion of attitudes towards and practices surrounding menstruation, pre-marital sexual intercourse, birth and death.

The body as a temple

Many women expressed a consciousness of the connection between the body and the divine. This was usually apparent in the belief that the body was the house of the divine, and that it was a temple where God (the women primarily spoke of the divine as God) resided. This understanding seemed to influence the attitude the women had

towards their bodies and the way they should be treated. Some of the women who held this concept thought that their heart was where God resided, others mentioned the mind, while one, Rupa, said that both the body and soul were sacred and taking care with what you put into your body was respecting that knowledge (interview 12). Other women also stressed the importance of what you put into your body (interview 11).

Promila, who has previously been discussed at some length, was taught by her father that her heart was a temple (interview 1). Sita, who was involved in the Sai Baba movement, taught other children that 'the body is a temple, and you know God resides in the temple and that is why they have to be very careful what they eat, what they put into the body' (interview 2). Sita had devoted much of her time to others, both the elderly and to children, the latter she taught weekly in her own home. She had decided not to have children but to devote her time to others. Kavita believed that God was in your heart but, in order to worship, you need to make some kind of image (interview 3). She also went on to say that, by praying, you are made pure as it gets rid of bad feelings. Manju the most recent arrival in Australia discussed the way God was always present in her mind and how she worshipped him in her heart (interview 21). She felt the lack of a temple and the isolation which her time in Whyalla entailed. Savita was also adamant that her body was a temple to God, who was within it (interview 22). This was reflected in her regular and frequent fasting, which even other women commented upon. However, she stressed that good thoughts were an important aspect of keeping her body pure. This was reflected in her attitude and demeanour as well as the respect in which she was held by other women in Whyalla, where she had lived for some time.

Mita elaborated on her own understanding when she stated

> You know the stone idol might be out there, but the real significance of it to me would be...in the emotions that are created are really within me...I'm not really worshipping you know, a stone idol out there so much as something that's inside every one of us, as it were...the only way to experience God is to relate to what our own bodies are really, rather than something out there. (Interview 8)

She stressed that it was important to remember that your body was holy. For her, a healthy diet and no 'junk food' was an integral aspect of looking after your body (interview 8). Mita did not take a leading role at the home shrine, but chose to attend alternative groups which concentrated on meditation and her statement was consistent with her own practices.

Malati, a busy working professional strongly involved in the Hindu community and her regional/language group, who had migrated from India over 20 years ago, articulated her understanding of the relationship between the body and the divine and the importance of cleanliness (interview 29). She believed that God was in your mind and she understood a connection between the mind and body commenting that a 'clean mind lives in a clean body...that is why we have a shower before we actually worship' (interview 29). *Puja* functioned to cleanse and freshen the mind every day. Fasting also cleansed the mind and the body. Good behaviour was, to her, most important (interview 29). Kavita also discussed the cleansing aspect of prayer (interview 3).

Vijaya said the body '...is a temple and ideally a temple has to be pure and good' (interview 5). She understood an interconnectedness between cleanliness and 'Godliness' (interview 5). Vijaya did not maintain a home shrine and the body seemed to be important to her. She stated at a later stage that she worshipped in her mind. Her concepts of the nature of the sacred will be elaborated upon in subsequent chapters. A negative possibility for the body was mentioned by Pria, the young woman born in India but brought up in Australia, who said that the devil could also reside in people (interview 25).

Although Yashoda stated that the body was a temple where God lived, mental purity was extremely important (interview 15). These concepts were echoed by Anjali and Aparna (interviews 19, 28). Sunita emphasised the importance of purity of body and mind as she stated that the soul was divine (interview 30). She said that the soul would be affected though *karma* and by impure thoughts and deeds. The idea that a clean body and mind were necessities in life came through strongly in interviewing her.

The internal aspect was stressed by some of the women, while they still practiced external cleanliness. Asha emphasised that your thoughts should be as pure as possible (interview 17), while Anita stated that inner purity was more important than external purity (interview 20). Madhu emphasised that purity was more important for the mind rather than the body (interview 27). Respect for yourself and your body (interview 23) and doing what felt good (interview 26) were also important positions to take concerning the self.

The women who discussed concepts relating to purity or cleanliness of mind and body were diverse. Some such as Sunita and Aparna had migrated from the diaspora some time ago (interview 30, 28), while others including Malati and Vijaya had been long time resident in Australia after migrating from India (interview 29, 5). Others were more recent arrivals such as Manju mentioned above (interview 21). Some of the women were strict in maintaining a home shrine such as Sita, while Vijaya was not (interview 2, 5). Those who discussed the body in the form of a temple or cleanliness and purity of the mind and body, incorporated women from different groups and with different profiles. Many of the views expressed were confirmed and elaborated upon when discussing different practices related to the topic.

On the other hand, some women did not appear to have the same understanding of the body. For some of the women it appeared that I was leading the conversation. When pressed on the topic Kuna had a wider understanding that God was everywhere, not specifically within, but she said that it was important to do what was right by your own body but this was not a religious belief (interview 7). Hema, when specifically asked if her body were a temple, had not thought about the concept (interview 18). Nishthha, also when asked said she did not relate to the concept (interview 24).

There was a strong sense of the interconnectedness of the mind and body, and the purity of the body relating directly to the mind (the inner self or the soul), with the latter being the more important. In this respect, the body was where the divine resided, just as a house was also often considered to be a place for the divine. The physical was, however, inferior to the metaphysical, in whatever form it was realised.

Most women had a strong sense of what was good or right for the mind and the body, and many of them had a very firm understanding of the body as somewhere where the divine resides and respect for it was, therefore, necessary. These assumptions concerning the body and the inner self influenced the practices and behaviour of the women, although not in a uniform manner. By looking at practices concerned with the body, it is possible to examine the way in which assumptions about the divine and the body are reflected.

Maintaining the body

Ablutions

Primary to the process of renewal, cleanliness or purification were ablutions in the form of a shower. Most women mentioned that they would shower in the morning prior to performing any type of worship at the home shrine. Babb discusses the importance of bathing as an act of purification as a prerequisite to ritual activity before being allowed into the presence of the gods (1975, p. 104).

During a discussion of *puja,* many of the women mentioned that they would always shower or bathe in the morning before doing any form of worship (interviews 1, 7, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 29, 30), although this question was not asked directly. Manju stressed the importance of bathing prior to touching the shrine and it appears to have been part of the ritual process even when the worship may have consisted of such simple actions as ringing a bell and changing water at the home shrine (interview 1). Except in one specific case, ablutions were not mentioned as being performed in the evenings prior to worship (interview 25). It would appear that the time spent in bed constituted the period when pollution occurred - although it was not expressed in these terms.

Dressing in clean clothes was also seen as necessary (interviews 4, 15, 16) and night clothes were unacceptable for *puja* (interview 4). When Surika wore her clothes for two days, she used a special gown for her morning *puja* (interview 16). Yashoda commented that, although she showered and changed every morning before *puja*, when she had been ill she would wash, rather than shower, but she still changed her clothes prior to her *puja* (interview 15).

Cleansing and changing into new clothes was mentioned in relation to childbirth and marriage. Vijaya, whose children were born in India, said she had a cleansing bath and dressed in new clothes before returning to the temple after the prescribed lapse of time (interview 5). Sita mentioned a symbolic cleansing prior to her marriage, which took place in Australia (interview 2).

Only one woman, who was brought up in Australia, mentioned that she and her young daughter did not shower in the morning but in the evening, and it was after showering that she conducted their worship. Even where the routine had changed, bathing prior to worship occurred. The reason given by Pria for this evening routine was that she did not like to go to bed dirty, although convenience also played a part (interview 25). Cleanliness was, however, a theme taken up by a number of the women.

The information concerning ablutions in the morning prior to *puja* was given as a statement of fact and not related to the question on purity and pollution. Only Malati chose to explain the practice when she suggested '... a clean mind lives in a clean body...that is why we have a shower before we actually worship' (interview 29). Cleanliness was, however, a major concern that came through, and purity was often related to cleanliness and what was right or good.

Food

Food was an important aspect of maintaining the body. It is important to examine beliefs surrounding food in order to identify whether or not there was a connection between what the women chose to eat and Hindu concepts surrounding food. The position of the cow within Hinduism and whether vegetarianism was considered to be a superior practice as far as the body was concerned were the concepts which were focussed upon in interviews.

Vegetarianism is often understood to be a superior practice and less polluting for the body than meat eating; however, there is a tension within Hinduism between the assumed superiority of vegetarianism and the emphasis that was placed on meat eating within the Vedas (Khare 1992, p. 9). Louis Dumont states that, initially, vegetarianism was introduced as an aspect of diet by the renouncer (1966-1980, p. 149). He suggests that the concept of *ahimsa* was taken to a practical level by the renunciant and then adopted by Brahmans '...so as not to be outdone by the renouncer' (Dumont 1966-1980, p. 149-150).

Dietary restrictions are often understood in terms of caste-based restrictions and, therefore, the caste system may be strongly connected to dietary practices. Generally

speaking, certainly in the recent past, castes tended to be vegetarian or non-vegetarian, with meat-eating castes having restrictions on specific types of meat. There is no easy answer, however, as to why some castes developed into vegetarian castes while other did not. Not all Brahmans or high caste Hindus, are vegetarian, although meat is often understood as being polluting. A practical example of the manner in which meat can be treated as polluting is provided a little later, within the discussion of the preparation of *prasad* food within Chapter 8, where non-vegetarian families often use special cooking utensils when preparing food for the home shrine.

The degree to which food pollutes is not fixed, as it is often understood on a sliding scale and can differ between groups. The Havik Brahmans, for example, consider beef to be the most polluting while, for them, fish is the least polluting meat (Harper 1964, p. 153). Although not all Brahman castes are vegetarian, Louis Dumont suggests that vegetarianism '...became a fundamental Brahmanical feature' (1966, p. 194) and, therefore, symbolised the relative ritual purity of the Brahman. Vegetarianism has often been understood as the ideal and a necessary aspect of maintaining ritual and caste purity. Therefore, a number of different concepts and assumptions are embedded within the relationship between meat, and especially beef, and ritual pollution. In Dumont's thesis, caste is intricately tied in with this.

What is consumed can become an important determinant of relative purity. Many Brahmans, as well as members of other castes, consider vegetarianism to be an important aspect in maintaining purity, including caste purity. The maintenance of caste purity often appears to be an important aspect of vegetarianism. It has also been adopted by some lower castes in the process of Sanskritization. The correlation between diet and pollution and hierarchy, however, is a complex matter. Although vegetarianism is understood to be less polluting and a superior practice, the concept that vegetarians are therefore higher in status 'defies a simple, consistent caste rank correlation (otherwise all Brahmans will only be vegetarians)' (Dumont 1966, p. 56). So, other factors also come into play when determining caste hierarchy. Generally speaking, however, castes have often maintained themselves relative to other castes through dietary restrictions, and vegetarianism has often been an aspect of this. Breaches of these restrictions have been discussed in terms of pollution.

As the cow is associated with the concept of the mother and fertility, the consumption of beef is also considered to be polluting within Hindu tradition, whilst the products of the cow, such as milk and ghee, are considered pure. As with vegetarianism, Deryck Lodrick in *Sacred Cows, Sacred Places*, suggests that '...the rejection of beef by caste Hindus, and similar food avoidances can ultimately be traced to the ahimsa concept, though other socio-religious factors need to be considered in understanding how these traits evolved and how they survive in India today' (1981, p. 5). He goes on to outline a number of different theoretical positions which have arisen to explain the sanctity of the cow within Hinduism. Norman Brown, also, suggests that factors that contributed to the sanctification of the cow include:

> ...the figurative use of words for cow in the Vedic literature and subsequent literal interpretation; Vedic prohibitions against violations of Brahmans' cows; the ahimsa concept; and the association of the cow with the Mother Goddess cult. (Lodrick 1981, p. 2)

Wendy O'Flaherty traces the development of the cow within Hinduism (1980). She suggests that development of '...the sanctity of cows has made them animals *not* to be eaten instead of the *piece de resistance* at the feasts of Vedic gods, sacrificers, and guests' (O'Flaherty 1980, p. 244). She looks at the way in which the cow developed this sanctity. O'Flaherty reports on the work of Ludwig Alsdorf, who traces the changing fortunes of the cow to pre-Aryan beliefs, also contending that '...the idea of vegetarianism (i.e., of not eating or killing any animals) is complimentary to but by no means synonymous with or dependent upon the peculiar veneration of the cow' (O'Flaherty 1980, p. 244). O'Flaherty extends Alsdorf's theory to include not only economic, historical and social factors but also '...the revulsion against the once devoured and now devouring, a corresponding sanctification of the nurturing cow mother, and a mythology of milk expanding to eclipse the mythology of blood and seed' (1980, p. 250).

Regardless of the change that occurred, Dumont suggests that beef eating is a determinant of hierarchy, as he states that 'If you eat beef, you must accept being classed among the Untouchables, and on this condition your practice will be tolerated' (Dumont 1966-1980, p. 191).

Changes in attitudes to meat-eating, however, have been occurring in India for some time. Aileen Ross, in her book *The Hindu Family in its Urban Setting,* published in 1961, suggests that women were beginning to eat meat and men beef through an '...exposure to new ideas and patterns of behaviour along with peer group support and/or control ...' (1961, p. 216). It should be mentioned that these trends have continued within India, and that the late 20th century immigrants to Australia, until recently, have come from the educated urban elite, who were represented in Ross's study.

In the following discussion, vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism, as well as beef-eating, will be discussed in order to identify whether a basis exists for the practices and assumptions of the women within Hinduism. As a link between caste and dietary practices has been suggested, the later section on caste may also provide an understanding of practices generally.

Vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism

At the time of the interview, 50% of the women stated they were vegetarian, whilst the other 50% said they were non-vegetarian. It is interesting to note, as can be seen in Appendix 11, that a higher percentage of women who have migrated within the last 10 years are vegetarian than are the medium term and longer term residents, and when examining those who have been here for 5 years or less, 4 out of the 5 women are vegetarian. This may indicate that prolonged exposure to the Australian environment influences change to a non-vegetarian diet or, in fact, may indicate alternative explanations, such as a resurgence of vegetarianism within India.

Many of the women had thought about their practice, rather than it being an automatic decision due to tradition. Even when their families were either vegetarian or non-vegetarian and where these traditions had been continued, the women often reflected upon their own decision, although this was mainly the case with vegetarians. Non-vegetarians would make comments such as 'Bengalis are big meat-eaters', thus placing their tradition in a regional context and arguing in functionalist terms, looking at the availability of various resources and the development of dietary habits.

Conversely, it appeared that, on reflection, vegetarianism was justified on two different grounds other than tradition. Firstly, the concept of *ahimsa* (non-violence) was often used with comments relating to cruelty to animals, although they did not relate this concept of non-violence to a religious context. In fact, several stressed that it was nothing to do with religion. Secondly, some of the women suggested that they had tried meat and did not like the taste, so had not continued with non-vegetarian food and had reverted to a vegetarian diet. Therefore, they suggested that enjoyment or taste had been a deciding factor in their decision to remain as vegetarians. It is, indeed, interesting that a religious connection with vegetarianism was denied. This suggests that the women may have rejected a connection between vegetarianism and their understanding of what constitutes Hindu practice. It may not be overtly incorporated into their Hindu worldview, being one aspect of Hinduism which has been reassessed in changing circumstances in urban India and also the diaspora.

Some women who were brought up as vegetarians had become non-vegetarian, while others brought up in the non-vegetarian tradition had become vegetarian. The latter seems to be a reversal of the trend noted by Ross (1961). Three women of 25 years, 16 years and 7 years residency, respectively, had stated that they had become vegetarian although they did not come from vegetarian traditions (interviews 26, 27, 9). Two of the women who became vegetarian in the Australian context are involved with religious groups, while the third indicated a lack of involvement; therefore, a religious motive may be applicable for some but not for all.

In contrast, there were four women who made the point that they had commenced eating meat in Australia after coming from vegetarian backgrounds (interviews 19, 23, 24, 29). Three of these women had been in Australia for more than 20 years, while one had been resident for 4 years. All of these women were involved in religious activities and, therefore, it would appear that a reassessment of assumptions and practices had occurred, rather than an abandonment of assumptions. Lata's worship had become more ritualistic since she has been living in Australia, although she has commenced eating meat, including beef (interview 23).

A number of the women interviewed had become Sai Baba adherents since migrating to Australia. Sai Baba's preference for a vegetarian diet may have influenced both the retention of vegetarianism and conversion to it.

The basic numbers do not tell the whole story, however, as change had occurred for some whilst they were still in India. Surika, who first came to Australia 6 years ago, although she went back to India to live for a short time, commented that '...in the process of education and western influence we are not vegetarian any more' (interview 16), and this change had occurred while she lived in India. She was from a Brahman family, who she described as being modern, although her marriage was arranged by her family. She had clearly been exposed to a variety of different influences while she was in India. Anjali, in many respects had a similar profile to Surika, also being one of the more recent migrants to Australia, living in Whyalla and having an arranged marriage (interview 19). She stated that she had also changed to a non-vegetarian diet while living in India. This change had been influenced by her husband, who had taken up a non-vegetarian diet while going to work in the colder northern regions of India after living in the south. Changes of environment and working conditions were also used by others in Australia in order to explain the switch to a non-vegetarian diet by other family members, and I will discuss this in more detail later.

The influences which came into play within the Australian context, such as contact with a variety of people and ideas, had also occurred in India. While the Australian environment seems to have provided the catalyst for change, some change had already occurred for others, prior to migration. As a number of women suggested that, although they ate beef in Australia, they would not do so when visiting India, distance from India appears to influence whether or not they feel comfortable in abandoning specific practices.

There was no clear division between a vegetarian and non-vegetarian family tradition, and a number of women mentioned that one parent was vegetarian while the other was non-vegetarian. Two women stated that their mothers were vegetarian and their fathers' non-vegetarian, but only one commented that it was the reverse in her family.

The comments of the women who chose to elaborate upon their change from vegetarianism to meat-eating within Australia proved to be most interesting. Nishthha explained that her husband had been a student of the Vedas and this study had convinced her that there was nothing in them prohibiting the consumption of meat and alcohol (interview 24). Except on certain days, she had no restriction on what she ate. She told me a story as to why vegetarianism was originally advocated, that it was advocated in order to preserve certain species. She attributed the change in attitude to logic and education. I might state that, although she migrated to Australia 30 years ago, prior to migration she had been exposed to a variety of different influences, as her father has studied in Europe for a number of years and she had lived in hostels for some time while completing her education. Malati also commented that she had started eating meat after leaving India, and she had lived in England for some time before coming to Australia 23 years ago (interview 29). She and her husband, together with a group of friends, started eating fish and chicken, although she does not eat beef or pork, even though she did eat the latter for a time.

The reason given by another woman, Lata, for her change to a non-vegetarian diet was extremely interesting, as it appears to be connected with assimilating to a specific environment (interview 23). Although she eats and cooks little meat in the home, commenting that she didn't like the smell it left behind, she and her husband, both in high profile professional positions, started eating beef at professional meetings due to the difficulties which not eating it entailed. This demonstrates a desire to 'fit in' with mainstream cultural expectations. With those women mixing with non- Indians and specifically with higher status groups, the desire not to be seen as different or, indeed, 'traditional', may in fact influence the decision to eat meat on such occasions.

Two women mentioned that they had given up vegetarianism through external considerations. The first, Kulpana, had been a vegetarian for some time, although her parents were meat eaters. When she came to work in Australia, her future employer gave a barbecue in her honour, and it was at that stage she recommenced eating meat in order not to cause any embarrassment (interview 9). She has since returned to her vegetarian diet. The second, Aparna, although once again not from a vegetarian family, gave up eating meat while her family continued to be non-vegetarians. She maintained this diet for some years but eventually gave it up, as she felt that it was often very

awkward for her family. Even when her husband explained to others that she was a vegetarian, in social situations they would serve her prawns or fish. She eventually gave it up so as not to inconvenience her family. Her comments were 'I thought what's this big thing I'm making that I'm different to everyone else' (interview 28). Unlike her children, however, she does not eat beef and has a number of vegetarian days each week. The social aspect of sharing meals and dining with others in Australian society is evident in these accounts, especially the way in which the women were attuned to what they understood as social expectations and the avoidance of giving offence to others.

Another incident also indicated that family and health concerns were more important than those of the individual. This incident involved an expectant mother who returned to a meat diet whilst pregnant and breast feeding, so as not to adversely affect her unborn children.

Vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism appear to be individual choices, with many households being mixed. In 8 instances, the whole family was vegetarian, while in another 6 cases either husband or children, or both, were non-vegetarian. Only one of the women who was a non-vegetarian had a vegetarian husband, and he was a non-Indian. Once again, it does appear that personal choice is recognised, and it would also appear that, outside vegetarian households, it is more common for Indian women to be vegetarian than for their male counterparts or their children to be so.

It was certainly interesting that women tended to uphold vegetarianism while the men and children did not. It is difficult to suggest why this has occurred. As many of the women were working, it cannot be lack of exposure to Australian society due to women staying at home. It could be suggested that women tend to uphold the traditions longer than men but do not seek to impose it on the younger generation. A couple of mothers commented that it was difficult, in Australian society, to insist on their children being vegetarian. They used the example that their children were invited to parties at McDonalds', where they would eat beef hamburgers or, at other times, fried food cooked in animal fats. They were very conscious of their children not being made to appear different within their peer groups. Perhaps women's practices were understood to be on behalf of the family, allowing the other members of the family to adapt to different circumstances.

None of the women connected meat eating with polluting the body, or vegetarianism with not polluting the body. Although many women chose to retain their vegetarianism while others opted to adopt it, the connection was never made, to me, between pollution and meat. It appeared to be very much a personal choice and the connection seemed to be more with that of *ahimsa* rather than with purity. It was often considered to be an ideal state for women and, where it was not undertaken on a permanent basis, it formed part of the fasting practices women undertook, as will be discussed later. Therefore, it was often seen as a discipline rather than a necessity, possibly within the practice of renunciation. This would, perhaps, account for why some women cooked meat for others, would let their children participate in parties where hamburgers were served, and could switch from eating meat within the wider Australian community, while retaining their vegetarianism at home. Refraining from eating meat did not appear to be a fundamental or non-negotiable practice for many of the women, although it may have been an ideal. The flexibility within Hinduism allowed for practices to be adapted or, indeed, the link between vegetarianism and Hinduism was possibly not recognised nevertheless, when discussing with Devi her habit of eating pork and beef, she commented that she was a very bad Hindu (interview 4). Suffice to say, switching from a vegetarian diet to a non-vegetarian diet did not always pose problems for the women who could adapt to individual choice. For others, such as Kavita, vegetarianism was a non-negotiable aspect of their lives (interview 3).

Kavita's experience of being tricked into eating a small piece of chicken demonstrates her own attitudes towards meat (interview 3). She had been convinced by a Muslim friend that she was eating a vegetarian hamburger at a restaurant when, in fact, she realised after two bites that it was chicken. She said that she did not feel polluted by accidentally eating meat, because it was not an intentional act (interview 3). She was most concerned that when eating out with meat-eaters, her food may come into contact with meat. The intention was the most important aspect for her. Perhaps this is a further indication that the concepts of purity and pollution are, in themselves, not firmly connected with food. Certainly for Kavita as it was the thought rather than the deed which mattered.

Kavita was one of the women who appeared to have far less familiarity with non-Indians, and with many western customs and concepts, than did many of the other

women. She had led quite an isolated existence within the Australian community generally. At the time of the interviews her contact with non- Indians had been so limited that she was unable to cope with western style cutlery. As she was going to be in a situation which required these skills, she asked me to give her lessons. She once commented that Indians were always telling her that she had not been influenced by non-Indian customs, although she realised when her mother visited, that changes affecting her had been greater than she thought. She had great difficulty in adapting to many of her mother's expectations. Her mother had brought her own cooking and eating vessels, bowls and cups but Kavita was always unintentionally doing the wrong thing, by her mother, such as making tea in a saucepan but measuring the milk in a ceramic cup. She was forever starting afresh to conform to her mother's purity requirements, which she found tedious.

It was only in relation to the preparation of *prasad*, which will be discussed later, that a connection can be found between meat and pollution. What was put into your body was most important. Constraint (renunciation) and what was considered to be good for the body were important aspects of what was eaten. A healthy diet was emphasised and constraint in food and alcohol, where consumed, was important. The importance of constraint and cleansing the body were also common themes when fasting was discussed.

Eating beef

Of the 15 non-vegetarian women, only three had not eaten beef at least once, although it generally did not form a significant part of their diet, which would suggest that for many, the cow is losing its association with the sacred. However, this was not the case for all the women, some of whom felt an instinctive aversion to eating beef. One of the women attributed certain unfortunate occurrences one day to the fact that she had just eaten beef, and has refrained from it since. Many women suggested that they would normally only eat it when they were out and if it were served to them, but they would not cook it themselves. Lata said that this was the case when she went to professional meetings (interview 23). Surika said that if it were served to her by a friend who had lovingly prepared the food and did not know that she did not normally eat beef, she would eat it, and this had been the case in the past (interview 16). Her words reminded

me of a verse from the Bhagavad Gita where Krishna says 'He who offers to me with devotion only a leaf, or a flower, or a fruit, or even a little water, this I accept from that yearning soul, because with a pure heart it was offered with love' (9 [26]). Of the six vegetarian women who had non-vegetarian husbands or children, two of those had husbands and children who ate beef, while a further two had children who did so.

Although caste was not a topic which was discussed in depth by the women, when it was mentioned it was never in relation to food preparation or consumption, and vegetarianism did not seem to be an indication of hierarchy in South Australia. Dumont's comments that Brahmans risked being classed with the lowest ranked castes if they ate beef had not translated to the South Australian diaspora (1966, p. 194). It is interesting to note that being a Brahman did not appear to be a determining factor in the retention of vegetarianism. A number of those families who are now non-vegetarian, and consume beef, are Brahman families. Indeed, Rupa made the comment that 'It's just my observation with whom I've spoken to but I would have thought now the higher class [and caste] that people are the more they eat meat [including beef] and they drink alcohol than the lower classes [and castes] these days' (interview 12). Rather than beef-eating and meat-eating generally being regarded as practices which relegate individuals to low levels in the caste hierarchy, it appears that a reversal has occurred in the diaspora.

The consumption of beef, therefore, did not appear for many to be associated with a religious prohibition while it still carried significance for others. Alternatively, a change to meat and beef eating may have occurred for Brahmans due to revisiting the Vedas and the pre-Buddhist period when meat and beef eating were the norm, rather than through a rejection of religious assumptions. Only one woman actually made the comment that the cow was sacred, while others suggested that eating beef was something that Hindus would not normally do. It is clear that it was respect of the *ahimsa* concept that the women understood their own stance on not eating meat. For those women who ate meat but did not eat beef, it was often stated that this was because of tradition and, moreover, the sacredness of the cow and its relationship with the Mother Goddess was also mentioned.

The connection of meat and beef generally with the concept of pollution was unclear. There was a general insistence that meat was not polluting, even by many of the vegetarians, who made comments like 'What's wrong with eating meat', thus once again bringing the debate back to a more practical level concerning cruelty to animals. When it came to cooking beef within the house, many of those women who would eat in when out would not cook it in their own kitchens. This may indicate that they were not keen enough on eating it to cook it or there may have been an underlying aversion to cooking it in the domestic sphere, including covert assumptions regarding pollution.

Diet was something that was often reflected upon, and alternatives tried. The explanations that were given for vegetarianism primarily focussed upon the concept of *ahimsa,* although family tradition was also important, as was taste. Changes from a non-vegetarian diet to a vegetarian one were expressed in terms of *ahimsa.*

Non-vegetarianism was also understood in traditional terms, which tended to focus upon regional contexts. Changing to a non-vegetarian diet is more complex to assess. It was obvious, as Ross (1961) suggested, that changing attitudes and practices have been occurring for some time. The exposure to alternative views had resulted, for some, in vegetarianism being abandoned in India whilst, for a number, this has occurred within the Australian context.

Reassessment of vegetarianism through study and reference to the sacred texts has occurred. Peer group influence was a motivating factor also, accompanied by experimentation with Indian peers or non-Indian colleagues. It was also interesting to note that meat was eaten in order to conform to the norms of Australian society. It could be speculated that, because the same caste hierarchy does not exist within the Australian context, traditional determinants of purity and caste hierarchy are no longer important. Conversely, in order to be accepted within the Australian socio-economic hierarchy, especially at professional gatherings, Indian Australians may believe that lack of conformity with the meat eating (and alcohol) habits of the majority of their colleagues sets them apart, rather than allowing them to assimilate with these groups.

For two of the women interviewed, family duty outweighed personal desire for a vegetarian diet. Women were more likely to retain a vegetarian diet in the Australian

context than were men, and were also more likely to change to a vegetarian diet from a non-vegetarian diet. Where families were mixed, the children tended to be non-vegetarian.

Few of the non-vegetarians interviewed had not tried beef. Some women commented that they had only eaten it when they felt that not eating it would have a negative effect on others. It would appear that the cow, for a number of women, had lost its strong connection with the sacred, although there still seemed to be an instinctive reaction against cooking and consuming it. For others, however, this connection did not seem to be present. Men were much more likely to eat beef and it seems they were more regular consumers.

The view, which many of the women expressed, that the body was a temple or identified with the divine 'body', was reinforced in the attitudes to food. What you did to your own body was very important to many of the women and, therefore, decisions concerning what you put into it were important. Purity of mind was important, also, and pure and good thoughts, as well as pure bodily practices, were necessary in order to achieve this. Non-vegetarians often emphasised purity of mind.

Exposure to a variety of ideas and attitudes, including those that have occurred in the Australian context, has brought about some changes in practices and assumptions. For some women Australia does appear to have been the catalyst for change due to the intensity of exposure to alternative ideas and differing norms. I suggest that this is a reassessment and redefinition of assumptions and practices, rather than an abandonment of Hindu assumptions as such. Even where the concepts have not explicitly retained significance, an implicit connection to Hinduism has remained. For the women who do not know why they did what they did, the implicit connection remains. It will be interesting to observe the next generation to see if these continue to persist.

Functions of the body

In the interviews, I asked the women what the concepts of purity and pollution meant to them. Without specific probing this question was not always successful in eliciting

information concerning particular practices or assumptions within Hinduism related to these concepts. Information was often, alternatively, gained in discussions on topics such as the practice of *puja*, temple visits and food. Pollution was not usually directly addressed by the women, who tended to think in positive rather than in negative terms. They would suggest things which were pure or clean rather than what was polluting. When elaborating upon the topic of purity and pollution, I generally brought the conversation around to a discussion of natural functions that are considered to be polluting within Hinduism due to the involvement of body fluids. Menstruation, childbirth and sexual intercourse were three functions that were discussed, although the latter was only touched on when the interviewee led into it.

Menstruation

Mary Hancock describes the restrictions which are often placed on women during menstruation (1995, p. 67). She suggests that 'the ritual impurity (*tittam*) of menstruation was usually cited by orthoprax Brahmans as the reason for women's subordinate ritual role. Menstruation was thought to render women unfit to cook, to view the deity's image, and to participate in worship' (Hancock 1995, p. 67). The understanding that menstrual blood is ritually polluting is shared by a variety of scholars (Dumont 1966-1980, p. 53, Babb 1975, p. 72, Smith. 1991, p.23). The women, however, did not tend to describe menstruation in these terms, even when their practices were along the lines that Hancock suggested were necessary during menstruation. Therefore, the women's own understanding of menstruation often appeared contrary to their practices.

There were a variety of responses when the issue of worship at the home shrine and the temple during menstruation was discussed. Although none of the women used the term 'polluted' to describe the state they were in during menstruation, 'dirty' (interview 1), 'impure' (interview 4) 'unclean' (interview 15) and 'not good' (interview 15) were terms which were used. This may indicate that there was indeed some connection been the concept of pollution and menstruation for these women. Promila who described herself as a modern woman and who had studied as a single woman in the West, was one who understood this state as precluding her from worship (interview 1). Promila, together with Devi and Yashoda were a cross section of the women (interview 1, 4, 15). Promila who was from Malaysia, was married to a non-Indian, and was somewhat

younger than the other two women. She had been in Australia for 15 years. Devi had lived in Germany as well as Australia, where she had been stayed intermittently for 24 years after leaving India; Yashoda migrated from India 9 years ago, and was one of the eldest women interviewed.

Fourteen of the women stated that they would definitely not go to the temple or conduct *puja* whilst they were menstruating. Two women said that they would go to the temple but not conduct *puja* at their home shrine (interviews 3, 4) while a further one said she would conduct it at home, but would not go to the temple because of her respect for the beliefs of others (interview 8). Both of the women who went to the temple but did not conduct *puja* at their home shine elaborated upon their practices. Kavita suggested that she would not touch the home shrine but would pray (interview 3), while Devi said she would do what she considered to be the least important tasks, such as lighting incense, but would not offer fruits or anything else to the deity (interview 4). Some of the women who stated that they would attend the temple whilst menstruating made the point that they would not go near the images (interviews 12, 29). Once again, it seems to be proximity or contact with the deities which was important to avoid. Praying, also, may have constituted contact for some of the women. When explaining her own practice, Promila said that she was considered to be 'dirty' when she had her period and would not pray or go to the temple (interview 1).

Some women had broken with family tradition while, for others, it was being reinforced. When discussing her practice of doing *puja* and attending the temple while menstruating, Poonam said that her mother would not do so (interview 13), a comment also made by Pria (interview 25). Both women had mothers living elsewhere in Australia. Aparna, in contrast, mentioned that her daughter would not attend the temple, and her own mother had insisted that the practice be kept up, although she felt that it would be acceptable if you did not go near the shrine (interview 28). In this case, the grandmother was responsible for the practice being maintained by the younger generation, even where he daughter's views were different. One other mother commented that her daughter would also follow the practice of staying away (interview 26).

When she was living in India prior to migration to Australia Madhu attended the temple whilst menstruating, following agreement from her mother, who believed it was acceptable as long as she was discreet (interview 27). The idea of 'what people don't know doesn't hurt them' came through also with Nishthha, who was told by the senior woman in her husband's family, with whom she was living in India, not to tell her when she was menstruating and that she could do anything she liked (interview 24). Being in a confined environment, this was difficult for her to do. Later, when she was living in Australia, she had not wanted to 'advertise' that she was menstruating by failing to attend a family ritual celebration, and has commenced ritual activity while menstruating.

The women often attempted to explain their practices. Promila, as previously mentioned, used the term 'dirty' to describe her state, but also commented that it was tradition not to attend the temple (interview 1). One woman suggested that, because of the way women had been brought up, they considered it to be impure (interview 4). Another stated that it was 'unclean' (interview 15).

Many of the women explained it in terms of traditional practices or 'what they are supposed to do' or were brought up with, rather than a concern for pollution (interviews 7, 17, 21, 22, 26). Rupa, for example, stated that it was not polluting and originated for reasons of hygiene, but now she keeps it up for reasons of 'tradition' (interview 12). I gained a clearer understanding of the reactions of the women to attending the temple while menstruating or maintaining the home shrine, when I was placed in the position of attending a religious function while menstruating. I felt a considerable amount of guilt at the time and thought that everyone must know. This, I kept telling myself was ridiculous as it wasn't my custom and I certainly did not think that it was polluting or dirty. However, my discomfort continued. How much stronger must the feeling be for women reassessing and changing their own practices. The concept of what should be done must, indeed, provide a strong incentive.

What the women thought was the history or the origin of the prohibition was often related to me both by women who had discarded it and those who had maintained the practice (interviews 2, 6, 12, 18, 22, 23, 24). It was usually in very practical terms of what facilities were available in historical times, and even in their parents' generation.

They suggested that washing facilities were inadequate and sanitary protection haphazard. They also looked at the practicalities of women withdrawing from ritual duties and the kitchen, and related them to joint households where there were always others to take over certain tasks. Current living arrangements in Australia, and often in India also, were not conducive to the maintenance of traditional practices, and even where ritual duties were not undertaken during menstruation, none of the women mentioned that they refrained from kitchen duties. One woman did relate her surprise when she discovered that women in Fiji were still maintaining these practices, including staying out of the kitchen (interview 6). Two of the women spoke against the practice in strong terms, describing it as a male 'plot' and sexist notion (interviews 9, 13).

A few of the women were influenced by others, or influenced others, to abandon the practice. Sita explained the prohibition to her nieces in practical terms, telling them that it was not an impure practice and that there was no current reason for maintaining it (interview 2). One of the women was persuaded by her husband to abandon the practice, although she also made the observation that there was no one else to do the tasks (interview 18). Yet another was convinced by a holy woman from Fiji that going to the temple was acceptable, although she still will not touch the home shrine or pray (interview 3).

As far as the practice of abstaining from ritual activities during menstruation is concerned, only one woman expressed her understanding in terms of ritual purity. She stated that she thought the rules 'have to be observed initially to show the aspect of cleanliness associated with divinity but I think once you reach a stage some of the things can be thrown out, it's up to the individual' (interview 30). For her, ritual was a necessary process and discipline which could be put aside at a particular stage when it was no longer important to spiritual development.

The other women interviewed who had abandoned the practice did not appear to think of the prohibition in religious terms, where blood and body fluids are often understood as being ritually polluting rather than physically polluting. Those women who continued the practice often did so because they believed it was the correct thing to do although, as I previously stated, four women thought of it in negative terms. Although

an overt connection with pollution did not exist there appeared to be a covert connection.

Cleanliness tended to be a general notion rather than related to ritual cleanliness. Reassessment and re-evaluation of the prohibition against ritual activity appeared to be occurring. There seemed to be different stages of reassessment of what was or was not acceptable. Where rejection of the prohibition occurred, this did not relate to the degree to which the women were 'religious' as some of the women who were most closely involved with worship had abandoned the practice of refraining from ritual activity during menstruation. A connection with tradition and practical constraints were often used as reasons for the prohibition, rather than it being considered to be a Hindu concept, although a covet connection existed in the practices of many of the women. As with food prohibitions, in areas where reassessment occurs, religious connections or explanations may be giving way to practical or functional explanations in order for practices to be rejected. It may be that the practices which are at odds with either a modern urban environment, or the environment of the diaspora, are the practices which undergo reassessment. Alternative functionalist explanations may replace religious explanations before the practices can be dispensed with. Therefore, the variety of practices that can be found, and the explanations offered, may reflect different stages within a process, or differing outcomes in response to the changing circumstances.

Sexual intercourse

Although the question of pre-marital sexual intercourse was not specifically addressed in the interview process, it did arise with several of the women. I was interested to note that pre-marital sex was, in fact, a more frequent occurrence than I had expected. Four of the women mentioned this had occurred. One of the women had gone on to have an arranged marriage with another man whilst still living in India. The other three instances had occurred while the women were living outside India. There was a twenty year difference in age between the women, with the eldest now being in her late 40's. One further woman mentioned that it had not occurred to her to refrain from sexual intercourse for the prescribed post-natal period. One of these women commented that sex was not impure, while another did not think that choosing a sexual partner was as important as choosing a marriage partner.

Other women insisted on the necessity of women being virgins when they married, while one mentioned that is was just as important for men, also, to be virgins (interview 6). One woman, who considered it extremely important to marry prior to a sexual relationship developing, had secretly married in a registry office prior to a formal wedding. This was because she was going to be in close contact with her future husband before the wedding, and she did not want premarital intercourse to occur.

Although the information is too sketchy to draw any firm conclusion, it would appear that the ideal of a woman being a virgin at marriage still appeared to be desirable, although four of the women had undertaken sexual activities prior to marriage. There did not appear to be an explicit connection between pre-marital intercourse (and therefore body fluids) and pollution. Three of the women who were involved in pre-marital sexual intercourse had been living in Western countries at the time, while the fourth was in India. Only one of the women went on to marry her first sexual partner. The exposure to alternative sexual expectations was apparent for these women. This may indeed have implications for other diaspora women, and may indicate that the concept of body fluids being polluting is no longer recognised or that it is important to retain them.

Birth and death

Because of the age of the women, many had borne their children in India and other diaspora countries: therefore, not a great deal of information was available concerning practices surrounding the giving of birth in South Australia. The information that was gained was more concerned with *samskaras,* rather than with direct references to birth as a form of pollution for the women involved. For those women giving birth prior to migration, the traditional period of abstinence from domestic duties and temple attendance was observed, albeit with the assistance of the extended family. Vijaya told of her ritual bathing and dressing in new clothes in India before she could return to the temple (interview 5).

As temple visits could be infrequent in Adelaide and difficult from Whyalla, the idea that women stayed away from the temple for a period of time after their confinement tended to be something which occurred naturally due to the planning which went into temple visits, rather than a deliberate abstinence. However, one of the women who had

given birth in Australia did suggest that she attended the temple before the prescribed time had elapsed (interview 13). Even for those women who stayed away from the temple, domestic duties were undertaken, often in the absence of any family help, although at times assistance did occur. Asha was awaiting her confinement when I interviewed her, and her mother had come from India to assist (interview 17). Vijaya's observation was typical when she suggested that there was no one to help in Australia: you were on your own so you just did everything without thinking about whether you were supposed to (interview 5).

Once again, due to the profile of the Hindu community in South Australia, death was a relatively recent experience for this diaspora community and, when it was discussed, it tended to be as a *samskara* and will be looked at further within the relevant section dealing with that. The issue of death arose in relationship to purity only in a couple of instances. Shamila's family was seemingly much more concerned with purity and pollution than were other families (interview 11). They appeared to keep up the traditional regulations concerning ritual purity and purification. She mentioned periods for staying away from the temple when contact with death had occurred and, also, when there had been a birth in the male line of the family. She said that, as vegetarians, she and her husband had a shorter period of absence than meat-eaters before they could return to the temple. The comment was also made by one of the women interviewed that she thought some people tended to distance themselves from a priest who is involved in assisting with funerals (interview 8).

Generally, however, there was little indication that a connection existed between birth and death and the concept of pollution. As with the other bodily functions, a reassessment, due to circumstances and exposure to differing concepts, appears to have occurred, although not enough information is available to make anything but a very tentative conclusion.

Summary

Most women had a strong sense of what was good or right for the mind and body. External cleanliness was not always related by the women to Hinduism, and internal purity was often understood in vague terms of what was good or right. Some of the

Although the cow was often understood to be sanctified, most meat-eaters had eaten it at least once and, therefore, the idea of not eating beef had often been reassessed. This could be undertaken through a reassessment of the historical development of the cow, and was done on very practical lines. The cow did appear to have retained a link with the Goddess for a number of the women; however, it tended to be considered something not to be eaten rather than ritually polluting.

Bodily processes such as menstruation were generally not understood by the women to be ritually polluting, however, they were occasionally described in negative terms. Even when practices involved abstinence, they were rarely understood in terms of being undertaken in an effort to avoiding polluting. A number of women thought that it was wrong to touch or approach the deities while menstruating, perhaps indicating that a connection does exist between the divine and pollution through menstrual blood. When distance was kept by the women it tended to be more directly attributed to alternative motives. What was wrong did not equate directly, in the women's minds, with being ritually polluting; even so, symbolic connections were often present.

A number of women freely approached representations of the divine and conducted worship while menstruating. But no one suggested that they had refrained from preparing meals at this time. Where reassessment had occurred once again it was made on practical or functionalist terms. The practical aspect of change in hygiene, the change in family structure which allowed for others to cope with the duties of *puja* and cooking, while giving the menstruating woman a rest, were explanations which were used, along with male control of women. Those women who had reassessed their practices suggested that they could find no current reasons for prohibitions. Once again functionalist arguments appear to be a step towards reassessment of practices. However, even where women had disregarded prohibitions concerning menstruation, they were often very concerned not to offend others.

Assessment and reassessment was continually occurring. It appeared that practices which posed problems within the wider community could be re-evaluated or altered in order to eliminate potential conflicts, or could be kept up in the home, although not in public. The women were often concerned with accommodating their families, others in the Indian community, and those within the wider community with whom they came

into contact. Practices could vary between what occurred outside the home and what they chose to maintain within the domestic sphere, demonstrating the flexibility of many of the practices and of Hinduism specifically.

This was not a process which was unique to the diaspora, as concepts surrounding body fluids, including menstrual blood as well as food were often undergoing re-evaluation within India and the diaspora generally. Factors that may have an influence on this include exposure to alternative ideas (often through the education process which may include living away from home), changing family structure, lack of domestic help and changing expectations. The diaspora experience may continue, accelerate or add to what has occurred within India.

The specific practices and the women's own understanding of themselves and their relationship with the divine demonstrates their interconnectedness. Where the divine was thought to be within, the practices relating to the body and the mind assumed increased importance. What constituted appropriate behaviour did not appear to be concerned with practices surrounding ritual purity as much as with physical purity, although an implicit connection often remained.

CHAPTER 8

SACRED SPACE: The temple and the home

Introduction

In this chapter, the temple and the home are examined in their capacity as forming sacred space. Alternative spaces to these are examined, also. The uses and roles these areas play for the women will be the primary focus. The development of sacred space in South Australia is discussed in order to gain an understanding of the kind of space that is available and the role women played in the conception of this development. This will provide a framework for an understanding of the contemporary situation.

At first I analyse the use that women make of communal sacred space. The second part of this chapter will contain a discussion of the establishment and use of a home shrine and its significance within the diaspora.

There are certain assumptions on which the following discussion is based and these need to be made explicit. They are the concepts of the sacred and the profane and a specific understanding of sacred space. For this, the theoretical work of Mircea Eliade is integral (1959). The sacred aspects of the world are different from non-sacred aspects. What is sacred is differentiated, set apart and opposed to what is mundane, profane or undifferentiated (Eliade 1959, p. 10). Eliade further describes the sacred as being equivalent to reality and, ultimately, to power (1959, p. 12). Sacred space is space which has been set apart, or differentiated, from the surrounding undifferentiated space. For Eliade, space is differentiated by the occurrence of an hierophany through the manifestation of the sacred (1959, p. 26). Space can also have sacredness imparted

through a holy officiant or it can derive sacredness by association with the sacred through ritual activities and objects. When sacred space is discussed within this chapter, reference will be to space which has been set apart and differentiated from the surrounding homogenous space.

Communal Sacred Space

My questioning about space involved determining which communal areas of religious or spiritual significance were used by the women, including the temple, Sai Baba groups and Vedanta societies. In one respect, the two groups of women, from Adelaide and Whyalla, have to be dealt with separately, as no formal temple exists in Whyalla. The option of using a temple was, therefore, unavailable to the women, except on visits to Adelaide or elsewhere. I have incorporated the findings from the questionnaires that I collected in order to provide a wider indication of the use of sacred communal space. Indeed, the initial discussion draws upon the questionnaires that were distributed and collected within the community generally. The discussion then focuses more specifically on the women included in the interview process.

The use of the temple will be examined, including the nature and frequency of temple visits. Secondly, the function of the temple for the women will be discussed. This will be followed by an examination of other religious groups and organisations attended by the women which can be found within the community.

The development of community sacred space in South Australia

When looking at the development of communal sacred space in South Australia, it is instructive to do so in the light of the development that Raymond Williams identified within the United States, with its similar migration profile (1992). He suggested that five different strategies for the development and adaptation of Hinduism in the United States had occurred. They were as follows;

- Individual
- National
- Ecumenical
- Ethnic
- Hierarchical

The individual strategy commences when individuals involved in the immigration process preserve their '...religious identity through acts in private or its opposite in the private disregard for any religious heritage' (Williams 1992, p. 232). Where private practices were maintained, these included maintenance of a home shrine and the performance of family rituals. The national stage that Williams describes takes as its reference the colonial legacy, which superimposed a national identity on Indians. Williams describes the cultural organisations that could be supported as the community expanded. Although initially secular in nature, these organisations assist '...performances in film, dance, theater, and music, honor politicians and bureaucrats from India, observe all-India political and cultural holidays' (Williams 1992, p. 235). Although theoretically secular, Williams reports that, indeed, they tend to become unofficially Hindu and include religious aspects within them.

The ecumenical stage is one in which a pan-Hindu emphasis occurs. During this stage, an emphasis on common boundaries and identity is stressed over diversity, including Hindu and regional diversity. Temples are constructed around pan-Indian deities rather than regional deities, universally accepted texts such as the Bhagavad Gita are highlighted, and the festivals that are celebrated are also pan-Hindu (Williams 1992, p. 239).

Diversity is emphasised within the ethnic strategy, which occurs when a significant number of people from individual ethnic (regional/ language) groups reside in specific locations. Williams suggests that the combination of '...ethnic and religious elements in personal and group identity has a powerful attraction for first-generation immigrants, more powerful than the union of Indian national elements with either secular elements or with an ecumenical Hinduism' (1992, p. 241). The final strategy of adaptation is hierarchical, which Williams describes as being concentrated upon loyalty to a living religious leader, and he included within his discussion loyalty to Sai Baba. This loyalty cuts across regional/ethnic groups according to Williams (1992, p. 243).

The different strategies Williams found within the United States are analogous to the South Australian situation. As Williams suggests, a combination of these strategies can be found at any time, with different strategies being applicable to different times in the development of the community. It is also instructive to compare the Adelaide and

Whyalla communities in the light of Williams' categories as they appear to have adopted different strategies.

Development of a formal structure for communal worship occurred over a period of time within Adelaide. Information supplied by those women who participated in this process, together with that from Bilimoria (1989a) and Lahiri (1992), gives a clear picture of this development. The scholarly works by Bilimoria and Lahiri confirm the accounts given by a number of the women interviewed who were present during the formation of a formal structure.

Prior to the development of communal sacred space in South Australia, the individual strategy that Williams identified was certainly evident, with home shrines being maintained and festivals celebrated in the home. As the community increased in size, a development of national and ecumenical strategies occurred. The initial public religious activities were the celebration of festivals (interview 26). When the community was still small, festivals were often held in private homes, as other venues were often too expensive for the community to hire. From this developed *bhajan* sessions in the homes of individuals, but including a wider group. As the community expanded, fortnightly meetings and festivals were held in the migrant centre free of charge (interview 26). By the mid-1980's, Hinduism become more formalised with the opening of a Hindu temple in Adelaide. The ecumenical nature of this temple is demonstrated by the main deity chosen for it. Ganesha was chosen as he was thought to be a compromise, being pan-Hindu rather than regional specific. The temple represented compromise and focussed upon commonalities within Hinduism.

A number of the women interviewed were present in the very early stages of Hinduism in South Australia, and have contributed to the development of community worship and celebrations. It was clear from the accounts of these women that those who were involved in the development of communal groups did so in partnership with their husbands. The practice of husband and wife working as a team came through strongly. Within this partnership, however, there were times when I gained the impression that some women instigated the initiatives, while, at other times, it was clear that the husband was the instigator. Two of the women who were most involved with the formation and support for the temple appeared to have taken a primary role. One of the

women commented that she often came up with ideas and her husband followed them through (interview 26), demonstrating the way women and men worked in partnership by taking on complementary roles.

Lahiri elaborates on the development of Hindu worship in Adelaide. He states

> In South Australia Hindus similarly used to gather in private homes for their prayer meetings, and occasionally visit the local Hare Krishna Temple on festive days. By the mid-80s a few religious groups, like the Hindu Seva Samaj (Hindu Association of Social Services), Vedanta Society, the Sai Baba group and the Siddha Yagasrama became active in organizing prayer meetings and *Bhajan* sessions. By then, there was an influx of immigrants from the ex-colonial possessions of Britain. It was mainly under their patronage that the Hindu Society of South Australia was inaugurated in 1985. With generous donations from the Hindu devotees, it bought a vacated Lutheran church at Oaklands Park which became the first Hindu temple in the state. The "Inaugural And Thanksgiving Satsang" was held on 22 January 1986, and was attended by a large number of people. At the initial stages a few lay Hindus officiated as priests, although, at present, a full-time Hindu priest from Malaysia has taken up that responsibility. A Ganesa image was installed at the temple with inaugural *Puja* on 11 and 12 July 1986. (Lahiri 1992, p. 206-7)

The temple has a number of other deities, and building is currently under way to extend and renovate the current temple. Adjoining land has been acquired and fundraising has taken place to enable this to occur. The temple still has a full-time priest in attendance; as this priest is from a Tamil-speaking background, there is the perception within the community that it is becoming less ecumenical and more ethnically oriented.

Although founded on ecumenical principles, more recent developments suggest that ethnic divisions are occurring within the temple. These have taken place along the lines of a north/south, Hindi/Tamil division. The way this has occurred is covered more fully within Chapter 11. It does appear that ethnic concerns are being emphasised within the temple, possibly at the expense of a more ecumenical form of Hinduism. It is also possible that more recent immigrants have been influential in this development.

Although the development of the temple has been important for communal worship and celebrations, private temple worship, cultural activities such as dance, and a centre for language teaching, it is by no means the only communal space with significance for the

community. Other religious groups the women mentioned attending were Sai Baba Groups, Vedanta societies (both within the temple and at alternative sites), and meditation groups. The Adelaide community had many more options available to them, unlike the Whyalla community, where no temple existed and few options were found.

One important recent development has been the installation of the south Indian deity Murukan in a Sai Baba meeting centre, during an elaborate ceremony involving two priests. The explanation given for this development was that a number of those attending the centre were very fond of that particular deity and were keen to have him placed within its centre. The priest from the Ganesha Temple attends the God on a weekly basis. It would appear that this demonstrates a more regional influence to a communal sacred space. Thus, although Williams suggests that the emphasis of Sai Baba is, 'hierarchical', in this specific case it does not cut across regional grounds but tends to reinforce them.

Temple attendance

Results from questionnaires in Adelaide

Thirty-nine women from Adelaide answered the questionnaire which was distributed within the community (Appendices 3 & 4), with all but one woman stating that they attended a temple (in one instance the temple interstate was chosen rather than the Adelaide temple). Only one woman did not attend a temple; however, she conducted *puja* twice a day at her home shrine. This woman was between 46-55 and married.

Those who attended a temple were asked in the questionnaire to state whether they attended for 1. *puja* only, 2. *puja* and festivals, or 3. festivals only. When completing the questionnaires, some of the women chose to indicate frequency of attendance. The results are as follows:

Table 4

Temple attendance in Adelaide derived from questionnaires

***Puja* only**	***Puja* and Festivals**	**Festivals only**	**Not stated**
3 (1 rarely)	28 (1 infrequently 1 ambiguous 1 occasionally)	6 (1 in past only)	1 (attends for cultural reasons and is not included in the table below)

It is clear from these figures that the women generally attended the temple for both *puja* and festivals, with the number of women attending being extremely high. The lack of attendance of one of the women did not indicate absence of worship, as she conducted *puja* twice a day at a home shrine, and it would appear that a variety of reasons may have contributed to her lack of attendance at the temple.

An examination of the age distribution of the women does not shed light upon the use of the temple by the women. It would appear that individual choice was the important factor. The age distribution of women attending a temple is as follows:

Table 5

Temple attendance in Adelaide from questionnaires, age distribution

Age group	***Puja* only**	***Puja* and Festivals**	**Festivals only**	**Total**
Under 25	1	2	1	4
26-35	0	6	1	7
36-45	1	8	2	11
46-55	1	9	2	12
Over 55	0	3	0	3
Total	**3**	**28**	**6**	**37**

One did not attend
One did not specify but attended for cultural reasons.
Total 39

Of the 39 women from Adelaide who answered questionnaires, 22 also participated in the interview process. As can be seen from the information above, 28 women answered that they attended the temple for *puja* and festivals. Three women stated that they attended for *puja* only and six attended for festivals only.

Of the six women who stated that they attended the temple for festivals, one placed this activity in the past. She wrote that she used to attend the temple for festivals, but did not currently do so. When answering a question concerning Indian social groups, she also indicated that in the past she had attended the Indian Australian Association meetings, but no longer did. She said she offered *puja* at a home shrine once a day. She was a married woman from Malaysia and was between 36 and 45 years of age. Her lack of attendance may well have been to do with circumstances peripheral to the worship, as her withdrawal from the Indian Australian Association would indicate. This also demonstrates the fluid nature of participation in communal sacred space, and the manner in which it is complementary with what occurs in the domestic sphere. The frequency of attendance varied.

Two women went occasionally for festivals and *puja* and one occasionally for *puja* only.

As previously stated, only one woman said she did not attend the temple but wrote that she worshipped in her own temple, which for her was her own home. This example, together with another of the women who, although indicating her attendance at the temple for festivals, said this was now a past event, thereby demonstrating that participation in communal activities does not appear to be an indication of what occurs in the domestic sphere. A discussion of home worship is included in the following section; however, it is important to note that the four women who did not worship at a home shrine attended the temple. Three of the women who did not worship at a home shrine went to the temple for festivals and *puja,* while the fourth only attended festivals at the temple when she was invited by friends. All women, therefore, took part in some form of activity related to the maintenance of Hinduism.

When asked if they attended any other religious groups, the answers supplied provide an interesting overview of some specific orientations. Nine women answering the

questionnaire stated that they attended Sai Baba functions, although not all were adherents or regular attendees. Five attended Vedanta groups and two attended meditation groups. Some of the women had also attended places of worship for other religious traditions. Three different religious traditions were mentioned in this regard. Five women attended Christian worship and two mentioned attending Sikh religious worship while a further one attended a Buddhist group. One woman stated that she attended a multi-faith group. Sometimes these different traditions were grouped together. For example, one woman stated that she attended the temple for *puja* and festivals but also attended a multi-faith group as well as Christian and Sikh worship. Of the five women who mentioned Christian worship, three also attended Sai Baba groups.

Results from questionnaires in Whyalla

The manner in which the women in Whyalla were selected was due to their relationship with one particular woman in the community. For the interview process, this proved to be somewhat of a disadvantage in a number of respects. Therefore, I am cautious in generalising my findings on the use of communal sacred space for Whyalla. I was able, however, to follow through three alternative contacts to attempt to balance my information. One of these alternative contacts was a single woman who worked in Whyalla for a short time; the second woman had a son working in Whyalla; and the third was a woman living in Whyalla who had not been introduced to me, or indeed mentioned, during my trip to the city. The first two women took part in the Adelaide interviews. Contact with the third woman from Whyalla had been made after she submitted an article to the Indian Australian Association Newsletter, supplying her name and address. My contact with all three women amounted to informal telephone conversations.

The Whyalla women who participated in the interview process did not constitute a homogenous group on all levels, as their length of residency, age, background, employment and status within the community varied. Although the women interviewed all had an acquaintance with the one woman, Yashoda (interview 15), who arranged the interviews, they did not appear to represent a group of 'friends'. I stressed when the offer to arrange the interviews was made that I was interested in as diverse a group within the community as possible. My later contact, through the Newsletter, arranged

for a number of subsequent questionnaires to be distributed outside the initial contact group.

The Whyalla Hindu community was not large enough to support a temple. In 1991, the 'Religion Profile' produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics listed 112 people living in the Whyalla Local Government Area who identified themselves as being Hindu. The city was listed as having 52 women and 60 men (ABS Religion Profile 1991, n. p.). This constituted the third largest concentration of Hindus within a Local Government area in South Australia.

In the absence of a formal temple, an interesting development had occurred there, with one of the local families providing their house as a community temple. The deities were attended to on a daily basis and, when the couple was absent from Whyalla, other women attended the shrine. Their house (which they referred to as Whyalla's temple) was the centre for religious activity in Whyalla. *Bhajan* sessions, prayers, offerings of *prasad*, the celebration of festivals and special occasions, including such *samskaras* as first feeding, were all performed at this 'temple'.

The main focus of the 'temple' was Sathya Sai Baba, and religious activities often centred around Sai Baba activities and functions, although deities other than Shirdi Sai Baba and Sathya Sai Baba were represented in the shrine. Not everyone who used this space, or attended the functions, was a Sathya Sai Baba adherent, but it appears that the convenience of having a religious centre to use was more important than the specific orientation of the centre. The leaning towards Sai Baba was not anathema to the Hinduism of the non-Sai Baba adherents. These women were often at pains to make the point that worship of Sathya Sai Baba was not inconsistent with their assumptions, although they may not have been adherents. Generally, both the Adelaide and Whyalla women who were involved in initiating religious and cultural activities emphasised the joint nature, with their husbands, of their work. In the case of Whyalla, the woman who was responsible for setting up the centre and the temple, together with her husband, was highly revered within the community as both a leader and as the driving force behind the establishment of the centre. She was certainly a remarkable woman and clearly loved within the community, and there were glowing testaments to her position in the community, including her contribution to its spiritual life. I believe that she has since

left Whyalla and is living elsewhere in Australia, and although the temple and centre have been taken over by another woman, she is missed on a daily basis (Journal: 101). She had been responsible for introducing many individuals to Sathya Sai Baba, and some have become adherents.

Eleven questionnaires were completed for Whyalla and eight of the women completing the questionnaires were also interviewed. As far as indicating their attendance at the temple, their answers were somewhat unclear. Most of the women appear to have answered in regards to what they would normally do if a temple were available, while others indicated that the Sai house was considered to be a temple, and answered as to their practice of attending it. One woman wrote that there was no temple in Whyalla that she could attend either for festivals or *puja,* but that she did attend the Sai group on certain occasions. She was in the habit of conducting *puja* at her home shrine once a day. Three women stated, specifically, that they attended the temple for festivals, while six stated that they attended for both festivals and *puja.* One woman stated that, if a temple were available in Whyalla, she would attend. In summary, the information from the questionnaires was as follows:

Table 6
Temple attendance in Whyalla from questionnaires, activities

***Puja* only**	***Puja* and Festivals**	**Festivals only**	**Stated no temple available**
0	6	3	2

The emphasis on festivals rather than *puja* may be due to the nature of the 'temple' in Whyalla, which was more conducive to festival celebration and Sai Baba worship than to other forms of *puja.*

The age distribution of women attending a temple was as follows:

Table 7

Temple attendance in Whyalla from questionnaires, age distribution

Age group	Puja only	Puja and Festivals	Festivals only	None available	Total
Under 25	0	1	0	0	1
26-35	0	3	1	1	5
36-45	0	1	0	0	1
46-55	0	1	1	1	3
Over 55	0	0	1	0	1
Total	**0**	**6**	**3**	**2**	**11**

Although it is difficult to draw any conclusions from this information it would appear the women normally attended temples although, while some considered the Sai house a temple or substitute temple, other did not. Those women who did not use this alternative did not indicate that they were not in the habit of attending any temple and therefore it is not unreasonable to suggest that, when a temple was available, all women would attend for some activity. Therefore, there appeared to be a general desire to participate in temple activities. It is interesting to note that the clarifications, which some of the Adelaide women added to their statements regarding frequency of visits, did not apply to the Whyalla women. This may have been due to an awareness of being isolated from a temple, and nostalgia for one.

As indicated, the Sai Baba group was an important aspect of the Whyalla community. Only one of the Whyalla women stated that she did not attend the Sai Baba group. All of the other women did attend, although one said she only attended in Australia (interview 21), while another attended, but stated that she was not a believer (interview 20). Three of the women mentioned that they also attended Christian worship (interviews 15, 16, 22).

Although an Indian Australian Association group was present in Whyalla, very little was said of this, although three women stated on their questionnaires that they were members, while a further four went to functions but were not members. It does appear that this organisation was responsible for organising the Divali celebration each year,

but I was given the impression that there were a few problems within the group. It certainly did not appear to have a religious function.

The Whyalla women often responded to the questionnaires in general terms rather than in terms of their specific practices in Whyalla. It was clear, however, that they all considered themselves to be temple-goers when the opportunity arose, and a number of the women had adopted the Sai group as a surrogate temple while others did not appear to consider it to be a 'real' temple.

The temple: the interviewees from Adelaide

All 22 of the interviewed women from Adelaide attended temples, although Poonam, the divorcee, attended the temple interstate and overseas, and had never visited the temple in Adelaide (interview 13). When interstate, she attended with her family. Of these 22 women, ten classified themselves as being frequent or regular temple-goers.

Six of the Adelaide women appeared to be very frequent attendees at the temple (interviews 2, 3, 11,14, 26, 30). Attendance amongst this group varied from at least once a week to fortnightly, although one woman described herself as attending all the time. This group varied in age and period of residency in Australia as well as by country of birth. An overview of them is as follows:

Table 8

Frequent temple attendees in Adelaide from interview, country of origin, age distribution and length of residency

Interview	Country of origin	Age	Length of residency
2	Malaysia	36-45	15 years
3	India	26-35	6 years
11	Sri Lanka	26-35	5 years
14	India	26-35	6 years
26	South Africa	46-55	25 years
30	Malaysia	55+	23 years

A further four women attended regularly, although not as frequently as the first group. They visited the temple for festivals and *pujas*, with two of the women commenting that

they visited the temple each month in order to celebrate a time which was particularly significant to their region of origin.

Table 9

Regular temple attendees in Adelaide from interview, country of origin, age distribution and length of residency

Interview	Country of origin	Age	Length of residency
12	India	46-55	23 years
23	India	46-55	22 years
24	India	46-55	30 years
29	India	46-55	23 years

Rather than considering themselves regular temple-goers, women often went for particular occasions. Six visited the temple when they were invited by friends for special occasions. Two further women attended the temple for special occasions, although they did not mention a personal connection. As previously suggested, one woman attended interstate when she joined relatives. A further two women indicated that they attended for social reasons while another one suggested she attended for cultural reasons.

It did appear that this informal network of inviting friends, or suggesting that they joined in for specific occasions for which they felt a personal connection, was an important aspect of temple attendance, and often stimulated individuals to attend. These practices indicate the social nature of temple attendance and that, for a number of the women, this personal involvement with others was an integral aspect of temple attendance.

Both the religious and social nature of temple attendance was, however, obvious from the interviews conducted in Adelaide. Sunita had made a conscious effort to worship publicly in order to provide an example for the younger generations (interview 30). She had a well-developed awareness of the need for leadership within the Hindu community, and public acknowledgment of Hinduism was an integral aspect of this, as well as the need to provide an example and education for children. Chanda had also

been instrumental in establishing and participating in public worship (interview 26). When questioned about the instigation of the initiatives which had been established, she commented that she often came up with the idea and her husband then acted upon it.

Although attendance at Sai Baba *bhajan* sessions was an important aspect of public worship for two of the Adelaide women who were actively involved in the Sai Baba organisation (interviews 2, 28), this did not preclude temple attendance. One of the women attended on a weekly basis, while the other attended for special occasions. Both these women, who came from other diaspora communities, displayed a strong sense of obligation and commitment to the community generally. Sita devoted considerable time to working with children and teaching them. When asked why she was attracted to Sai Baba, her initial response concerned the use of English, which she felt more comfortable with, despite coming from a Tamil-speaking background. When pressed, she elaborated that Sai Baba's teachings were diverse and incorporated other religions (interview 2). Aparna was an adherent prior to migrating to Australia 19 years ago from another diaspora community.

The latter was involved in a Sai Baba group that has recently conducted the installation of the God Murukan into a Sai Baba worship centre, and it is difficult to tell if this would become the focus for worship as a substitute for the Ganesha temple. Its installation had been an elaborate affair, and the God was being attended regularly by the priest from the Ganesha temple. This alternative centre may eventually become a focus for the South Indian community, as the Sai centre has already been for a number of families and individuals from this region.

Whereas the Ganesha temple was established upon ecumenical lines, according to Williams' categories, this recent development is both 'ethnic' and 'hierarchical'. Whether the ethnic thrust will replace the Sai Baba hierarchical element is difficult to say, but it is clear that there is a tendency for a move away from an ecumenical strategy.

Four of the Adelaide women interviewed, who were intimately involved with aspects of public worship, either within the temple or Sai Baba groups, came from diaspora communities. This is consistent with Lahiri's findings, as he suggested that '...the more

religious orientation of groups like the Hindu Society of South Australia, [were] dominated by Hindu immigrants from the ex-colonial countries' (1992, p. 210).

Two women mentioned that their husbands were more inclined to attend the temple than they were. One suggested that her husband attended more frequently for worship (interview 8) while the other suggested that her husband was more interested in guest speakers who came to the temple (interview 6).

The 'temple': the interviewees from Whyalla

All of the eight women interviewed attended the 'temple' which had been established in one house in Whyalla. This attendance is not surprising, given that the women were all friends or acquaintances of the woman who had established the temple. Since the interviews, the women who ran the 'temple' has moved interstate, as mentioned previously, and another woman has established her house as an alternative. It does not appear that all the women interviewed have continued to attend. One woman I followed up sometime later lamented the loss of the original 'temple' and commented that she had not attended the new one. This does indicate what I strongly suspected at the time, that it was the charismatic nature of the women involved which had made a successful centre for worship. Once again, this may well indicate the social nature of community worship.

Three of the women interviewed attended the Whyalla 'temple' on a weekly basis (interviews 15, 19, 22). Two women used it for festivals (interviews 16, 20), while another one used it occasionally for festivals and *bhajans* (interview 18). A further two women indicated that they were regular users (interviews 17, 21).

The responses as to whether or not the women considered the 'temple' to be a temple varied, with some insisting it was a 'real' temple, others suggesting that they used it as a temple, and one stating that she did not consider it to be a temple but she still attended.

Even when this house was discussed in terms of a temple, it was considered to be a substitute for not having a formal temple in the town (interviews 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22). Anjali stated that it '...is our temple now... we consider her home like a temple'

(interview 19). Another described it as the best option when a temple was not available (interview 18). Only one of the women actually stated that she did not consider it as a temple but that she did attend on special occasions (interview 20).

A number of the women indicated that they missed having a temple, even when they were able to use the Whyalla house as a substitute, and temples were often visited when they were in cities in Australia which had formal temples. Manju, who came from India to Australia 18 months previously, indicated she was in the habit of attending the temple in India on at least a weekly basis (interview 21).

When Anita was asked if she missed having a temple as she did not consider the Whyalla temple to be a substitute, she indicated that she did miss it but that, as she does her rituals at home, it did not matter (interview 20). Quite clearly, a temple was not a necessary aspect of religious practice for her, although it was a desirable one.

The substitute temple appeared to fulfil some of the requirements of a temple for the women. It was not only used for *bhajans*, prayers, festivals and the offering of *prasad*, but also for *samskaras* such as the first feeding. Sacred items from the 'temple' were taken to other houses for ceremonies such as entering a new house. The woman whose house constituted the 'temple' performed daily rituals at the shrine, held the weekly Sai Baba *bhajan* sessions, taught children on Sundays, took sacred items to other houses, and was consulted for auspicious times. Her husband also assisted, but it was quite clear that she was the prime motivator and she indicated that her husband's involvement was due to her. Unlike the typical profile of the women in Adelaide, this particular woman was from India, rather than from another diaspora community.

Two of the women spoke of the social aspect of the 'temple' in a manner similar to that of a number of the Adelaide women. Asha said that

> I found my community especially after coming to Whyalla. I was a bit worried when I came to Whyalla from Adelaide because Adelaide straight away we had the temple we met everybody and I knew, you know our people were there but in Whyalla - but since I met ... and... I could meet everybody else here and I was very happy that we had some religious group like we could discuss our things. (Interview 17)

The atmosphere at the 'temple' was also discussed in terms of an extended family. It was described as a 'household' and 'welcoming' (interview 16).

As previously mentioned, the Whyalla 'temple' was also a Sai Baba centre and, therefore, it performed multiple roles within the community.

The reaction to Sai Baba by the women interviewed was mixed. For a number of the women, Sai Baba had been introduced to them since they had been in Australia. Yashoda's family had been devoted to Shirdi Baba, ' an Indian holy man from whom, says Sai Baba of Puttaparthi, he is reincarnated' (Sandweiss, 1975, p. 239). The latter is more commonly known as Sathya Sai Baba or simply Sai Baba or even Baba. Yashoda had met Sai Baba on more than one occasion while she was still living in India. She understands Shirdi Baba and Sathya Sai Baba as one and the same, and his presence has guided her life especially, in the latter years. She has placed herself fully within his control. Her house is a temple devoted to him, but it also contains other deities. She has been responsible for introducing many of the women to Sai Baba through her example of kindness and devotion. She had become the spiritual leader for many of the women in the Indian community in Whyalla. In a sense, she filled a void in the community, which was due to the absence of any more formal organisation. Although her husband was also involved, it was clear that Yashoda was the driving force, and she acknowledged that her husband's involvement was due to her (interview 15).

In contrast with the Adelaide women who were Sai Baba adherents, the Whyalla women were all from the Indian subcontinent. Yashoda's family were Shirdi Baba adherents, and the incorporation of Sathya Sai Baba into her religious reality was a continuation of this tradition (interview 15). She spoke of Shirdi and Sathya interchangeably and insisted that they are one and the same. Yashoda was over 55 and had lived in Australia for 9 years and, therefore, she was senior in years when she migrated. She had previously lived for a short time in Germany.

As previously stated, there is no inconsistency in Hinduism with the inclusion of worship of Sai Baba. There appears to be the distinction, however, between the acceptance of Sai Baba and devotion to Sai Baba. In both the Adelaide and Whyalla

communities, there seem to be three different approaches to Sai Baba: firstly, to be a devotee; secondly, to be accepting of the validity of Sai Baba but not a specific devotee; and, thirdly, to disbelieve the legitimacy of Sai Baba. This was consistent with Lawrence Babb's findings in Delhi (1986). He stated that

> Among my neighbours in New Delhi there were some who did not identify themselves as actual devotees, but who nonetheless considered Sathya Sai Baba to be in some sense a living deity. Of course there were also many who regarded him as a fraud or worse. (Babb 1986, p. 167)

Other than Yashoda, one Whyalla women interviewed was a staunch devotee of Sai Baba. She stated that this was since she had known Yashoda (interview 22).

Anjali stated that she worshipped Sai Baba in the form of a god, but it was unclear whether she was a specific devotee of Sai Baba or whether it was a matter of availability (interview 19). She may, in fact, be part of the second category, who worshipped out of convenience, perhaps not being a devotee. Two of the women indicated that worshipping Sai Baba was something specific, which they did in Australia (interviews 17, 21). Asha commented that she was not a believer in India, but that she had only been introduced to Sai Baba while living in Australia (interview 17). Manju made a similar comment that they did not have Sai Baba in Delhi, so she only goes to gatherings in Australia (interview 21). Anita, on the other hand, made a firm statement that she did not believe in the divinity of Sai Baba (interview 20).

It would appear that the network that was set up around the 'temple' and the Sai Baba group constituted an important nexus for the existing community, as well as for new residents. This was especially so for the women, as some were not involved in the permanent work force. As a number of the women had come to Whyalla with their husbands who were contracted to BHP, they often took some time to find employment of any kind at all, as opportunities were limited. Therefore, networks, and the contacts they made through the 'temple' and Sai centre, were important for them.

The Adelaide mother of one young man who was working in Whyalla had also mentioned that her son had attended the 'temple' for special occasions. Therefore, it would appear to assist the men as well as the women (interview 12).

Alternative communal groups: Adelaide

Besides the groups just mentioned, there were a number of different groups which women attended. General meditation groups, without a specific Hindu orientation, were sometimes a focus for attendance. Meditation techniques, retreats and guest teachers were all part of these groups. Those attending often came from diverse backgrounds, those from an Indian background being a minority. A number of Sai Baba groups were mentioned. Worship, *bhajan* singing, the celebration of festivals including Sai Baba's birthday, and guest speakers were all activities which were part of the groups. The Vedanta groups would often have discussions and social activities, and when special guest speakers were visiting from interstate and overseas, they would combine to host the occasion.

Two of the women interviewed attended meditation centres regularly as part of what seemed to be their main communal spiritual practice (interviews 8, 9). The first of these women had a husband who was very involved in both the temple and private worship, and it appeared that she had searched for her own focus for religious expression and direction. It seemed that her husband took a leading role in both the domestic space and the community's religious space. She commented that 'I had to go out and find my own road and that was good for me' (interview 8). For the second woman, attending a meditation group and practicing meditation were part of the spiritual path or goal, as she had chosen to follow that of *Raja* yoga (interview 9).

A Vedanta group operating from the temple met every alternate Sunday, and two women interviewed were regular attendees (interviews 11, 30), while another said she had been in the past (interview 5). This group will be discussed in Chapter 11. Apart from the group at the temple, other groups were connected with this philosophy. One of the groups that met regularly was the Ramakrishna Sarada Vedanta Society of S. A., which is associated with the Ramakrishna Sarada Vedanta Society of N.S.W. The president of both associations is Rev. Pravrajika Ajaprana Mataji (correspondence from P. Carter, 3 March 1998). The Adelaide centre is based at Aldgate, and has members from both non-Indian and Indian descent, although there are few of the latter (Journal: 107). This group cooperates in conjunction with others and, when visiting speakers from interstate or overseas are available, groups will often 'share' the speakers or combine in order to maximise the audience. Aparna, who was interviewed, made the

point that a group she was involved with would cooperate with the Ramakrishna Sarada Vedanta Society (interview 28). Meena commented that she would attend talks by those visiting from the Ramakrishna mission, although her husband did so more regularly (interview 6).

The Ramakrishna mission and Vedanta societies provided a steady stream of visiting spiritual leaders from interstate, India and other diaspora communities. The community in Adelaide was certainly not developing in isolation from spiritual developments, although the Whyalla community did not have the same advantage and so relied more on personal visits to major cities in Australia as well as to India.

As previously mentioned, a number of Sai Baba groups exist in Adelaide. Two of the women were intimately involved with different groups. During an informal discussion with a Sai Baba adherent in 1993, at an early stage in my research, I was given considerable information concerning the Sai Baba groups in Adelaide. This was supplemented through subsequent discussions with Sai Baba adherents and attendance at specific celebrations.

There has been considerable division within the Sai Baba groups over the years, with different factions arising. New centres have formed when problems have arisen in others. The size of individual groups has fluctuated, with the Elizabeth group at one stage acquiring a church in which to worship. When problems occurred over the incorporation of the centre, the church was subsequently sold. It was suggested that there were some 500 to 600 adherents in Adelaide with a third of them being Indian. Seven centres mentioned were at North Adelaide, Elizabeth, Clapham, Golden Grove, Wattle Park, Aberfoyle Park and Brighton, with the largest concentration of Indians at the Wattle Park centre. The Wattle Park centre has recently established itself in a converted stable in the grounds of a private residence, which provides considerable room for meetings and worship, and is available at any time for individuals. The Sai Baba 69th birthday celebration that I attended was held at a community hall. Of the 200 people in attendance, approximately 50% were Indian.

Sai Baba groups, along with other alternative groups, have provided an additional community sacred space for the women of the Hindu community. These specific

alternatives to the more traditional temple organisation appear to provide a forum for women to become more involved with organisation. Women seem to have taken a more prominent and leading role within these organisations, which were not dominated by male Brahmans.

Alternative communal groups: Whyalla

There was no indication that the women in Whyalla belonged to or attended any other religious group than the Sai Baba group, and I do not believe, from the information gathered, that any alternative Hindu oriented religious group existed.

Summary

Women were instrumental in the development of communal sacred space, often in partnership with their husbands. There appeared to be a strong desire within the community, for this to be established, even when it was still small. The Adelaide temple and the substitute Whyalla 'temple' were used by nearly all of the women interviewed. The temple served important social functions in the community, as it provided an introduction for new immigrants to the Hindu community, and was a medium for maintaining social networks. It was, also, for a few of the women, an important aspect of their religious life and a means of demonstrating a public face for Hinduism. This latter function was seen by some to be crucial for the younger generations born in Australia.

A temple was not necessarily an integral part of maintaining Hinduism, but was a desirable one. Hinduism was primarily understood by the women (as will be seen in the section on domestic space) as being maintained within the domestic sphere, with the temple a desirable addition. It would appear that, whenever a community becomes large enough to support communal practices, communal sacred space develops. The Whyalla community provides an indication of the profile of an emerging community. Although, because of the Sai Baba influence it has taken a specific (hierarchical?) quality, it may still give an indication of the way in which the Hindu community in Adelaide emerged.

The desire for a communal aspect for Hinduism came across in both Whyalla and Adelaide. It appears that, where few alternatives are offered, concessions are made, as

in the case of Sai Baba worship in Whyalla. The Adelaide community was more cohesive, as the community was developing a public aspect, with ecumenical Hinduism being prominent and the temple being the primary focus of communal sacred space. With further influxes of migrants from India and other diaspora communities, alternative public religious groups appeared, often reflecting the specific interests and orientation of the participants, as well as regional/language groups. These groups were also, for many individuals, more conveniently located than the temple.

If the Whyalla community were to increase in size, no doubt alternatives to the current Sai Baba-oriented group would occur. Even now, as the centre has been taken over - or should I say taken in - by someone else, since the departure of the initiator, an alternative group without a Sai Baba focus may well evolve.

Lawence Babb's chapters in *Redemptive Encounters* on Sathya Sai Baba provide an insight into the attraction of Sai Baba (1986). Although he does not mention the rise of Sathya Sai Baba in the diaspora communities, he suggests that, in India, it is the English-educated urban elite which is attracted to Sai Baba (Babb 1986, p. 167). He also suggests that the individuals are often '...to some degree culturally rootless, distanced from their tradition by background and education' (Babb 1986, p. 191). Members of this group, he suggests, are searching for their identity. According to Babb, this is a theme which is frequently taken up by Sai Baba and one the latter attempts to address in his teachings (1986, p. 191). Babb goes on to suggest that

> It is therefore possible that the nativistic tendencies in Sathya Sai Baba's teachings provide a link between more traditional concepts of the predicament of the self in the world and perplexities inherent in the lives of many members of modern India's most favored groups. (Babb 1986, p.191)

If this is the case for the English-educated urban elite from which Yashoda comes, the diaspora experience would have the same concerns, but more intensely. Therefore, the attraction of those from India and other diaspora communities to Sai Baba may be a search for identity. Although her background was similar to that of many others, Yashoda's personal encounter with Sathya Sai Baba and her family tradition would contribute to her decision to become an adherent. It will be interesting to see if the diasporan experience in Australia will result in others becoming adherents, or whether

other means of finding or understanding identity will prevail. Is it a sense of rootlessness or distance from tradition which attracts individuals to Sai Baba in Australia? Sai Baba groups, certainly within the Adelaide context provide one means of connecting with the wider Australian community without relinquishing a Hindu world view, and generally attracts those from alternative diaspora communities. Was it a means of being similar but different? Certainly those women would often emphasise that they had the Virgin Mary and Jesus in their home shrine. There would be the implication that they were different, but ultimately similar, to me with stress placed on the view that 'we all ultimately believe in the one God'. In a similar way the Vedanta groups placed emphasis on unity of purpose within religions, rather than stressing difference. Does Sai Baba offer a sense of control which is missing in the current circumstance? This also, may be part of the attraction.

The meditation groups which some of the women mentioned may fulfil the same needs as the Sai Baba groups. These needs may include alternative personal and spiritual development in an environment which is ecumenical in nature. These groups may assist in the search for identity and a sense of self within the South Australian diaspora by providing points of intersection with the wider community, as well as an alternative to the demands of the domestic sphere.

Unlike Whyalla and the early stages of the Adelaide community, currently in Adelaide there are many more alternatives for public worship and, it would appear that women are finding the areas in which they feel most comfortable.

The temple is still a place of some importance, albeit to a greater or lesser extent than the alternatives. All of the women interviewed had attended a temple or substitute temple in Australia for some occasion. Alternative spiritual or religious groups were also important to a number of the women, with Sai Baba groups, especially, providing a specific focus for them. This often reflected the specific religious orientation of the women, but it also appeared that the women could have a direct role within the groups. This was not available to the same extent at the temple, where a male priest presided, and where many of the duties and responsibilities appeared to reside with the men.

In a sense, the temple seemed, for some, to reflect the traditional or cultural aspect of Hinduism, rather than a necessary aspect of worship. This cultural aspect included the wearing of traditional clothes, traditional seating arrangements, traditional ritual worship, Indian languages, food and singing. Although some of these aspects may have been present in some of the alternative groups such as the Sai Baba groups, generally speaking, the alternative groups relied much more on spiritual or religious knowledge, understanding or meditation techniques. In a sense, then, these alternatives complemented the temple, rather than substituting for it. They seemed to provide a further direction for individual focus and development. They also appeared to provide a more fertile ground for women to develop and to take control of their own spiritual needs. Especially where the temple organisation appeared to be undertaken by male leaders, alternative groups could provide an outlet for female leadership. This is not to suggest that women did not take any roles within the temple, however, but to emphasise the gendered nature of the temple space.

It is interesting to note that the President of the Ramakrishna Sarada Vedanta Society of both South Australia and New South Wales, as previously mentioned, is a woman. Mataji, as she is known, comes to Adelaide three times a year under normal circumstances (Journal: 107). Whereas in the temple the priest is the figure of authority, Mataji provides a female face and spiritual leader.

Domestic sacred space

Domestic worship is generally a fundamental aspect of Hindu practice. An area of a dwelling is set aside for a shrine to house a representation of a deity or deities. This area is kept in a relative state of ritual purity and is tended to at certain times or occasions, often by the women of the household. In the initial development of the diaspora community, this was the only area available for devotional practices focussed on a representation of the divine, as a temple was not available within the state. Thus, the ritual maintenance of Hinduism took place primarily within the home in what Williams has described as the individual stage (1992). Even though a temple is now available to worshippers, the continued maintenance of a home shrine occurs, but often in conjunction with temple worship. In this section, the way in which the domestic space is prepared for the family, and utilised and maintained as a place for domestic

worship, is studied, along with an assessment of the significance of the domestic sphere in the maintenance of Hinduism in South Australia.

As the diaspora space is new space, families are often faced with the task of establishing new homes. As they establish themselves and develop firmer financial backing, families often opt to upgrade or build their own homes after a number of years in the state. All the women, therefore, had experiences of establishing a residence. The concept of transforming the space and blessing it to ensure prosperity for the family was often an important aspect of the moving process. The way this is undertaken is explored in this section.

After an examination of the establishment of the domestic space, I focus upon the extent to which worship at a home shrine occurs within the South Australian community. When discussing the Australian context, Bilimoria describes the practice of performing *puja*, in the following manner:

> In their homes most Hindus have a small wooden shrine or an alcove set aside for offering of devotional worship (*Puja*). In previous time the daily worship was performed by the man of the house. However, these days the women seem to have taken over the role. Before performing the *puja* the worshipper has a shower or bath to purify herself and puts on clean clothes. The idea of purity is all-important to the Hindus. The deities are then symbolically washed, dressed, and decorated with flowers and perfumes. Incense, light (*dip*) and food (*Prasad*) are then offered, followed by prayers. '*Prasad*' is food which has been sanctified by special preparation and then offered to the deity with devotion. This food is then consumed as though it were a 'consecrated offering'. (Bilimoria 1996, p. 21)

Although Bilimoria describes the detailed procedure, he acknowledges that '...in Australia, many of the rituals are either modified or cut short to suit prevailing conditions' (1989, p. 9). This section will include an examination of the women's role in the maintenance of the home shrine, and the significance of the shrines to the women within the community. Conversely, it is important to identify where a home shrine is not incorporated into the domestic sphere. This may either be an indication of a lack of maintenance of Hinduism, or of a diversity of expression.

Establishing the Sacred within domestic space

As migration to the diaspora entailed the establishment of independent and new residences, the undifferentiated and profane realm that was and is encountered was often brought under more favourable conditions by the performance of a variety of rituals. The domestic space was, generally, transformed into a suitable abode for the deities and the family through ritual activity. Ritual activity was usually accompanied in South Australia by the creation of a family's domestic space as sacred space. The rituals undertaken often involved brahmanic rituals and popular rites. They may include the timing of entry at an auspicious time, the installation of the deities, the performance of a special *puja* by a priest (there are a number who perform rituals for the community), a family *puja*, the boiling of milk and sugar on the stove (to ensure family prosperity) or simply a prayer.

An important means of making auspicious any new residence, to ensure an auspicious household, took the form of moving home on an auspicious day and performing the ritual of boiling milk and sugar on the stove. When establishing an auspicious time for moving into a house or flat, the priest, members of the older generation, or even relatives overseas, may be consulted. Women often took a leading role in these rites by conducting them or assisting others.

Promila's mother, who lived with her, assisted one of her friends to find an auspicious time (interview 1). As well as performing rituals including boiling milk and sugar, Yashoda, assisted other families with rituals, when moving (interview 15). When helping Surika, she looked for an auspicious time and sang *bhajans* (interview 16). Anjali was also helped by Yashoda, who supplied the dates and assisted in the rituals, including boiling milk and sugar (interview 19). Pria's mother came from interstate to assist her move and offered flowers at the home shrine (interview 25). Chanda assisted her son and also performed rituals herself, including moving on an auspicious day, performing *puja* and boiling milk and sugar (interview 26). The auspicious time was established by Sunita, who contacted a priest in Malaysia before one was available in South Australia. Once this was established, she undertook rituals, including offering *prasad* and asking for blessing as well as boiling milk and sugar (interview 30). She also assisted her daughter to move in the same manner. The combination of moving on

an auspicious day, performing a *puja* and boiling the milk and sugar were mentioned by others (interview 17, 22).

At the time Chanda moved, there was no resident priest in Adelaide, and she and her family had to make do without the assistance of a priest to advise on auspicious times and to perform a *puja.* If the occasion arose in the future, she would use a priest to perform rituals, as she felt that it was more desirable. In the absence of a Hindu priest, Sita gained the assistance of a Catholic priest (interview 2).

Devi, who performed few rituals, although not moving into her new house on an auspicious day due to the inconvenience, did offer fruits and flowers at her home shrine (interview 4). When asked about moving on an auspicious day, Poonam made the comment that she did not regulate her life through the observance of auspicious times (interview 13). Hema, although observing the *puja* and milk boiling, commented that it was not always convenient to move on an auspicious day (interview 18). Even when an auspicious day was not convenient, the point was made by some of the women that it was desirable (interviews 17, 18).

Anita made the observation that she and her husband did not particularly believe in auspiciousness and did not take it into account when moving (interview 20). She did, however, place the gods in the house first, and offered food, before they moved their possessions in. Other women's practices were similar (interviews 21, 23). Aparna commented that, although she did not care about auspiciousness, her husband did and, therefore, they moved on an auspicious day (interview 28). She did, however, perform rituals, including boiling the milk and sugar.

Shamila felt that it was important to establish an auspicious time for moving into a new house and to perform a *puja* for the occasion (interview 11). Indra had the priest establish an auspicious time and perform the *puja* when entering the house (interview 14). She then boiled the milk and sugar. For Malati, it was not so much establishing an auspicious time for moving, but avoiding one that was inauspicious (interview 29). Rituals were, once again, conducted by a priest when she moved, and she boiled the milk and sugar.

Changing attitudes in establishment rituals were mentioned by two of the women. Kulpana suggested that boiling the milk and sugar was something her mother would have done but she did not, as she does not place the same emphasis on rituals (interview 9). For Mahdu, practices had altered while living in Australia (interview 27). Originally, she performed rituals, including boiling the milk and sugar, when moving house in Australia; however, when she recently moved to a new house, she did not conduct any rituals. Auspiciousness, she suggested, has never meant anything to her. Kuna said that it was her mother in India, who insisted that she light the lamp and put milk on the stove when she moved into her new house (interview 7).

The two women who did not have a home shrine did not mention the performance of any rituals for moving house. This may well indicate the different attitudes towards domestic space without a home shrine. Kulpana, mentioned above, who placed little emphasis on rituals at a home shrine but spent considerable time meditating, did not feel the need for ritual activities before moving into her house (interview 9).

A few of the women mentioned that they had special *Satyanarayana pujas* conducted in thanks for a successful move a short time after it had been completed (interviews 24, 25). Lawrence Babb suggests that this ceremony can either be performed in anticipation of the fulfilment of desires or after the vow has been fulfilled (1975, p. 181). He describes it as being conducted for such blessings as '...the desire for business success, good health, children and the like...' (1975, p. 181). As it is a ceremony focussing on and honouring Vishnu, it is a devotional practice. Those who mentioned having this special *puja*, either for moving or for other occasions, either had a priest from the community attend or were married to a Brahman who was able to perform the rites. This differs from the experience in the United States, where Narayanan reported that, as there were few priests available in that country, the *satyanarayana puja* was normally conducted in the temple (1992, p. 170). This indicates that the South Australian community is well supplied with Brahman priests who are able to assist the general Hindu community. Therefore, individuals could choose what rituals they want assistance for and what they would choose to undertake themselves.

Fred Clothey uses the term 'agamization' to describe the use of priests who base their work on the ritual text and are versed in ritual traditions of their region. He suggests that these men are often used in the diaspora as temple priests. In South Australia, many assist the wider community by performing *satyanarayana pujas* and *samskaras* for those generally from the same regional language group. Clothey suggests that '...this relative "agamization" serves to upgrade the ritual life, link it to the performative tradition's perceived ancestral roots, and lend it greater status. At the same time it is believed to enhance the power of the ritual to achieve its intended aims' (Clothey 1992, p. 130). He continues by emphasising the importance of orthopraxy for many within the diaspora where a sense of isolation and marginality occurs, and he suggests that diasporan Hindus may return to orthopraxy when their '...uniqueness is perceived to be at stake in the face of majority cultures, migration and change' (1992, p. 130). Generally priests were used in South Australia as adjunct to rituals conducted by the family for important occasions. Their services could be used when they were available, or dispensed with when they were unavailable. They did appear to lend a certain degree of status or authority to a particular ritual.

As many of the women were married to Brahman men, a number of whom acted as part time priests within the community, it can be assumed that the rites which were performed often included brahmanic rituals. The temple priest was occasionally brought in to perform rituals as a family moved into a new home. In the absence of a priest, an instance of using a Catholic priest was reported. Non brahman families conducted the rituals they thought were appropriate. Within the homes of the women who were married to priests, the men automatically conducted the required rituals for these occasions with the women assisting in such activities preparing the items to be used, including food. The discussion of *samskaras* provides specific examples of the way in which this occurs. There did not appear to be a tension between the men conducting the brahmanic ritual, and the women, as the latter would assist their husbands and undertake popular rites, in what appeared to be a complementary manner. There appeared to be a distinction between what may be termed 'men's business' and 'women's business' at these times.

It does appear, often, that moving on an auspicious day and placing the deities in the home shrine within the house was an important aspect of establishing the domestic

space as a sacred space and the residence of deities. Women's popular rites with the boiling of the milk and sugar, with its symbolic link to fertility and abundance, appeared to be an important aspect of ensuring the prosperity of the family. Once again it was the actions of the wife and mother, on behalf of the family, that actively ensured the well-being of the family. Once sacred space was established, it was then maintained through devotional practices and avoidance of ritual impurity.

Home Shrines: information from the questionnaires

Of the 50 women who completed questionnaires, 45 conducted *puja* at a home shrine while five stated that they did not. Of those women who did not use a home shrine, two were between 36 and 45 years of age, while the other three were aged between 46 and 55 years.

The frequency of use of the home shrine, as well as of rituals performed, varied considerably. I have chosen to give an overall view of the women who completed questionnaires. ***Table 10*** sets out the age group of the women and their marital status.

TABLE 10

Summary of women's details from Questionnaire: marital status

Age of women	Number of women	Marital status
Under 25	5	2 single, 3 married
26-35	12	12 married
36-45	12	10 married, I single, 1 divorced
46-55	17	17 married
Over 55	4	4 married

Table 11 looks at the frequency of *puja* conducted at the home shrine

TABLE 11
Frequency of conducting *puja* at a home shrine, from questionnaire

Time period	**Number of women**
Twice a day	18
Once a day	16
Weekly	1
Occasionally	2
Special occasions	7
Rarely	1
Never	5
Total	50

Tables 12, 13, 14, 15,16 provide a breakdown of frequency of conducting *puja* at a home shrine, by age grouping.

TABLE 12	
Frequency of conducting *puja* at a home shrine:	
Women under 25 years of age	
Time period	Number of women
Twice a day	0
Once a day	2
Weekly	1
Occasionally	0
Special occasions	2
Rarely	0
Never	0
Total	5

N.B. The two women who were single conducted *pujas* on special occasions

TABLE 13	
Frequency of conducting *puja* at a home shrine:	
Women between 26 and 35 years of age	
Time period	Number of women
Twice a day	6
Once a day	4
Weekly	0
Occasionally	1
Special occasions	0
Rarely	1
Never	0
Total 12	

TABLE 14	
Frequency of conducting *puja* at a home shrine:	
Women between 36 and 45 years of age	
Time period	Number of women
Twice a day	5
Once a day	3
Weekly	0
Occasionally	0
Special occasions	2
Rarely	0
Never	2
Total 12	

TABLE 15	
Frequency of conducting *puja* at a home shrine:	
Women between 46 and 55 years of age	
Time period	Number of women
Twice a day	7
Once a day	5
Weekly	0
Occasionally	0
Special occasions	2
Rarely	0
Never	3
Total 17	

TABLE 16	
Frequency of conducting *puja* at a home shrine:	
Women over 55 years of age	
Time period	Number of women
Twice a day	1
Once a day	1
Weekly	0
Occasionally	1
Special occasions	1
Rarely	0
Never	0
Total 4	

When the results of the questionnaire are analysed, the most striking feature is that home shrines are used for *puja* by the majority of the women on a frequent basis. Thirty four of the fifty women surveyed conducted *puja* at least once a day. Even where women have stated that they did not use a home shrine, this did not necessarily indicate a lack of adherence to Hindu beliefs, values or assumptions. In one case, it was indicated that the husband performed the rituals at the home shrine, rather than the wife.

Another woman, although not preforming *puja* at home, wrote that she attended a Sathya Sai Baba group, indicating some interest in this particular religious direction. Two of the women who indicated that they did not have a home shrine were subsequently interviewed. Vijaya, one of these mentioned that she was influenced by Vedanta philosophy. Instead or maintaining a home shrine, she contemplated on a special, secret name for God, which she held in her mind. This once again indicates an alternative form of devotion to that which is focussed upon a home shrine (interview 5).

None of the women who completed a questionnaire, including those who were interviewed, did not either perform *puja* at a home shrine or visit a temple. All were involved in some activities related directly to Hinduism. Whyalla did not have an official temple, and the women answering the questionnaire there all performed *puja* at a home shrine at least once a day. It may be that the lack of formal communal facilities made the women more conscious of performing *puja* at a home shrine. Even though the temple may not always be utilised regularly, when available, there may in fact be a psychological support rendered by a temple. Vashudha Narayanan quotes a 2nd century woman poet as advising "'Do not reside in a town where there is no temple'" (1992, p. 167) and, indeed, the lack of a temple may mean that domestic rituals are more frequently undertaken. It would be interesting to see the effect on the use of home shrines in Whyalla if a temple with a permanent priest was available.

The rituals that were performed at the home shrine varied considerably, with some being basic or consisting of simple gestures, while others were quite elaborate. In order to demonstrate this variety, I will quote from some of the statements made on the questionnaires. Some examples of the less complex rituals included the weekly recitation of a *mantra* and thanks (questionnaire 3); the offering of flowers after the husband has conducted morning *puja* (questionnaire 4); the lighting of the lamp and making an offering (questionnaire 6); and prayer (questionnaires 21, 22). One woman stated that 'Praying to God in own Temple' would be performed twice a day (questionnaire 27). Prayers and meditation were often performed, rather than rituals directed towards offering hospitality to the deities (questionnaire 11).

The more complex rites that were performed often included a variety of rituals. One example included lighting of the lamp, reading from the Ramayana, singing *bhajans*

and meditation (questionnaire 15). Another woman provided considerable detail of her evening ritual as she stated that she would 'Cleanse the body, pick flowers from garden (whatever is available), water, light lamp (now it is a candle) with a chosen oil (essential oils) or incense stick. Quiet meditation or prayer or song - and odd number of circles in rotation' (questionnaire 17). One Whyalla woman wrote that she performed 'prayers for 15 mts. Sometimes read a few verses from Gita or any other good religious book. Recite a few times Gayatri Mantra' (questionnaire Whyalla 1).

Other women mentioned ministrations to the deity as being part of their ritual actions, such as 'Daily prayers, which includes, bath, decorating and offering prasad' (questionnaire 24) or 'Lighting the Lamps. Lighting of incense sticks, Offering of flowers. Kneel down three times' (questionnaire 25).

Worship at the home shrine tended to be divided between prayers or meditation and ritual activities with some overlap occurring. This reflects, perhaps, different assumptions concerning Hinduism, time constraints or differing priorities. It is interesting to note that the two single women only conducted *puja* for special occasions and not as regular maintenance. This may indicate that marriage entailed different obligations for women but, as not all married women maintained a home shrine, a conclusion is difficult to make in this regard.

Home Shrines: the women interviewed

Of the women who participated in the interview process, 24 conducted *puja* regularly at their home shrines, four conducted it occasionally, and two did not have home shrines, therefore, neither the women nor their husbands conducted *puja*. Although 28 women conducted *puja*, in six cases the women stated that their husbands took the prominent role in conducting *puja* at the home shrine. Of the six men who took the prominent role four were definitely Brahman while a further one may also have been a Brahman, and I have included him as such. Only one of these men was definitely non-Brahman. Of the four women who conducted *puja* occasionally, one had no children, one was unmarried, while another had a husband who took a primary role. The dominant role played by women in maintaining the home shrine was consistent with the current trend which Bilimoria noted, which applied to both India and the diaspora (1996, p. 21). The extent to which the home shrine was maintained was extremely high, demonstrating a

considerable desire by the women generally to undertake specific Hindu practices within the home. This was not an area which was being reassessed as regards the basis of the practice, however, the actions involved may have been influenced by such things as time constraints, which working and the lack of domestic help or an extended family, may have entailed.

Domestic sacred space: its creation and maintenance

In the majority of instances, the existence of a home shrine and the presence of deities within the domestic space provided a physical and symbolic sacred centre within the domestic space. Home shrines varied considerably from constituting a small space, often in the kitchen or a kitchen cupboard, to elaborate shrines, and occasionally entire rooms devoted to shrines, where space permitted. The area surrounding the shrine was often treated with strict rules of purity, although this was not always the case. On ritual occasions, stricter rules than at other times, could be invoked. For example, some families only requested visitors to remove their shoes when entering the house on the special occasions, such as Divali, when a special *puja* was performed, although on a daily basis shoes were not removed. On these occasions, also, the deities were temporarily moved to a more prominent place within the house from their usual position in a kitchen cupboard or shrine room.

In a sense, the domestic space was considered to be sacred space that was not opposed to communal sacred space but an extension of, a substitute for, or a continuation of it. Indeed, communal sacred space could be considered as an extension of sacred domestic space. Where no communal sacred space was available for use, the home shrine provided the means of fulfilling many of the rituals and undertaking celebrations. The domestic space, in two instances, had been extended to include sacred space for the broader community. In both instances, the primary focus of worship in both households, although not the only focus, was Sathya Sai Baba. The Adelaide site had a distinct South Indian focus. These homes had been made available to the community for both communal and private worship, in a sense acting as a communal temple. In one instance, in Whyalla, this was in the absence of a temple.

This arrangement is not without precedent. Mary Hancock, when discussing Smarta Brahmans in Madras City, comments that

> Sunithi's house was treated by its residents and her clients like the sites in urban India referred to as 'private temples'. They are public spaces but are 'private' in that their management lies outside the control of the state government. They are maintained through the labor and finances of families and voluntary associations, and tend to serve a relatively homogenous public, in terms of sectarian affiliation, caste, class, and/ or residence. (Hancock 1995, p. 80)

For Whyalla, the domestic space catered for a specific residential group, but it also had sectarian overtones. The Adelaide space was also relatively homogenous, catering for sectarian devotees from both the Indian and non-Indian community. The Indians who attended the centre were consistent with the South Indian focus of the space.

Another sense in which the domestic space catered for the wider community was during festivals. Although this is described in more detail when discussing regional space, it is important to note that worship was conducted for invited members of the community to participate in festivals. An example of this is Ganesha Chaturthi, which is held over several days. Members of the community, generally the regional/language group, participate in celebrations and worship at the home of a particular family.

Although it can be significant to a wider group, the home shrine as a reflection of the history and experiences of the individuals is not to be understated. In general, women are expected to take over their husband's family deities. These deities are often inherited physically over time when mothers-in-law will hand over particular deities to their sons' wives. Devi explained that her mother-in-law came to Adelaide and set up a home shrine for her and now she feels responsible for looking after it (interview 4). For Indra, the incorporation of the Buddha and Hindu deities in her home shrine reflects the synthesis of both her own and her husband's cultures (interview 13). The incorporation of Sathya Sai Baba and Shirdi Baba into Yashoda's home shrine articulated her specific experiences and understanding of Hinduism, which was part of her culture (interview 15). Her family had been Shirdi Baba adherents, while an early personal physical encounter with Sathya Sai Baba influenced her spiritual development, therefore both were incorporated into her home shrine. A number of the women commented that they had incorporated Christian symbolism such as representations of Christ or the Virgin Mary, or rosary beads in their home shrines. Poonam called her home shrine cosmopolitan with the inclusion of Buddha, Christ and Mary alongside Hindu deities

(interview 13). This does not necessarily reflect a synthesis of the dominant religion of the host society, but it could result from such experiences as Christian education, which occurred prior to migration.

As previously suggested, the lack of a home shrine did not necessarily indicate an absence of Hindu assumptions. Vijaya and Meena, the two women interviewed who were without home shrines, did not regard them as a necessary aspect of their own lives (interview 5, 6). This did not mean that they rejected their importance for others, but that they had not included them in their own domestic space. Vijaya stated that her upbringing was not religious and, in fact, the communist influences from her region made religious expression undesirable. Her worship, rather than centering upon a home shrine, was concentrated on a special name, rather than on a form. It was this name which she focussed upon for her worship and meditation. She understood the divine as a power or energy to be concentrated upon, and therefore, for her, the name took the place of a home shrine (interview 5).

Meena, in contrast, thought of herself as a sceptic. Her practices were in stark contrast to the rest of her family. She had no home shrine, as she had questioned its relevance. She understood the divine as being more than 'rituals and myths'. She stated:

> I have never been a traditional Indian religious person. I have never gone for ritualistic things. But, I think I am very spiritual, I am, I am always looking for that divine connection within myself and I think Hinduism, for what I understand, is with our search to be with the divine. Whether through whatever means, you know if you sit in that corner and meditate or light that candle... (Interview 6)

Thus, while not maintaining a home shrine, she did follow a path in search of the divine.

Both Vijaya and Meena were involved in cultural activities within the Indian and Hindu communities, but the ritualistic aspects of worship, centred on a home shrine, had no relevance to them. They had developed an understanding of their own, with which they were comfortable. Both women attended the temple, and Vijaya was active in a Vedanta group as well as in a multi-faith group, while Meena's husband often attended special sessions sponsored by one of the Vedanta groups. At times, Meena felt guilty that she was not teaching her children the Hindu rituals, but she stated that she ran a

very 'Hindu house'. She had distinguished Hindu culture from religious expression within the domestic sphere.

It is interesting to note that Lata, who was from an Arya Samaj family and traditionally did not have a home shrine had, in fact, pieced together quite an elaborate one since coming to Australia (interview 22). Although her natal family conducted rituals, these were based on *havan* or *homa*, with offerings of ghee to a sacred fire, not centred on a home shrine. Her husband was not from an Arya Samaj background, and his mother, on one of her visits to Australia, had initially set up a small shrine for Meena's daughter. It does appear that the transition, from rituals conducted without idols to the elaborate home shrine that Lata possessed, was due to a combination of factors. These included the influence of her husband's family and, as she suggested, changes in her thinking coinciding with middle age. She appeared to have become more reflective about her beliefs during this stage of her life.

Although it was not my intention to reduce ritual activity to worship at the home shrine, this was often the way ritual activity was discussed and, indeed, worship at the home shrine was often discussed in terms of ritual. Home shrines were still maintained by women who had some concerns regarding the ritualistic aspect of worship. Sunita believed all Hindus should have a home shrine, but that rituals were only a guide and, at some stage, it was important to go beyond them (interview 30). Rituals, including maintaining a home shrine, performing *samskaras* and attending the temple, were a point of focus, and she understood their importance as a stage in the development of the individual. Therefore, although she did not think ritual activity was important for her, it was important in setting an example for the younger generations to follow. Her life, to a large extent, was devoted to educating others, and the performance of rituals, including the maintenance of a home shrine, was part of this, together with imparting an understanding of the basic texts of Hinduism. This went hand in hand with cultural aspects, such as language. In a similar way, the home shrine was described by Chanda as being one aspect within a system, which enhanced an understanding of the divine and the discipline within Hinduism (interview 26).

As Bilimoria suggests, currently, maintenance of the home shrine is generally considered the task of women. There is a sense that the wife and mother conducts the

rituals on behalf of the family, and that these rituals are observed by the younger generations, who will then take over responsibility for them, often while their mothers or mothers-in-law are in their final years of life. Devi stressed the role of the mother in maintaining the rituals when she stated '...my mother obviously does all the household *puja*. I mean we always leave it up to mother...' (interview 4). She only uses her home shrine occasionally, but she suggested that had she had children she would have been more concerned with maintaining the home shrine, in order to demonstrate to them.

The mother is generally considered to be the custodian of the home shrine and responsible for teaching the younger generation, although this is not to suggest that the home shrine was solely the concern of the women. Home shrines were regularly used by men; however, except for a few instances which will be discussed, the women appeared to take the dominant role. It was understood as part of a woman's duty towards her family. Grandmothers also played an integral part in teaching the younger generations. As many of the Hindus in South Australia were professionals, visits to India, and visits by other family members to Australia, were frequent. The community was not entirely isolated from the influences of older generations, and a number of women had older relatives living or staying with them.

There did appear to be a stage when the younger generation of women was expected to take over responsibility for domestic rituals. Idols were handed over and, in one case, Nishthha reported that her mother, who had been meticulous at conducting *puja* at the home shrine, suddenly stopped. This was after residing for some time with her daughter (interview 24).

One development which had taken place due to the profile of the diaspora community, and also due the diaspora experience itself, was an uncertainty as to the correct rituals which were to be performed. Nishthha emphasised that she did not learn much because she went away to college at a relatively early age (interview 24). It was evident that this was not of great concern to the women interviewed, as they tended to do what they thought was appropriate, and they did not appear to be obsessed with the 'correct' performance, although it was reported that others were. Surika said that, in Australia, she had adapted, and used the example that, in India, a priest would come in to perform special rituals but, in Australia, she 'does her own thing' (interview 17). Manju

lamented the lack of time to perform rituals (interview 21). She said that her mother and mother-in-law were able to spend an hour conducting rituals, but her lifestyle only allowed her to spend a short time. She suggested that it was much easier in joint households where duties were shared. Once again, it was something she felt that she would be able to do in a different phase of her life when she had more time available.

There was certainly a general acknowledgment that circumstances which living in nuclear families and the lack of assistance in the home, as well as the time constraints which working women encountered, made adaptation necessary. Generally the women mentioned that their own practices were not as elaborate as their mother's had been and that they often performed symbolic acts. It did appear that hospitality to the deities was abbreviated and that meditation and prayer were popular actions. Pria, whose morning commitments with a young child and as a working mother and wife, made activities at the home shrine difficult had adapted her bathing and rituals to be conducted in the evening which fitted in with her lifestyle (interview 25). As previously mentioned, Pria was born in India and brought up in Australia. She was married to a non-Indian.

This adaptation of ritual activity was something that was commented upon by Leonard, who concluded that, in the United States,

> Daily rituals can be contracted, shortened on weekdays and lengthened on weekends; they can be combined, with both morning and evening rituals performed in the evenings. Rituals can be temporarily suspended, perhaps by students in dormitories, and resumed on return to the parental home. Ritual responsibility can be delegated to only one family member perhaps an elderly mother, who performs religious observances on behalf of the entire family. Families can postpone all rituals to weekends, or they can rotate the observance of holiday rituals among a number of families, simplifying observances for any one family. Because the sacred fire altar cannot be used in many settings, incense or candles can be substituted. Hindus must make places in their American-designed homes for *puja* rooms or shrines, converting kitchen cupboards, closets, or studies into worship centres. (Leonard 1997, p. 123)

This description of the adaptations that have occurred is analogous to those in South Australia.

In a number of cases, where the domestic space was appropriated by the often Brahman husband, the woman, rather than competing within the space or playing only a

complementary role, had opted to place her spiritual energies in an alternative direction. Rupa, whose late Brahman husband had taken the dominant role in the ritual life of the family, commented that she expressed her spirituality in her dance (interview 12). Her energies were not only used to perform, in her younger days, but she had also established a dance school. Mita was another who has found an outlet for her religious expression outside the domestic space (interview 8). Interestingly, her husband not only took a prominent role in the domestic rituals, but also within traditional community space. Mita has chosen an alternative focus and participated in meditation groups and retreats. These groups were unrelated to her husband's activities. Both women, however, played a supporting role within the domestic ritual space.

Time constraints may play a minor role in the maintenance of home shrines. One woman reported that her husband had taken a more dominant role since his retirement (interview 26); however, the other men who did take a prominent role were employed, as were many of the women who undertook the rituals. Ritual activity was not static. The activities that I have discussed, and the frequency of them, reflect the situation at the time each questionnaire was completed and the interview conducted. I am aware that, for some of the women, these situations have changed. It often depended upon what was needed at a particular time, what constraints were present, and the way individuals felt at the time. Maintenance of a home shrine fluctuated, and the picture I have pieced together is one applicable only for a specific time.

The removal of shoes and the maintenance of the domestic sphere

To preserve the sanctity of the home shrine, shoes are often removed. This is due to the assumption that the leather of the shoes and the dust from outside the home are polluting (Babb 1975, p. 50). As Babb has suggested, purity is 'a precondition for ritual activity' (Babb 1975, p.50) and, although he does not speak in absolute terms, he suggests there are differing degrees of appropriateness. He goes on to cite Poccok and Dumont by stating that '...purity may best be understood as a "condition" for beneficial contact with deities' (Babb 1975, p. 51).

When discussing the practice of removing shoes before entering the house or approaching the home shrine, the women tended to relate their practice to other

motivations, rather than making a connection with the concept of shoes being ritually polluting. The importance of cleanliness was often given as the reason behind specific practices within the house. At a number of the homes I visited, it was the practice to remove shoes prior to entering the house. I usually looked for shoes at the front door to give me a cue as to the practices of individual households. This was not always an indication, however, as shoes were sometimes hidden in the laundry. I occasionally found that a household had two different policies, one for those living in the house, which involved changing shoes into indoor footwear, the other for visitors, to whom no mention of the practice was made. I discovered that, at times when I inquired, visitors were not expected to leave their shoes outside, especially if they were unaware of the practice. Only one woman, Promila, was very strict with her insistence that shoes were removed, and she had a large sign at her front door to this effect (interview 1). She recounted problems she had experienced with getting workmen to comply with this request. Some women were only concerned that footwear was not worn in the shrine room, although others did wear shoes while conducting *puja*. Poonam, for example, told me that she prayed with her shoes on, although her mother would not approve of this practice (interview 13).

The reasons given for the practice of removing shoes were that it was for hygiene purposes and/or that the house was a temple. These were not mutually inclusive or exclusive categories. Promila, who was the most insistent, mentioned both these points in her explanation (interview 1). Pria's comments on her practice were very interesting, as they demonstrate how she had changed and adapted her practice over time and circumstances. She said:

> When she [her daughter] was crawling I asked people to take their shoes off...It also became a thing of not wanting to carry outside germs inside -so yes I used to. I've adapted it because really - I can't expect... everyone else to...some people are really uncomfortable about taking off their shoes. Especially if you've got, you know, foot problems, or what ever, so I don't - it's not something that I like to insist on. I will, to friends I'm close to, I will... My girlfriends always automatically take their shoes off because they know I don't like it. When I have Indian people around they all leave their shoes outside so that's fine but yeah, for people I don't know, like sales people, right, I don't generally insist. (Interview 25)

Therefore, she was more insistent when hygiene concerns for her daughter were more immediate, but she has adapted her practices in order to accommodate others. She still believed that her house was a temple and that cleanliness was important.

Kuna was another woman who did not insist that visitors take off their shoes, nor did she leave any sign that this was the practice in the family, although they adhered to the practice personally (interview 7). None of the women who did not have a home shrine left their shoes outside the house.

Kulpana had special soft footwear for use inside the house, but did not wear them in the room that houses her altar (interview 9). As with Pria, Kulpana would attend the temple and the home shrine whilst menstruating. Although the non-removal of footwear was considered unacceptable for these women, carrying out rituals during menstruation was not. It appears that a number of the women were selective in the practices they chose to continue or to adapt to different circumstances, as well as assessing the individual merits of each practice.

For the practice of removal of shoes prior to entering the house, concessions were made by some in order to accommodate non-Hindus visitors, with a couple of the women being highly sensitive to the feelings of others. For others, there were degrees of sacredness within the house, and rules for the room housing the home shrine differed from the rest of the house. Once again, proximity to the divine was important in the implementation of specific practices.

The house, or shrine room, on one level, was the abode of the divine and was treated as a temple by many of the women, with specific rules of cleanliness being imposed for this area. The removal of shoes was important for maintaining a suitable abode for the divine and a prerequisite for approaching the deities, although the practice was often discussed in terms of cleanliness rather than of ritual impurity. For a few of the women, the removal of shoes was not an important issue. Reassessment of the removal of shoes when entering the home or approaching the home shrine had not occurred to the same extent as with menstruation. That said, it did appear that the area where shoes were unacceptable may have been decreasing, with the removal of shoes mainly important for direct contact or the area where the deities resided. Although there was a strong

indication that a connection between purity and contact with the divine existed, this was sometimes expressed and understood in terms of cleanliness. This was in a similar way to understanding the connection between cleanliness and the body as a temple. There were indications that the women were sensitive to the practice of retaining shoes in the home, which is dominant in the wider non-Indian community. Therefore in many cases, the household practice of removing shoes was not made evident and not insisted upon, while for others the reverse was the case. Hence a number of the women appeared to the outsider, to conform to the dominant norm while removing shoes at important times and locations.

Cooking for the home shrine: *Prasad*

Babb discusses the purification of the physical space where ritual worship takes place, followed by the purification of the performers (1975, p. 53). Once this has been achieved, *puja* can take place. One specific practice, that of preparing and offering *prasad*, needs further discussion, as it often formed part of the performance of *puja*. Although this is not always the case on a daily basis, the women did prepare special food for offering at the home shrine or at the temple.

I was surprised to find that *prasad* food was a part of the lives of all the women interviewed. *Prasad*, food that is offered to the gods and then returned for human consumption, is, in all circumstances in South Australia, and normally in India, vegetarian food. On a daily basis, if food were offered, it tended to be fruit and milk but, on special occasions, it was vegetarian food which had been cooked especially for the occasion. *Prasad* often included ghee and milk, products of the cow understood by some North Indians as sanctifying the food with which they are cooked (Kasanji 1980, p. 222, Harper 1964, p. 156). Even the few women who did not have a home shrine for which they cooked *prasad* said that they cooked it on special occasions for the temple. The eighteen year old did not cook it herself but, as would be expected, her mother did this on behalf of the family (interview 10). One other woman stated that she had it especially made on one occasion to distribute to her meditation group, introducing them to the practice.

Prasad food was usually cooked only on special occasions. Those occasions mentioned by the women were Divali and festivals for particular deities, as well as more personal

occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries. Anniversaries are often to acknowledge the death of a father, mother or husband, and food that the deceased particularly liked may be cooked especially.

Although strict vegetarian families cooked *prasad* in the same manner as they cooked for themselves, although without tasting it, some non-vegetarians suggested that they were more aware of cleanliness when preparing *prasad* food. Comments indicated that they would clean the preparation area before they commenced cooking and would not taste the food during the preparation. Aparna stated that she had separate cooking utensils, not used for cooking meat, which were set aside especially for the purpose of cooking *prasad* food and food for special religious guests whom her family often hosted on their visits to Adelaide (interview 28), although she stressed, also, that there was nothing wrong with eating meat, and that doing so was a matter of personal choice, for which Hinduism allowed. She may have considered that, for her, it was not important but, for others, for whom she was preparing food, it was a consideration. This was also a theme which was repeated by other women who were non-vegetarian. Separate utensils were used also by two other non-vegetarian women, for the preparation of *prasad* food.

Although it appears that the women often treated meat as a polluting agent, they did not make the connection themselves, and often refuted this idea when it was put to them. Only one woman actually agreed with the suggestion that meat was polluting. I was unsure if the women were refraining from being judgemental or if they had not made the connection between meat and pollution. It was only those who prepared meat in their homes who suggested that cleanliness was an issue in the preparation of *prasad* food, although both vegetarians and non-vegetarians sometimes commented that the food could not be tasted during cooking. Alternatively, there may have been an assumption that meat was unsuitable for the deities rather than a concept that it was polluting.

Edward Harper, in a study on the Havik Brahmans of South India, states that the cook is not permitted to taste food which is offered to the gods and he suggests that this is due to the risk of pollution (1964, p. 157). Although this may be one explanation, the prohibition may also be concerned with the very understanding of *prasad.* Manuel

Moreno describes *prasad* as being 'Divine left-overs' (1992, p. 153). It is essential that the divine is first offered the food before the 'left-overs' are consumed by humans for, as A. K. Ramanujan has stated, if the food were tasted while being cooked, the divine would be receiving the left-overs (1992, p. 226). At a *samskara* celebration which I attended, a teenage boy was pulled aside by his mother and severely reprimanded for smelling a flower before it was offered to the god because, once again, the god should be the first to receive the offering.

Within the act of receiving the left-overs of the deities, the individuals are honouring them as superior, while at the same time they are repaying the deities for blessings which have been given in the past, and for those to come (Babb 1975, p. 56). Babb suggests that 'Thus the ritual is to have the net effect of affirming rather than negating the superior status of the god' (Babb 1975, p. 57).

Therefore, at least on a symbolic level, by the preparation and offering of food for the home shrine, the women were establishing and reaffirming their relationship with representations of the divine, honouring them, repaying a debt and ensuring a continuation of blessings. Distance was maintained and the preconditions that were necessary for contact with the deities were established within the cooking process. Vegetarians were more inclined to cook food normally; however, non-vegetarians would be more conscious about special care that the food did not come into contact with meat or utensils used with meat, and special caution was taken not to taste the food.

Summary

The domestic space is generally established as a realm suitable for the residence of the family and the family deities. The domestic space, in which the home shrine was located, was space which was often symbolically set apart from the profane undifferentiated world, with rituals accompanying families moving into new residences. It was maintained as such through rituals and observances, including those pertaining to ritual purity, some of which have been discussed previously. The removal of shoes before entering the house or the shrine room often indicated the way in which the area was set apart and maintained as an area suitable for ritual activity. The rituals performed at the home shrine varied considerably, both in action and duration, although

the offering or preparation of *prasad* for the home shrine or the temple was part of the lives of all of the women interviewed.

The home shrines reflected the histories of both the women and their husbands. Shrines were established and deities handed down by older generations, including during visits to Australia. Rituals and practices that occurred within the domestic space reflected the assumptions of the individuals within that space. They represented both the family's religious understanding and culture. In Bourdieu's terms, both the home shrines and their maintenance, and the alternatives, reflected the habitus of the women. Primary habitus, synthesised with more recent experiences, created an evolving domestic space, combining aspects of culture brought into the diaspora with the lived environment of the diaspora. Some had re-evaluated practices in line with the differing need and assumptions within the diaspora, for example abbreviating the performance of *puja* to fit in the time constraints, and not insisting on the removal of shoes within the house.

While reflecting on a family's history, the domestic sphere was not always a private sphere, as it could be the focus of community or sect activity. Domestic space, rather than being distinct from the communal sacred space, could act as an extension of it.

Frequency of use of the home shrine was, indeed, high. It appeared that home shrines had not lost significance within the diaspora of South Australia. It was one aspect of Hinduism that women chose to maintain, generally on a frequent basis. Even where individuals had felt that they had gone beyond the need for the guidance and discipline provided for by home shrines, they often understood the importance of maintaining a home shrine as an example for younger generations. Women often conducted the rituals for themselves and their families; however, where the domestic sacred space was dominated by the husband, women often looked for an alternative sphere for religious or spiritual expression and/ or control. There were times when women conducted rituals at the home shrine in conjunction with their husbands, or separately from them, but most frequently women took on the responsibility for the shrine's maintenance.

The preparation and offering of *prasad* demonstrated, at least on a symbolic level, a relationship with the divine. The way in which *prasad* was prepared confirmed the existence of assumptions concerning the acceptable manner of preparation of offerings

for the deities, including a symbolic connection with the concept of purity. The act of giving and receiving *prasad* confirmed the relationship of reciprocity and re-established a hierarchical relationship with the divine. On an implicit level, the preparation and offering of *prasad* demonstrated the assumption of control which the women had within the practice of devotionalism, by what Babb describes as paying the gods for the blessings which have been received and for those to come (1975, p. 56).

The maintenance of a home shrine appeared to be an important aspect of the maintenance of Hinduism in the diaspora. In the initial stage of the development of the Hindu community development, with a small group and no temple available, few alternatives to the home shrine existed. Whether or not the diaspora experience had heightened the use of home shrines, it is difficult to say; however, extensive use of the home shrine has been retained even after the installation of deities at the temple. Certainly, in Whyalla, where no real temple existed, all the women surveyed conducted *puja* on a daily basis at their home shrine.

The maintenance of a home shrine certainly did not appear to be a relic from the past but had ongoing significance for the women. The frequency with which it was used for *puja* indicates that time was deliberately put aside in order to practice Hinduism at a devotional level. Devotional practices at a home shrine had adapted to the environment of the diaspora. Rather than being abandoned, they were often abbreviated and conducted in a manner that demonstrated adaptation to the living conditions in South Australia. Although adaptation had occurred, especially in line with time constraints, practices had continued. Devotional practices were incorporated, to differing extents, into the lives of nearly all the women in the group. It is by examining other practices which women perform that a greater knowledge can be gained as to assumptions connected to a Hindu way of understanding the world that has been retained by the women.

CHAPTER 9

VOWS, FASTS AND PILGRIMAGES

Introduction

Vows, fasting and pilgrimages can form part of the practices which women undertake. Whereas vows and fasting are often undertaken by women alone, and have been described as part of the duty of a woman (Denton 1991, p. 213), pilgrimage is often embarked upon with other family members. In many respects, therefore, similarities exist between vows and fasts, whereas pilgrimage may be understood to have much broader implications and functions for the women. By examining these three practices, and their symbolic connections with Hindu assumptions, similarities emerge between them. It is in the manner in which these practices can positively influence the women's lives and those of their families that the practices can be seen to come together. Vows can, and often do, incorporate the acts of fasting and pilgrimage, thus identifying one link between these specific practices.

Vows and Fasting

Lyn Teskey Denton states that

> Most of the available accounts demonstrate that childbirth rituals, family and household rites, and a large range of vows and fasts constitute the core of women's religious practice (*stri-acar*), and that this practice is concerned almost exclusively with the welfare of others, particularly male kin. (Denton 1991, p. 213)

Household rites, as they pertain to the establishment and maintenance of a home shrine by the women, have just been examined. The objective within this section is to examine the maintenance of vows and fasts by the women and their attitudes towards them. Are these practices, which Denton suggests are one aspect of 'the core of women's religious practice' (1991, p. 213), maintained within the diaspora?

Vows and fasts are often linked, as vows often involved fasting. Indeed, the concepts are often joined in the minds of the women, and one woman who was interviewed, when asked if she made vows, answered as to her fasting practices. The link between the terms *vrata* and *pativrata* is also important as a *pativrata* is one '...who takes a vow (*vrat*) of devotion to her husband (*pati*)' (Harlan & Courtright 1995, p.8). Lindsey Harlan and Paul Courtright suggest that, not only is devotion to a husband considered to be the duty of the *pativrata*, but also it is a woman's power that is apparent in this concept, as it should be focussed upon protecting her husband with vows often involving fasting (1995, p.12).

The purpose of the questioning of the women in regards to these practices was to discover whether vows and fasting were undertaken by the women or whether the practices had no significance for them. Further, it was intended to identify the situations for which vows were made, for whose benefit, and what they might involve, as well as the frequency and motivations for fasting. The information obtained was in fairly general terms, and was not designed to be a comprehensive analysis of *vratas* or fasts, as these vary greatly, but as a summary of the practices for the women in a diaspora community.

Sandra Robinson acknowledges the wide variety of *vratas* throughout India, while providing an extensive discussion of *vratas* based upon work conducted in Bengal (1985, p. 199). Robinson describes *vratas* as '...domestic rites which Hindu women perform in the fulfillment of specific desires' (1985, p. 199). As *vratas* are performed by women without the aid or sanction of a Brahman priest, they present an alternative to brahmanism, even though they are codified in brahmanical literature (Robinson 1985, p. 200). They are voluntary rites which are performed in order '...to gain and maintain domestic welfare' (Robinson 1985, p. 200), and according to Robinson, the gains women receive from the performance of these rites are indirect.

Vows and fasts also involve the theme of renunciation. Lawrence Babb has suggested that, in fasting, 'The idea of renunciation is also the operating premise of...the fast' (1975, p. 209), and as he also argued that, renunciation facilitates the gain and control of power. Therefore, by undertaking fasts, women acquire and control personal power within their lives. Fasting is also considered to be meritorious because it involves renunciation (Babb, 1975, p. 92). The same could be suggested of *vratas*, which also involve renunciatory restraints.

Vows

Attitudes amongst the women towards making *vratas* or vows varied considerably, and between the two extremes of those who undertook vows and those who did not were the women who did so occasionally but not without reservations. Eleven women stated that they undertook vows, ranging from frequently to occasionally (interviews 1, 3, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 25, 29), while a further five had on occasion, but not without expressing concern at the practice (interviews 4, 5, 7, 21, 22). Eleven women were adamant that they would not undertake vows (interviews 2, 6, 8, 12, 13, 20, 24, 26, 27, 28). One woman mentioned that she did in the past but no longer does (interview 9), while the youngest women interviewed stated that she had never done so but her mother did (interview 10). One answer was too ambiguous to classify (interview 18).

There was some indication that the diaspora environment had influenced a change in practices. In Malaysia, Promila would make as a vow the decision to climb to some sacred caves; in Australia, however, she gives money to the temple priest for his family (interview 1). She stated that she places money in front of the shrine when someone is not well and then takes it for a donation when it is convenient. Manju, who associated vows with visiting temples, commented that it was difficult in Australia as there were no temples, and she just did *puja* at home instead (interview 21). The profiles of the two women were quite different. Manju was from India, had been in Australia for 18 months and was living in Whyalla (interview 21). Promila, as previously discussed was from Malaysia, had studied in the West and was married to a non-Indian (interview 1).

A number of the women mentioned that they performed vows for others. Pria, a younger woman brought up in Australia and married to a non-Indian, recently

undertook a vow for her husband's exams (interview 25). Alternatively Malati who was somewhat older than Pria and had migrated from India as a married women, was fulfilling a vow for her daughter's success in an exam (interview 29). The profile of those women who chose to maintain vows was, indeed, varied.

Some of the women understood their own practice of performing vows as being for their own benefit. Kavita stated that she made vows all the time, asking for many things, but she added 'I feel a bit dirty after asking something for myself – little bit dirty. I try not to ask all the time' (interview 3). Anjali commented that she used to make frequent vows such as 'give me that job' but only does it occasionally now (interview 19). Several women asked for success in their own exams (interviews 9, 14, 23). Asking to be allowed to marry the person they had chosen was also mentioned (interview 23). Devi stated that she only made vows in times of duress, but she tried not to make them generally, as she felt very bad if she was unable to keep the vow (interview 4). She said she was guilty of breaking vows, but that she tried to be honest with her vows. She considered vows were bargaining with God and did not think that they changed anything. She said she would rather pray than make vows.

A number of the women mentioned that their practices of undertaking vows had changed over the years. Some women mentioned that their vows were less frequent now than they had been in the past (interviews 5, 19, 23). Vijaya, who did not maintain a home shrine, said that when her children were young, she used to make vows frequently, as she was very anxious for them. Now she feels she has a greater inner strength and the children are older, so she seldom makes vows (interview 5). Vijaya's specific combination of practices demonstrates the individual nature of her religious expression and the manner in which choices are often made. Kulpana, the single woman from Malaysia, divided vows between low scale and high scale, depending upon what was asked for (interview 9). Although she used to ask for success in exams, a low scale vow, she now practices meditation without conditions. This was also a reflection of her spiritual development where meditative practices have become very important. Chanda said that she may have made vows in the past but no longer did so (interview 26).

The women mentioned a variety of activities that they would perform in the fulfilment of vows. Taking a child to the temple for its first feeding was mentioned (interview 5), as were offering *prasad* to a god (interview 14) and praying to god for seven consecutive days (interview 25). Fasting for one day a week for several weeks was also discussed (interview 29). Breaking coconuts was mentioned, but mainly as a past event (interview 9).

Some of the more arduous tasks mentioned involved returning to India. These included visiting and decorating a particular god on a visit to India (interview 7). Kuna, a young mother from India, who was about to return for a visit, had vowed to visit the family god on her trip, as her father had been ill (interview 7). She said it was not like a bribe, but a prayer. Mentioned, also, was returning to Tirupathi, (a pilgrimage centre, discussed in more detail below) and making the long and difficult climb to the top of the mountain and the temple complex (interview 17). Surika, a young mother from Whyalla, who had been in Australia for 6 years, said that she made vows three or four times a year (interview 16). One of her vows, that she returns to Puri to place an offering, is yet to be fulfilled, although she had every intention of doing so (interview 16). Pria described how she was yet to fulfil the vow her grandmother made on her behalf, which involved visiting a sacred site in India (interview 25). Pria had been a very sickly child and the vow had been for the return of her health. She felt that it was an impractical vow, especially as she was brought to Australia as a young child, but she intended to fulfil it. She said she made more practical vows herself. Madhu's daughter was also involved in fulfilling a vow made by her grandmother by having a tonsure performed (interview 27).

Many of the women who stated that they did not make vows suggested that it was bargaining with god. Sita, a Sai Baba devotee who came to Australia from Malaysia when she was single prior to her marriage, described vows as bargaining (interview 2). She added that '...so I don't participate in that at all...but at the same time if it's important to someone else, I would encourage that person to carry on and do what that person believes' (interview 2). Meena, from Fiji who did not keep a home shrine, described vows as just superstition (interview 6). This differed from the other woman, Vijaya, who also did not keep a home shrine (interview 5). Mita stressed that god was

not a bargaining factor (interview 8), while Poonam stated that she had mental discomfort at making vows (interview 13).

Rupa, who described herself as following Brahmanism, stressed that vows were not part of her tradition (interview 12). Vows, she said, were not part of the scriptures: they had developed at a later date and, therefore, she did not undertake them. Certainly for Rupa, the widow from India, her practices involved what she believed to be brahmanic. She was often strident in distancing herself from non-brahmanic practices. Vows were included in this, but not fasts or pilgrimage. She also suggested that without her husband she was restricted in what she undertook at the home shrine. She did not, however, as a widow, withdraw from community religious and social functions.

Anita had been trying to conceive and was having difficulty doing so; however, she suggested that, even though she did not have a child, she did not believe in performing vows as she believed that everything was predestined (interview 20). If she were meant to have a child, it would happen, and that undertaking a vow for children would not change anything. Madhu, whose daughter had been ill, said she could not bring herself to make a vow (interview 27). Aparna did not perform vows, and instead suggested that she prayed and asked for blessings for all of the family (interview 28). Sunita stated that '...there is no need to make vows, the Lord knows' (interview 30) and she went on to discuss *karmic* action. Kulpana practiced vows when she was young but did not make them any more, saying instead that she practiced meditation without any conditions (interview 9).

Summary

Women both initiated and conducted vows of their own accord. It was an individual action undertaken without assistance. Over half the women practiced vows. Where vows were not undertaken, it was a personal choice, and often other methods such as prayer and meditation were substituted by those women who felt that vows constituted bargaining with the divine. Those women who felt discomfort in making vows, including a number who continued to perform them, often felt that other actions which were freely given without the motivation of reward were better. A few of the women understood that fate, *karma*, or what was predestined, could not be altered by a vow. One stressed the non-brahmanic nature of vows. However, more generally, there was

an assumption that vows, prayers and meditation were ways in which the women's actions could positively influence their lives and the lives of others for whom the actions were undertaken.

Women often performed vows for others, primarily family members, and a number of the women stated that they performed them for their own benefit. Whether, in fact, these actions were as self-interested as the women assumed, is doubtful, as their desires to succeed in exams or to gain their choice of husband may have wider implications, encompassing others. Undertaking vows and the alternative actions of prayer and meditation were, indeed, actions that were designed to exert control over the women's lives and those of their family members. None mentioned that their husbands undertook vows, as it appeared to be part of a woman's role. Although the husband could be the focus of a vow, there was little indication that vows were more readily directed towards them than any other member of the family. It appeared that vows were done on a 'needs basis'.

Vows included such actions as fasting, praying and offering *prasad*, to acts of pilgrimage involving considerable sacrifice. Many of these actions centred upon devotion to a manifestation of the divine, reinforcing the link with devotionalism in the lives of many of the women. Many women were active, through these practices, in exerting control for the family over the environment and situations in which they found themselves. Even where vows were rejected due to the unease at what was considered to be bargaining with god, alternative practices such as prayer and meditation were undertaken in an attempt to provide blessings for the family, without the same conditions that vows demanded. In a sense, the end results were considered to be similar, although the manner of achieving them differed.

A link between the women's assumptions concerning vows, both when they were performed and when alternative practices existed, demonstrated a strong link to Hindu assumptions. Women taking vows reaffirmed the assumption about the role of a manifestation of the divine within their lives, and confirmed an assumption by many of them that a reciprocal relationship existed between the devotee and their deity. What was given by the deity was repaid by the women. Even where vows were rejected, this was done, most frequently by using alternative Hindu assumptions such as gaining

blessings through devotion without the expectation of a reward. Other explanations involved such concepts as *karma* and brahmanic tradition. The themes of renunciation and power were evident within the practices. Women were attempting to harness and direct power, often for the benefit of others, and renunciation as a way of achieving this power was evident.

Fasting

Fasting seemed to be complex, with the understanding of it differing with the individual. As with vows, this is possibly due to a number of factors, such as family customs, regional variations and the fact that it is not compulsory but is understood to be a personal choice. It is, however, a significant practice for many women in India (Babb, 1975). The individual practices, as well as expectations, ranged from only drinking water, though having one light meal a day, possibly consisting of fruit or even porridge, to fruits during the day and a vegetarian meal in the evening. Individuals choose their own practices for most fasts, although some of the more region specific fasts carried their own expectations. Fasts were generally described in two different ways. Firstly, there were the more organised regional fasts conducted at specific times, and secondly, individual fasts which women chose to undertake for a variety of reasons. Some of the women also mentioned in passing that they often fasted before going to the temple, but they did not appear to associate this with the concept of fasting itself.

One of the interesting regional fasts is the Punjabi fast for Kalvachot (Karva Chauth). This is maintained by a number of women in South Australia who may not have anything to eat or drink from sunrise to sunset. These days, however, water or tea and coffee tend to be taken. This fast is specifically undertaken for the welfare of the husband and is only kept by women. Although it is seen as a personal choice and not compulsory, there may be pressures to participate. It does not seem to be necessarily confined to the older generation, as I was informed of a young woman who married into a Punjabi family interstate and was expected to participate. It can be quite an arduous task, as women continue with their work commitments during this time. Lata, a high profile professional, and mother, from an Arya Samaj background, suggested that she stopped the practice due to the severe headaches she experienced and the black mood she developed, which her husband jokingly suggested had a more immediate negative

impact on his health, negating the positive effects of the fast (interview 23). Not all fasts are as strenuous as Kalvachot (Karva Chauth). Although there was the implication from Lata that fasting had been bad for her health, most women suggested that fasting was, in fact, good for both the body and the mind. It was thought to be cleansing and a demonstration of self-discipline.

Not all women fasted. Nine said that they did not fast, while another two were not fasting at the time, as one was pregnant and the other trying to conceive. Only four women mentioned that their husbands fasted, and this tended to be for a shorter period than for the women. In one case, the husband fasted for a single day during a nine day fasting period in order to keep his wife company for that day. Alternatively, Indra, who fasted for three days each week did so on Mondays to keep her husband company as he fasted for Siva on that day (interview 14). She was from a Buddhist background but had incorporated Hinduism into her life on her marriage to a Brahman. Rupa made the comment that 'Hindu fasting is normally carried out by women', and she went on to suggest that she meant wives and mother and not unmarried girls and widows, although she, as a widow, fasted two days a week (interview 12). It does seem to be the case in South Australia that it is the women who are primarily concerned with fasting. It was suggested that this was because the men went to work, although many of the women who fasted also worked outside the house.

Six women stated that they fasted before going to the temple, although not all women were regular attendees, and five others fasted for special festivals, the celebration of which may have involved temple attendance. One husband fasted before going to the temple while the wife did not.

The most interesting aspect was that ten women fasted regularly each week, while two other non-vegetarian women had three or four vegetarian days a week. Their fasts were associated with either particular days associated with individual gods or goddesses, or the anniversaries of the death of a husband or father. The fasts ranged from one to three days per week, with three of the women fasting for the three days a week. These fasts normally included one light meal of fruit and milk, although Rupa, a widow who was interviewed, said that on one of her two fast days each week she did not eat at all, in

remembrance of her husband's death (interview 12). The comment was made on several occasions that wheat products could not be eaten at the time of fasting.

Other women fasted for special festivals or auspicious days that were important for specific regional groups. A Bengali woman fasted for Durga *puja,* while a Maharashtrian fasted twice a month in times connected to Ganesha. Once again, regional influences were seen to determine which fasts were maintained. At one privately sponsored function that I attended, pertaining to a specific deity important to Maharashtrians, several women did not partake of the *prasad* being offered because they were fasting that day. They did seem to be the more senior members of the gathering, although in the interviews women of all ages were involved in fasting.

The women's comments on their practices were very interesting. Even when the days for fasting were chosen to coincide with days that were connected with specific gods or goddesses, the religious nature of the fast was not always acknowledged. Savita, a Sai Baba adherent, and a longer term resident from Whyalla, stated that her fasting three times a week was not religious but a cleansing of her system, even though she suggested that the three days were chosen because of their connection with particularly deities which were important to her. She said 'I just do it, it doesn't mean anything you know' (interview 22). When I asked her if she fasted, a friend of hers had been present at the time, although not for most of the interview. Her friend had laughed and indicated that Savita fasted every day of the week. She was generally thought to be very devoted to Sai Baba, whose worship she had been introduced to in Australia.

This theme of the cleansing of the body and mind was also put forward by other women. Indra, a non-vegetarian, went as far as saying that you needed to have a vegetarian diet on the day you prayed to your special deity because 'If you want to offer them your good prayer from your heart, you have to be vegetarian...' on that day (interview 14). She chose one of the days on which she fasted because her son tended to get hurt or fall sick on that day, while one of the other days, as mentioned above, was chosen to coincide with her husband. Self-denial and self-control were also given as reasons for fasting. Another young woman, unhappy with her current circumstances, commenced fasting one day a week, some time after I had interviewed her, in an attempt to improve her situation (interview 3), and yet another stated that she fasted for

the welfare of her family. Fasting could also be used in order to fulfil a vow to a god or goddess. Malati vowed that if her daughter passed a special examination she would fast every Saturday for five consecutive weeks (interview 29).

Summary

For some, fasting seems to have been understood as an effective form of worship and/ or as a means of getting a particular god or goddess to assist the devotee. Fasting which was used for the welfare of others as well as for the self suggests a belief that the divine can be persuaded to intervene in daily life and that women can gain the power to facilitate this. Fasting was a positive demonstration of self-restraint and renunciation, and this was believed to have a positive effect on the body.

The cleansing aspect of fasting was acknowledged by many of the women and, indeed, the concept of needing to be vegetarian on the days you 'offer your good prayer' (interview14) was made. There were indications that the body was in a superior state to approach the deity when fasting had occurred. Fasting was not only thought to be good and cleansing for the body, but it was thought to have a similar impact upon the mind.

The themes of renunciation, devotion and power were evident in the accounts of fasting. This was in a similar manner to which they were evident for vows. There were not, however, the same negative feelings that vows produced in some of the women. Once again, fasts were often undertaken for other members of the family, including those who had died. Even where an implicit link to Hinduism existed, the connection was not always recognised. The comment that it did not really mean anything must not be overlooked. Connections may be, as suggested, implicit rather than explicit; however, the symbolic connection with Hindu assumptions, including women's devotionalism and *sakti*, cannot be ignored.

I found surprising the extent to which a number of the women participated in fasting. It appeared to be a strong practice for quite a few of the women, many of whom often appeared to be respected and admired by other women in the community. Fasting was quite widely practiced but, as I have suggested, it varied considerably as to the exact form it takes, as well as the times when it is considered beneficial to fast. As fasting was a personal practice that could be undertaken away from the public eye, the

environment of the diaspora did not appear to have a strong impact on the practice. Women appeared to arrange their social lives around their fasting, and they may also fast on certain days so as not to inconvenience others. Even where women were working outside the home, this did not appear as a reason for abandoning fasting.

Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage involves visiting communal sacred space, but in a manner different from that in which the local temple and alternative religious spaces are utilised. Pilgrimage is understood to be an important aspect of Hinduism and Hindu worship, and India is thought to have a 'sacred geography', consisting of both natural and constructed pilgrimage sites. Although, for the early Indian diaspora, pilgrimage would have been restricted due to the isolation of the communities and difficulties in travelling to India, as well as the financial constraints, for more recent immigrants the situation has indeed altered. It is my intention, in this section, to assess the degree to which the women in the diaspora community have taken up opportunities to undertake pilgrimages to Indian sacred sites. The questions in which I was interested were: was pilgrimage something that had relevance for the women in the diaspora; was it undertaken; what were the motivations for pilgrimage; what types of sites were visited and what was their significance; and what was the impact of pilgrimage on the lives of the Hindu women in South Australia?

The Hindu pilgrimage

Defining what constitutes a pilgrimage is not straightforward, and perceptions of what a pilgrimage was varied between the women. The women were often unsure whether or not their own journeys to sacred sites in India could be counted as pilgrimages. This is not surprising, as E. Alan Morinis suggests that

> The pilgrimage category open to anthropological investigation contains a wide variety of practices, but also images and meanings, that are more extensive and touch on more areas of cultural and personal life than is immediately evident when one calls to mind the image of the pilgrim, with cloak and staff and dusty feet. (Morinis 1992, p. 3)

However, although Morinis acknowledged the complexity of pilgrimage, he has been able to define it. In order to identify pilgrimage, I have taken as a starting point, his definition of it as:

> ...a journey undertaken by a person in quest of a place or a state that he or she believes to embody a valued ideal. At its most conventional, the end of the pilgrimage is an actual shrine located at some fixed geographical point. The place has acquired a reputation that draws pilgrimages. One who journeys to a place of importance to himself alone may also be a pilgrim. The allegorical pilgrimage seeks out a place not located in the geographical sphere. Some sacred journeys are wanderings that have no fixed goal; the pilgrimage is here the search for an unknown or hidden goal. (Morinis 1992, p. 4)

The journeys of either groups or individuals can constitute a pilgrimage. According to Morinis, in *Pilgrimage in the Hindu Tradition: a case study of West Bengal* (1984), small groups or individuals make their way, on a variety of forms of transport, to pilgrimage centres, although he suggests that, in West Bengal, pilgrimages are primarily the practice of families (Morinis, 1984, pp. 217-220).

The distinction between journeying as a pilgrim or as a tourist is perhaps less clearly defined. Once again, Morinis debates this issue. He acknowledges that an overlap in motivations can occur (Morinis 1992, p. 7). The most distinguishing aspect of pilgrims, however, is that they tend to be 'self labelling' (Morinis 1992, p. 7). In his earlier work on pilgrimage in West Bengal, he asked the individuals he encountered to define themselves. Those who considered themselves to be tourists and did not undertake any form of worship, he excluded as pilgrims (Morinis 1984). The act of worship at the pilgrimage site also appears to be a defining aspect for Morinis.

In order to understand the occurrence of pilgrimage for the women interviewed, I have taken self-labelled pilgrimages, or visits to pilgrimage centres and shrines of significance to the individuals. Only one of the women described herself as visiting pilgrimage sites purely for sightseeing (interview 19), although visits by a number of the women interviewed may, indeed, have had dual motives. There appeared to be a deeper motivation than pure tourism in all other cases; however, the strength of the religious motivation varied considerably.

Although an historical description of Hindu pilgrimage is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to provide a context of what Hindu pilgrimage entails. Surinder Mohan Bhardwaj suggests that the antecedents of the modern pilgrimage may be found in pre-Aryan India and Vedic literature and, by time of the Mahabharata, a well-established tradition of *tirthayatra*, or journeys to sacred fords, had developed (1987, p. 353). Although originally pertaining to river fords, the term *tirtha* is applied to a wide variety of sites, including those associated with water, temples, forests, groves, mountains or holy people (Bhardwaj 1987, p. 353). Within the diaspora, temples are often constructed using symbolism from *tirthas,* and the positioning of the temple in the physical environment can incorporate this symbolism.

The concept of sacred geography is an important part of pilgrimage and although, traditionally, the concept of sacred geography has pertained to the sites within the sub-continent, as the diaspora grows and establishes itself, the sacred geography expands. Williams suggests that 'Increasingly, a sacred geography is developing in the United States marked by many Hindu temples that constitute a kind of pilgrimage cycle, analogous to pilgrimage sites in India' (1991, p. 251), while those diasporas with a much longer history, such as those in Sri Lanka and Malaysia, have already established sacred geographies.

Categorising sacred geography is, indeed, one specific way in which pilgrimages have been organised theoretically. Bhardwaj in his book *Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India* (1973) describes pilgrimages as being centred on sites which are pan-Hindu, supra-regional, regional, subregional and local (p. 226). Although his hierarchical understanding of these sites can be contested (Morinis 1984, p. 235), the classifications, rather than their ranking, does provide a way of understanding the different sites that were mentioned by the women being interviewed. The term 'pan-Hindu' could be applied to both historic sites connected with Hinduism and those that are associated with more recent religious gurus, or sacred persons, such as Sathya Sai Baba and Ramakrishna, whose followers come from throughout India and the diaspora.

Regardless of the type or nature of the pilgrimage site, they are set apart from other sacred sites such as the domestic and community temple, as they are, according to Morinis, '...imbued with special holiness because it is purported to have been the

historical location of a manifestation of divine power' (Morinis 1984, p. 279). Therefore, there is a need to discuss pilgrimage separately from the domestic sphere and the temple, especially as, for the Australian diaspora community, these sites are distanced from those that are readily available.

Pilgrimage in the lives of the women

Non Participants

Although pilgrimage featured, at some time, in the lives of most of the women, the degree to which it was important varied. Non-participation was not an indication of the lack of the significance of pilgrimage. Five of the women, out of the 30 who were interviewed, reported that they had not been on a pilgrimage, although all suggested that they would like to do so at some time in the future. Only one of these women, Devi, had been brought up in India (interview 4). She did not have children and had left India soon after her arranged marriage to an Indian Australian. As previously mentioned, she had suggested that some of her practices may have been different if she had children. Although she expressed a desire to undertake a pilgrimage in her old age, she suggested that this was from an intellectual perspective, as she was interested in the effect pilgrimage had on others, and wondered if her experience would be similar (interview 4).

Of the remaining four women who had not undertaken a pilgrimage, only one, Shamila, had never visited India. She had been born in Sri Lanka and, although her husband had been on a pilgrimage to the South Indian temples, she had not accompanied him, possibly due to financial or family constraints. She expressed a desire for doing so in the future (interview 11). Kulpana, the single woman who was born in Malaysia, also had not undertaken a pilgrimage (interview 9). A pilgrimage to the birthplace of Ramakrishna was, however, part of her long-term plans. This desire reflected her personal development or religious path, as the teachings of Ramakrishna were of great importance to her. She was prepared to make long-term plans and sacrifices in order to fulfil this goal.

Two of the women who had not been on a pilgrimage were brought up in Australia. Kumkum, the youngest woman interviewed, was born in Australia and had visited India with her parents, but had not been on a pilgrimage, although they had (interview 10).

She did express an interest in pilgrimage and stated that she would like to because it was part of her culture. Pria, who was born in India and brought up in Australia, had not been on a pilgrimage, although she thought it would be a wonderful experience and, indeed, her grandmother had made a vow that Pria would undertake a pilgrimage (interview 25).

Therefore, even where pilgrimage had not occurred, it appears that it was due to lack of opportunity, rather than lack of desire. It was part of a long-term plan, or something that would be of interest in a different phase of life or when the opportunity presented itself.

Sites Visited by the women

As previously stated, Bhardwaj has developed the classification of pilgrimage sites as pan-Hindu, supra-regional, regional, subregional and local (1973, p. 226). The pilgrimages that the women had undertaken, or wished to undertake, did fall into these specific categories. These sites did not appear to be understood in hierarchical terms; rather, they were a reflection of the specific beliefs or assumptions of the women and their families, their regional affiliations, and the reputation of the specific sites for addressing the desires of the pilgrims. Their choice of pilgrimage site reflected the way in which the women positioned themselves within the wider Hindu and Indian framework.

Those women from other diaspora communities, the 'twice migrants', tended to visit regional sites in India, such as Tamil sites or sites associated with a particular god or goddess. They also visited pan-Hindu sites, including those of an historic nature such as Hardwar and Rameswaram, sites which they believed should be visited in every Hindu's lifetime; or sites which were connected with gurus, such as the birthplace of Ramakrishna and Sathya Sai Baba's ashram. These women did not mention family sacred sites in India; however, one of the women mentioned revisiting temples she grew up with in Malaysia, indicating that Malaysia had developed a sacred geography (interview 2). The long diaspora experience appears to have distanced the women from the strong connection that often exists between families and specific temples within India.

A connection to specific temples, especially sub-regional and local, in contrast, was mentioned by a number of the woman who had migrated from India. Strong relationships appeared to exist between the families of a number of the women from India and specific temples.

Family deities, and the temples connected with them, often have great importance for members of a family, even within the diaspora. *Samskaras* are performed at these temples and children have names derived from them. Rajbali Pandey discusses the connection between certain life cycle rituals and family deities (1969, p. 98). These family deities are thought to be active in the lives of family members, within a reciprocal relationship. For example, he suggests that there is a belief that, if a god or goddess is prayed to for a successful pregnancy, it is 'regarded as obligatory to perform some of the Samskaras in the honour of their deity prayed to' (1969, p. 98).

For many of the women who have migrated to Australia from India, these family deities and temples remain important for orienting worship and religious practices. The temples may be the focus of pilgrimage, which may also include the performance of *samskaras* after immigration.

Kuna always makes a point of visiting a specific god connected with the family when she visits India (interview 7). As her father had been ill, she suggested that, on her forthcoming visit to India, she would pay to have the god, Guruvayur Krishna, dressed with sandalwood. Before migrating to Australia, she lived in the north of India, although her family had roots in the south. This particular god was located in the south and, although it was a deity connected with the family, it had ceased to be local once the family had moved to the north. It would appear that the classifications which have been used by Bhardwaj do not allow for the mobility which is occurring within India. This may indicate a problem with the specific classification of sites, although the sites had, indeed, been local for the family at one stage, and could be termed local to the family's ancestral home.

Kuna did not restrict her pilgrimage to this temple, although it was clearly the most important place for her. She mentioned visiting other places of worship, and named Tirupathi as one whose god she had heard about and wanted to visit.

Every time Rupa, a widow, visited India, pilgrimage was part of the trip (interview 12). She stated that there were three temples that were part of her husband's tradition and five that were part of hers. These sites had considerable significance within her family. Her husband's family had been given names derived from these temples, and she and her siblings had names derived from the temples connected with her family. Asha mentioned a clan connection to a site which she visited (interview 17).

Kavita had only spent a very short time in her father's village due to his early death; however, the village temple remained very special to her and she always tried to visit it (interview 3). She mentioned that 'seeing' [the god] and seeing a *puja* were important aspects of her visit.

The women who felt a strong family connection to specific sites tended to value visits to them over those to others, and the visits appeared to be more frequent. These temples acted to locate individuals and their families in a framework connected with their past and history, part of their family heritage. Superimposed upon these preferences was often a desire to visit sites of greater general significance for Hindus. Rather than describing their choice in hierarchical terms, specific sites fulfilled different functions for the women. Family temples were used for life cycle rituals and a more intimate connection with the family, while pilgrimages to pan-Indian sites, for example, fulfilled a more general desire to visit those sites that every Hindu was expected to visit within their lifetime.

The one woman who was from an Arya Samaj family visited sites that were pan-Indian, as specific temples did not appear to be associated with her family. Pilgrimage, as such, is not part of the Arya Samaj tradition (Morinis 1984, p. 75). The young woman who was born in Australia and had not been taken on a pilgrimage by her parents or grandparents, also had an Arya Samaj influence (interview 10).

Generally, the selection of these individual sites by the women reflected a connection to geographic areas and specific manifestations of the sacred, which, in turn, reinforced their place and identity within a family and region, as well as in the wider Hindu context.

Importance of Specific Sites

Although a list of the individual sites that were favoured was not elicited, specific sites were mentioned by a number of the women. By far the most commonly mentioned site was that of Tirupathi in Andhra Pradesh, a three hour trip by road from Madras. This site was mentioned by six of the women interviewed as being important to them (interviews 5, 7, 15, 17, 18, 29). Three of these women came from south India, two from central India (Maharashtra and Hyderabad), while the sixth was from north India but from a south Indian background. The next most frequently mentioned site was Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu (interviews 2, 17, 18, 30). It is interesting to note that Bhardwaj, when discussing what he has termed '"transsectarian" site[s] of pan-Hindu importance' (1987, p. 354), suggests that Tirupathi has become increasingly popular amongst these.

The organisation involved in the running of this temple has certainly been active in sponsoring and promoting the building of temples to Venkateswara within the diaspora, including several in the United States and one in Australia. Williams discusses the program of temple building established by the '...Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam' in the United States (1992, p. 250), while Bilimoria describes the building of the Helensburg temple, just outside Sydney, Australia, in association with the same organisation (1996). This may assist the promotion of this particular pilgrimage site for those within the diaspora.

As Tirupathi appeared to have significance for a number of the women, I decided to visit it whilst I was in India in 1998. This centre, which consisted of a very large assortment of temples and associated buildings to assist pilgrims, was situated on top of a hill outside the town of Tirumala. To reach the top of the hill and the pilgrimage complex, buses or cars are used; however, it is considered meritorious to climb the eight kilometres to the top. This takes about three and a half hours. According to Sri Ramaiah Chetty, 'Going by foot is also a part of commitment (mokkubadi).' (no date, p. 3).

Yashoda, when interviewed, expressed extreme disappointment that she had attempted the ascent but was unable to complete it due to her ill health. Asha fulfilled a vow by visiting Tirupathi and climbing the hill. She suggested that her first visit preceded a

promotion for her husband, although this could have been a coincidence. She visited the site again prior to coming to Australia, which has been a successful time for them. Asha suggested that, before coming to Australia, she 'just wanted things to go right so I said I'll go up and see him (Venkateswara) but everything is all right now here so I believe that's probably because I went up and came, you know, the God has blessed me, that's what is my belief' (interview 17). Her comments indicate a commitment to family welfare through her involvement in the pilgrimage process.

This site does not appear to have the same attraction as a tourist centre as do many other sites in India. It does not have the historical or architectural importance of sites frequented by non-Indian tourists. Although my visit was timed to coincide with an auspicious time, Brahmotsavams, no other western tourists were encountered. Considerable religious fervour was evident. The crowds were heavy and the previous day it was reported that 200,000 people had attended for *darshan.* The same report stated that

> The pilgrims, during the rain, which lashed the temple town since the wee hours of today, stood in the serpentine queue, spending more than 10 hours, before entering the massive queue complexes, where they were forced to spend another 10 to 15 hours, to get their turn for 'darshan'. (*The Hindu*, 28th September 1998).

It is clear that the women who mentioned the site understood Tirupathi as producing a remarkable effect upon pilgrims. There were specific expectations of the pilgrims, as well as opportunities for religious expression, apart from *darshan.* In the *Tirumala - Tirupathi Yatra Guide: a to z information to pilgrims* (no date) by Sri Ramaiah Chetty, instructions on offering gifts are given, including 'If anybody desires to offer God, gold, silver, Kala Kanda or Jaggary resonant to his weight, his physique will be weighed in person.' (p. 17). The guide also set out a list of 14 instructions for the pilgrim such as 'Pilgrims must take a bath and wear fresh clothes while entering the temple' (p. 14).

Ritual bathing, making offerings to the deity and acceptance of *prasad* are all important aspects of pilgrimages to temple sites and were in evidence at Tirupathi. These are rituals that involve, firstly, purification of the body to a state that is desirable in the presence of, and relationship with, the deity. Secondly, re- establishment of a

relationship with the deity by making offerings such as gifts, vows or hair, and the acceptance of the deities' 'leftovers' or *prasad.* The effort that is involved to undertake the pilgrimage demonstrates the themes of renunciation, power to influence the events of their lives and those of family members, and devotionalism.

A common form of commitment at Tirupathi is the offering of hair to the God. Prior to leaving Australia, I had been informed that if I made a vow to go to visit the God at Tirupathi and had my head shaved while I was there, that which I requested would be granted.

Tirupathi appeared to be of significance to a wider group than the regional one. Although Bhardwaj suggested it was a pan-Indian site, it appeared to be more supra-regional for those women in the diaspora. No north Indians without connections to the south mentioned this site. It appears to attract pilgrims because of the reputation of the God Venkateswara, although the experience does not always live up to the expectations of the pilgrim, as Kuna discovered (interview 7). The power of the God had attracted her to Tirupathi; however, the crowds made her experience a disappointing one.

Organisation of pilgrimage by family members

Family members often organised pilgrimages. Surika's grandmother had taken her on pilgrimages as a child (interview 16), while others such as Anjali and Aparna went as children with their parents, although Aparna now has no further interest in pilgrimage (interviews 19, 27). Malati's uncle hired a car when they visited India in order to treat them to an expedition to visit regional temples (interview 29).

Mita had undertaken two pilgrimages (interview 8). The first was as a wedding treat that her father gave when she and her husband returned to India for their wedding, after meeting in the diaspora. The excursion took 12 days and a car and driver were hired for the period. A number of south Indian temples were visited. At a later time when she visited India with her husband and children, her husband's family, which was extensive, hired a large bus to visit her mother-in-law's favourite temples. This took five days.

This visitation of regional sites in India often occurred. Sunita took her children from Australia to tour the south Indian temples; however, at a later stage, she and her husband chose six temples for a more leisurely visit with time to observe rituals and *pujas* (interview 30). In this case, the family was Tamil-speaking and had migrated from Malaysia, although they identified themselves as being Sri Lankan Tamils. As Tamil speakers, they affiliated themselves with the south Indian temples and deities; however, a family connection to specific sites was not mentioned. Once again, the children were introduced to these sacred sites by the parents.

Motivations for, and perceptions of, pilgrimage

Specific motivations were sometimes mentioned for pilgrimages, as well as what was gained through the process. Motivation could have a practical focus, such as fulfilment of *samskaras*, or vows, or for participation in festivals.

Promila, who was from Malaysia made pilgrimages from Australia to the Ganges in order to scatter the ashes of a loved relative, and later to return to the site (interview 1). The fulfilment of a vow was the initial reason for Vijaya to visit one of the major pilgrimage centres, but it was the feeling with which it left her that now attracts her to return to the same centre (interview 5). As previously mentioned Vijaya did not have a home shrine. Manju recounted her son's first *mundan* being performed at her husband's family temple, which was devoted to Hanumanji. She stressed that, in their family, it was obligatory for this ritual to be performed at that specific temple (interview 21). Visits were sometimes timed to coincide with the celebration of festivals (interview 26).

A number of the women expressed their motivation in terms of a desire for worship or to connect with the sacred. Observing *pujas* and *darshan* were mentioned by a number of the women (interviews 3, 7, 12, 30), while seeing different aspects of God was also given as a reason for visiting a variety of centres (interview 15). For Rupa the widow, who has been mentioned above as having a name derived from a family temple, pilgrimage was an essential part of her visits to India, as it combined worship with the family's history, because she visited the temples that were important to them (interview 12). For her, pilgrimage was one aspect of her religious practices that she was meticulous about. She felt that she often neglected religious practices, and pilgrimage

was a means of maintaining her identity as a Hindu. *Darshan* was the most important aspect of pilgrimage for her, although she also gave money for rituals to be performed.

Yashoda felt drawn towards pilgrimage sites, including Sathya Sai Baba's ashram (interview 15). She suggested that 'Wherever you go you find him [God] there. It is there waiting for you. That's what I felt. He's calling you to go there' (interview 15). Quite clearly, it was being in the presence of God which was important for Yashoda.

Asha visited Tirupathi because she was a devotee of the God Venkateswara. She differentiated between places that Hindus were meant to visit in their lifetime; pilgrimage centres which Bhardwaj calls pan-Indian; and other sites which attract pilgrims to return (interview 17). She suggested that Tirupathi was one in the last category. Once again, she mentioned feeling nice and also feeling satisfied. Hema was another who mentioned Tirupathi as a place she always tried to visit, out of a sense of belief, when she went to India (interview 18).

There was a feeling that pilgrimage provoked positive emotions for the women. This was more intensive for some than for others. It could result in a sense of re-invigoration from a religious perspective. Chanda, who was from a diaspora community and with no strong regional identification, had visited pan-Indian sites of pilgrimage. Of the experience, she suggested that, with the energy or vibrations which she had gained, she could live forever (interview 26).

The feelings that were evoked by the presence in a particular place or by a deity were important. This may be linked to, or result from, a familiarity with a particular site. Like Asha, mentioned above, Kuna expressed the feeling in a similar manner, stating that, 'I know this God so well...you feel, yes, if I go there, I feel nice' (interview 7).

Relating to personal heritage and tradition was another motivation that was articulated (interview 12). Mita explained pilgrimage as giving an understanding of her place in the world. She said that pilgrimage gave her

> A sense of history - a sense of feeling that these places have been Holy for so many centuries, you know, to people to whom I'm related as it were...a sense

> of understanding life and suffering and that there are things that are achievable and not achievable - essentially what it means to be human. (Interview 8)

For someone having migrated to the diaspora, a pilgrimage to a specific site with strong family connections reinforced order and a sense of being part of a wider framework.

It has been suggested that pilgrimage can have implications for individual and group identity by reinforcing affiliation with a regional/language group. Fred Clothey, in his article 'Pilgrimage Centres in the Tamil Cultus of Murukan' (1972), understands the worship of Murukan and the importance of Murukan pilgrimage centres as being interwoven with Tamil identity. He associates the popularity of the Murukan cultus with a 'rising Tamil self-consciousness and pride' (Clothey 1972, p. 79). The God Murukan is strongly identified with Tamil Nadu. Clothey suggests that 'In stressing the Tamilness of Murukan, his devotees find a sense of their identity as Tamils. At the same time Tamilians are placed into the wider context of history and nationhood' (Clothey 1972, p. 94).

Although a Murukan pilgrimage centre was mentioned specifically only by Sunita from Malaysia (interview 30), and her reference was to visiting a site in Sri Lanka, it did appear that regional values and identity were important within the pilgrimage process and the sites chosen. It is also interesting to note, as previously mentioned in the earlier discussion of communal sacred space, that the God Murukan has been installed in an 'alternative temple' by predominantly South Indians. This may indicate an attempt to maintain or assert a Tamil identity within the Indian community within South Australia.

The theme of renunciation was taken up by one of the women, Sita, who was a Sai Baba adherent from Malaysia (interview 2). When asked what she gained from pilgrimage to Sathya Sai Baba's ashram, she discussed being 'at the feet of the Lord and making lots of sacrifices to be there' (interview 2). She elaborated upon this further by saying it was

> The closeness, the peace, the fellowship, plus the austerity, because you do not have your normal comforts like for instance when we were in India over Christmas time we used to get up about 3 o' clock in the morning and I used to have a cold shower and then go down to the kitchen and help with

> chopping food, as part of the service and at times when I chose not to go to the temple I'd go into the *puja* area and sit in the meditation aspect, and the various rituals that were done till about 5.30, 6 o' clock. (Interview 2)

It is interesting to note that Sita's description mirrors Morinis's contention that

> The single act of pilgrimage combines the separately efficacious practices of austerities, sacrifice and worship. Thus the performance of pilgrimage is especially purificatory and meritorious. (Morinis, 1984, p. 67)

The themes of sacrifice, austerity and worship were all mentioned by Sita, from her own understanding of her actions. This was one level, a conscious level, of understanding pilgrimage, while the purificatory and meritorious nature of pilgrimage may be unconscious and unarticulated.

The individual motivations were consistent with what Bhardwaj suggested were the purposes of pilgrimage (1973, pp. 148-151). He listed 'Identification with the Sacred order' (Bhardwaj 1973, p. 148); the performance of life cycle rituals such as the scattering of ashes and the performance of *mundun*; 'problem generated purposes' (Bhardwaj 1973, p. 151) such as the fulfilment of a vow; and, finally, social motives, which he related to specific caste groups. The first three categories appeared to be present amongst the women, but, other than one mention of a clan temple, it was difficult to draw a conclusion regarding the fourth category.

Two motivations, which were not touched upon by Bhardwaj, were related to a personal heritage and tradition (although this may be partly included in his fourth category), and curiosity. There was often a sense of curiosity in 'seeing' a particular god or goddess or to understand and experience their particular attraction. The former of these two motivations is perhaps the most salient for women in South Australia. Much more of an effort needs to be made for women who are attempting to maintain a specific heritage and tradition in isolation from its source. Rupa expressed her concern and her duty towards her children and grandchildren, and she regularly undertook pilgrimage in order to maintain her tradition for the family (interview 12).

Not all women, however, felt that pilgrimage was a priority when they returned to India. These women tended to undertake pilgrimage only when time permitted.

Morinis, when discussing the motivation for pilgrimage suggests,

> Whatever motivates a person's quest, he acts and thinks within the overarching patterns of Hindu religious ideology and culture. The pilgrim is likely to be totally unaware of these invisible scaffolds which give structure to pilgrimage; nevertheless, such features are essential aspects of the pilgrimage institution. (Morinis 1984, p. 276)

Summary

Pilgrimage had featured in the lives of most of the women interviewed, and was understood to be a goal for some future time for those women who had not already participated. Although it was not always a strong priority, it was certainly an important part of the lives of a number of the women. It appeared to have retained significance and relevance for most of the women; however, motivations varied considerably.

For women who had migrated from India, pilgrimage often formed part of childhood experiences, and was incorporated into their primary habitus. It placed them into the context of family history and identity as well as providing a Hindu identity. For those women who had this type of association, visiting pilgrimage sites on their return to India reinforced their sense of identity and position within the family structure and, indeed, within Hinduism. It confirmed their place within a specific heritage. It was an aspect of their culture that was reaffirmed as part of their habitus. The places selected had meaning within the family context and, therefore, *samskaras* were performed within the appropriate temples in keeping with family tradition, thus reaffirming the place of the individual within the Hindu world order. It would also appear that their feeling of 'Hinduness' was strengthened by the experience.

For those from other diaspora communities and, also, Lata from an Ayra Samaj background, these specific connections were absent. For these individual diaspora Hindus, this specific sense of place within the sacred geographical landscape of India did not appear to exist. Growing up at a distance from India, without regular visits, meant that sacred sites different from those connected with families have developed importance. These sites were regional; for example, where the family had come from a

south Indian background, sites in this region were chosen, together with pan-Indian sites.

Visiting pilgrimage sites could act to reinforce regional/ language identity which families had maintained within the diaspora, although the experience could be filled with disappointment, as in the case of Meena from Fiji (interview 6).

Positive feelings tended to be invoked by visiting pilgrimage sites. Closeness to the deity or *darshan* was invigorating. It appeared that it gave a spiritual boost to some of the women. Regular pilgrimage could be an important means of helping to maintain Hinduism for the women and their families. Access to overseas travel by the Hindu community in South Australia meant that pilgrimage was viable, and it will be interesting to see if a connection to family sacred sites retains more importance for this diaspora community than has previously occurred when the migration experience differed.

For those visiting specific ashrams or gurus, the spiritual aspect was evident. Pilgrimage was often a primary rather than a secondary motivation for visiting India. There were often sacrifices made and considerable planning involved in order for the pilgrimage to be undertaken.

Pan-Indian sites were visited not only out of curiosity, but also due to the importance of the sites generally within Hinduism. Even when a family was from the Malaysian diaspora, the scattering of ashes occurred within India. Where familiarity and family connections were no longer evident, the sacredness of certain historical sites had still been recognised and their specific quality acknowledged and utilised.

Pilgrimage, for many, acted to reinforce the women's identity as part of a family, region and religion. It was a means of fulfilling specific obligations that could be difficult within the diaspora context. Edith Turner has understood pilgrimage as having 'the power of revival'. (1987, p. 330), and it does appear that it was a way of spiritually reinvigorating individuals. Women often understood their own pilgrimages as being conducted not only for individual benefit, but also on behalf of their families. It was through pilgrimage, much of which was not dependent upon the services of Brahman

priests, that women could act on behalf of the family and could direct their power for the benefit of the family. It was an act of unmediated devotion.

Although the 'scaffold' may be invisible, as Morinis has suggested, the pilgrims' actions stem from a Hindu understanding of the world (1984, p. 276). Pilgrimage was a valuable means of providing opportunities to fulfil obligations, as well as spiritual needs, opportunities which were lacking within the diaspora. At the same time, it reaffirmed regional and national identity, which was then brought back to the diaspora, thus enhancing an understanding of identity within that community. A spatial relationship to the deity or deities was re-established through the rituals performed at the sacred site. As Bhardwaj has stated, 'Thus at *mandiratirtha* [temple sites] supplications, vows, *darsan* (holy sight), and various relational expectancies of the pilgrims tend to dominate' (1987, p. 353). Sacred 'contact' had occurred, as the individual had been in the presence of the deity. Thus a sacred re-invigoration of the body as well as of the mind occurred, together with the re-establishment of the relationship between the deity and the devotee. The religious identity of the individual is reinforced and this identity may reinforce the sacredness of both the individual and the domestic sphere in which the women operate. Pilgrimage re-establishes a Hindu sense of order and relevance for the individual.

CHAPTER 10

SAMSKARAS

Introduction

While attempting to compile information concerning the significance of the *samskaras,* or rites of passage which mark the stages in the lives of Hindus, for the women interviewed, I became increasingly aware that this topic could constitute a separate study examining the different categories of life cycle rites which were undertaken, and their individual components. Although some information was obtained concerning these practices, it was not the purpose of the study to go into the detail required for a thorough analysis. The purpose of the study was more general in focus. My aim was to collect information concerning the significance of *samskaras* in the lives of the women and their families, rather than specific details of the rituals involved.

Often, in South Australia, life cycle rites took the form of both domestic rituals and community events. They could be undertaken by the immediate family, or they could include members of the wider community inside the home; alternatively, they were totally external to the domestic sphere. The community configuration was usually based upon the regional language group of the host family. The life cycle rituals that were conducted within the home, therefore, became rites which were celebrated by a select group from the wider community. This is consistent with Vasudha Narayanan's observations within America, where she found that domestic rituals and festivals were most often community based (1992, p.170). She did, however, state that pre-natal rites were undertaken within the temple rather than at home, which was not the case with the pre-natal rites discussed by the women in South Australia. She equated the community

aspect of rituals with the practices within village India, where she suggested that very few private domestic functions occurred.

Two specific functions which I attended, *Namakarana* (name giving) and *Sapindi-Karana* (uniting the spirit of the deceased with the ancestors after cremation), demonstrated the way in which members of the regional language group came together in the domestic space in order to celebrate these specific rituals. This is not to suggest that the celebrations were confined to these specific groups, but they appeared to constitute the basis for friendship groups which came together on special, celebratory occasions.

Although the life cycle rituals which I observed included both men and women as participants and observers, a number of rites which were discussed by the women were specifically women's rites. Therefore, when lifecycle rituals are discussed, it is important to acknowledge the differences in some aspects, as well as the similarities. The meaning that the rituals had to the individuals varied from being an excuse for a social function to a necessary stage within a larger group of life cycle rituals. Scholars, however, do discuss *samskaras* as an internally consistent body of rituals.

Samskaras as rites of passage

Two influential scholars who have written about life cycle rites are Arnold Van Gennep and Mircea Eliade. Van Gennep categorises the rituals which were concerned with the progress of the individual through the different stages of life as 'rites of passage' or 'life cycle rites' (Van Gennep 1960). These rituals mark the stages of life for both the individual and the wider community. As individuals progress through socially marked stages, their status within the community alters (Van Gennep 1960, p. 3). For Van Gennep, the communal aspect is integral to the process, as the individual is part of a much wider social structure. Eliade, while stressing the importance of rites of passage for the both the individual and the community, has stressed their religious aspect. He suggests that life cycle rituals are '...significant as a means of maintaining a sense of the sacred, as a means of sustaining religious devotion...for the individual' (Eliade 1976, p. 164), thus adding a different emphasis to Van Gennep's categories. Within the life cycle rite, the individual is brought, during the liminal phase, into relationship with the

sacred, resulting in purification of the individual. After purification, the individual is prepared for a different stage in life and a new role within the community.

Ralph Nicholas has asserted that 'the implications of the term *samskara* are somewhat different' (Nicholas 1995, p.138) from the term 'lifecycle rites', presumably, as he understands the ultimate purpose of *samskaras* as being a preparation for *samsara* or *moksha*. However, he still places them under the general category of life cycle rites. Writing with Ronald Inden, he has discussed *samskaras* in the following terms:

> The word *samskara* means to "complete," "prepare," "make over," "fully form," and above all, to "purify" (*suddhi*). Every *samskara* is regarded as a transformative action that "refines" and "purifies" the living body, initiating it into new statuses and relationships by giving it a new birth. A *samskara* removes "defects" (*dosa*) from the body, such as those inherited "from the seed" (*baijika*) and "from the womb" (*garbhika*), and infuses "qualitites" (*guna*) into it. These goals are accomplished by immersion, aspersion, or sprinkling, by touching various parts of the body, by donning new clothes, by anointing and feeding with special substances, and by the recitation of special words into the ear. Each *samskara* in the sequence prepares the person for the next; all of them cumulatively prepare him for the penultimate goal of attaining "heaven" (*svarga*), "rebirth" (*punar-janma*) in a higher caste, or becoming a proper "ancestor" (*pitr*), in preparation for the ultimate goal of "release" (*Mukti, moksha*) from the cycle of birth and "life in the world" (*samsara*) by the separation of the person's *atman* from his body and its union with *brahman.* (Inden and Nicholas, quoted in Nicholas 1995, p. 138)

In this sense, Inden and Nicholas understand the function of the individual rituals which have been termed *samskaras* as being ultimately the same: they are stages in a lifelong process, preparing the individual for the next stage of *samsara* or *moksha.* In this respect, according to Inden and Nicholas, it is important to look past the individual rites to a higher goal for which they provide a transition. They are linked, as a group of rites by the way in which they assist the individual to progress towards this goal. For the women interviewed, however, it would appear that more immediate goals, including social ones, were more salient than the overarching religious explanation which Inden and Nicholas provide.

Not all scholars writing about *samskaras*, however, include this higher goal within their analysis. Rajbali Pandey, in his text, *Hindu Samskaras: Socio-Religious Study of the Hindu Sacraments*, defines *samskaras* as '...religious purificatory rites and ceremonies

for sanctifying the body, mind and intellect of an individual, so that he may become a fully fledged member of the community' (1969, p. 16). As with Van Gennep and Eliade, both individual and community aspects of the rites are emphasised by Pandey.

The *samskaras*, as life cycle rituals, may achieve the objective which Van Gennep, Eliade and Pandey have identified. They were usually unarticulated aspects of the rite, however, and, I would suspect, outside the conscious understanding of the women interviewed although, understandably, there was often a recognition of change of status and duties for those who had undertaken specific *samskaras*, rather than the deeper meaning identified by van Gennep, Eliade, Inden, Nicholas and Pandey.

Types of *Samskaras* which are celebrated

Pandey suggests that currently there are sixteen *samskaras* which are the most popular performed (Pandey 1969, p. 23). He subdivides the *samskaras* into five specific categories as follows:

1. The Pre-natal Samskaras.
2. The Samskaras of Childhood.
3. The Educational Samskaras.
4. The Marriage Samskaras.
5. The Funeral Ceremonies. (Pandey 1969, p. ix)

Alternatively, Nicholas, who draws from his work in Bengal, asserts that there are ten individual *samskaras* that are recognised, although most individuals or families would not celebrate all ten (Nicholas 1995, p.139). Nicholas states that women and *sudras* are ineligible for all ten and 'most Brahman males do not receive a complete sequence' (Nicholas 1995, p. 139).

Attempting to construct a definitive list of the *samskaras* that are celebrated demonstrates, once again, the diversity of practices found within India. Regional, caste and class groups can have their own specific rites. Karin Kapadia's study conducted in the village of Aruloor in Tamil Nadu provides an excellent example of regional difference (1996). In her text *Siva & her Sisters*, she examines the puberty rites performed for girls at menarche (Kapadia 1996). She quotes Wadely as stating that

> The importance of puberty rites in south India can only be appreciated when we recognize their absence in north India. In the north, puberty is not only not celebrated, but is hidden. (Kapadia 1996, p. 68)

Kapadia goes on to discuss these rituals and their performance which occurs amongst the non-Brahman (and non-Brahmanised) castes, where lavish celebrations occur to celebrate menarche. According to Kapadia, this is a celebration of female fertility and is a preliminary rite that culminates in marriage (Kapadia 1996, p. 69). Although menstruation horoscopes are important where this ritual occurs, Kapadia suggests that, amongst the Brahmans of the region, birth charts have significance, while menstruation charts are not constructed. This ritual demonstrates not only regional but, caste and class difference in the celebration of *samskaras*.

Not only can *samskaras* vary as to those performed, the way in which similar rites are undertaken does, also. Rituals can be truncated or performed in conjunction with other rites, on convenient occasions, such as at marriage ceremonies (Nicholas 1995, p. 139). Nicholas suggests that the way in which practice of the *samskaras* may actually occur may lead observers to believe that they are devalued. As he suggests,

> Facts such as these may make it appear that we rested entirely too much weight on the rich symbolism of the *samskaras* at the expense of contemporary reality. Bengalis who are much better aware of the facts about their contemporary practices than I am have not, however, quit talking about the ten life-cycle rites as if they were matters of some importance. And at least one of them - marriage - remains very nearly universal. (Nicholas 1995, p. 139)

Reasons often given for not performing certain *samskaras* include poverty and western-style education, although Nicholas asserts that these explanations do not stand up to further examination. He goes on to suggest that it is more to do with the acceptance of the contemporary age or the 'Kali *yuga*' which, according to Hindu concepts of time, is one of deterioration of order and morality (Nicholas 1995, p. 139).

Pandey, writing originally in 1949, suggested that the 'creative period of the samskaras has passed away' (1969, p. ix). He went on to suggest that the prenatal *samskaras* and a number of the childhood rites were not generally practiced and, where they were, in orthodox families, they had been 'distorted' (Pandey 1969, p. ix). He further contends

that there are only three *samskaras* in current usage, '...the *Upanayana* (Initiation), not performed by all the twice-born today; the *Vivaha* (Marriage Ceremonies); and the *Antyesti* (Funeral Ceremonies)' (Pandey 1969, p.ix).

Nicholas, in contrast, states that it is impossible to say whether the *samskaras* are declining or increasing in importance, as there is insufficient information to make an assessment. As with Pandey, he concluded, also, that there is the perception that the performance of the *samskaras* had been affected in this modern period, going on to comment that

> This is significant because it means that the *samskaras* are not disvalued or considered a quaint archaism; if this were so they would likely be ignored or discussed merely for their curiosity. An additional piece of information is afforded in the very nearly universal unwillingness of Bengalis to neglect the *samskara* of marriage, which gives it a place of particular importance in the cycle. (Nicholas 1995, p. 140)

The practice and attitudes towards the performance of the *samskaras* by the women interviewed conformed generally to the assessment of them which both Pandey and Nicholas have made.

Samskaras undertaken in South Australia

A variety of *samskaras*, coinciding with Pandey's five categories, were mentioned by the women. Although this full range of *samskaras* was mentioned by the women, not all were undertaken within each woman's family; however, all were performed, to some extent, by Hindu families in South Australia. The women discussed the performance of life cycle rituals, firstly, as they pertained to themselves and, secondly, to their family. From their perspective, the order of performance tended to commence from marriage through to the rituals that were performed during their pregnancies, followed by rites for their children and death rituals for family members. Rather than appearing to be a linear set of rites for the individual, the women often discussed them in terms of marriage forming the commencement of a cycle which then involved the woman's family, rather than being applicable to the individual woman from conception. The individual goal which Inden and Nicholas outlined did not appear to be part of the women's own understanding of the *samskaras* (quoted in Nicholas 1995, p. 138).

Pre-natal

Many of the women had given birth prior to coming to Australia, while six of the women did not have children. Those women who had given birth to children prior to immigration, and who had completed their families while living in Australia, provided interesting material for understanding the attitudes towards pre-natal, as well as childhood, rituals. Although pre-natal *samskaras* were mentioned by a number of the women interviewed, the types of celebrations, and rituals that were undertaken, varied between the women. Regional, class and caste variations may have been influential in determining the nature of the *samskaras*. Pre-natal rituals and celebrations that the women described varied from having a dinner hosted for 200 guests, to a small group of women performing rites. Pre-natal rituals appeared to be mainly initiated by the women associated with the expectant mother, such as their in-laws, family, or other members of the community, rather than resting with the expectant woman, although, occasionally, the reverse was the case. There was certainly an understanding of the optional nature of these rites, rather than them being a necessity, even amongst those who had undertaken them.

Many of the women were due for pre-natal rituals prior to coming to Australia, although they were not always undertaken. Lata and Chanda both commented that they had not had them, with Chanda adding that it was not done in her husband's family (interviews 23, 26). Therefore, even within India, as well other diaspora communities, pre-natal *samskaras* were seen to be optional. In South Australia, this appears to be the case, also. Individual circumstances often had a major influence on whether these rites were conducted.

Savita, who was living in regional South Australia, did not undergo pre-natal *samskaras* due to her isolated existence (interview 22). At the time, this was of concern to her, but, in retrospect, she thought it was only a small issue and not worth worrying about. Sunita did not perform any rituals when pregnant in Australia, although she had during her Malaysian pregnancies (interview 13). She did not think that there was the opportunity to do so at the time, although she intends her daughter to undertake them. She identified the need for the younger generation to know the rituals. In a sense, she was suggesting that, although the rituals are optional, they were a necessary aspect of

the education for the younger generation growing up away from a dominant Hindu culture. This was certainly the concern of a number of the more senior women in the community. It also demonstrates the influence which the maternal family can have on the performance of *samskaras* after the marriage of a daughter.

Amongst at least one regional group, the senior married women have taken on the responsibility of performing and hosting pregnancy rites for the younger women. Nishthha indicated that she performed pregnancy ceremonies when she was asked to do so (interview 24). She understood it as being a social occasion, although it involved ritual actions such as the giving of a coconut (interview 24). She suggested that

> ...it's like a social ceremony and I think many of these ceremonies were...they were...for people to get together...especially the old days women had no chance of getting out of the house so they had these ceremonies where women can get together. (Interview 24)

Malati, who was also involved suggested that it was a combination of keeping the pregnant women happy and it was a teaching tool, as she stated 'If we don't do it the children are never going to find out' (interview 29). Malati had hosted dinners for a number of women during their seventh month of pregnancy. She stated that they were nice, happy occasions where presents were given to the mother-to-be and special food was cooked for her. Clearly, the social aspect is a major component for the women, and where this is absent, through lack of family or community, the ceremony does not have the same priority.

Pria had a series of dinners organised for her by the women from her community, which she said commenced with a *puja* and, also, included being given pure white cloth, praying and sharing food (interview 25). She indicated that these were given to her by a number of the women in her regional language group, who also happened to be the same caste group. She had been brought up in Australia and her parents were living interstate.

Hema, who had her children while in India, commented that pre-natal *samskaras* could be celebrated on either a grand or a small scale, and they had chosen the latter (interview 18). Most of the celebrations described by the women were in this category, but not all.

Meena reported that her husband's parents, prior to her immigration to Australia, had hosted a dinner for her in Fiji with 200 invited guests (interview 6). This had occurred during her seventh month of pregnancy, some years earlier. She discussed the way in which their family had continued this type of celebration in Australia. Her daughter's sister-in-law had a similar dinner hosted for her, during her pregnancy, in Sydney. The girl's mother-in-law, being in charge of the occasion, had travelled from Fiji for the celebration. Her daughter had married within caste, which may indicate the importance placed upon this rite in that particular caste, or it may denote regional customs. Meena anticipated that her daughter would receive the same attention from her mother-in-law. In this case the in-laws undertook the responsibility to host the *samskara.*

The performance of *samskaras,* including those performed during pregnancy, tended to be guided by individual family traditions and wishes. Kavita, who had an arranged marriage to an Indian who was living at the time with her husband's family in Australia, expressed disappointment that they had not organised any pregnancy rituals for her whilst they had done so for their own daughter (interview 3). While Poonam and Mita did not have any pre-natal rituals in Australia (interviews 13, 8), Shamila stated that she had undertaken them (interview 11). Asha suggested that pre-natal rituals were only applicable to the first pregnancy, so she did not have them for her second pregnancy, in Australia (interview 17).

What emerged from the discussion of pre-natal *samskaras* was that they were generally considered to be optional and often desirable if the circumstances permitted their performance. Some of the more senior women within the community understood the importance of the rites within the diaspora as a teaching tool and a demonstration of Hindu culture and ritual for the younger members of the community. It was believed that, if the older generation did not show the younger ones what to do, they would never know. This indicates that pre-natal *samskaras* have not lost their relevance for the women.

The social or community aspect was important for many of the women. It appeared that this was often a criterion for the performance or, indeed, the non-performance of the rites. It was a happy occasion, and one where the people, often women, could meet and celebrate. It could act to reinforce community, regional language group, and caste

allegiances. Where family members were present, the decision to conduct pre-natal *samskaras* seemed to reside with family members, primarily with the woman's in-laws. Senior members of the community also took the initiative, especially in the absence of close family members. The ritual activities which were undertaken varied considerably, although those from similar regional (and caste) groups were alike. Therefore, despite these rituals being considered optional and not a necessity for either the mother or baby, they were treated as something which was positive not only for the individual but also for the wider community. To use Nicholas's terms, '...it means that the *samskaras* are not disvalued or considered a quaint archaism' (1995, 140), but have retained considerable relevance within the community. Apart from the important social aspect which these specific rituals have for the women, they are seen to be a means of teaching about, and connecting to, a Hindu heritage.

On an unarticulated level, these rites, which were primarily women's rites, demonstrate a connection with concepts of the inherent power of women being used to exert a positive influence over birth. Once again, the symbolism which is inherent within these practices suggests that women's power can be channelled in a positive manner to assist other women as the rites were thought to have a positive influence on both the mother and the baby.

Childhood *samskaras* (including educational)

The interview questions were not designed to enable the construction of a catalogue of rituals which had been performed within the diaspora, to be constructed. As previously stated, my intention was to find attitudes towards *samskaras* and their maintenance within the diaspora generally. Therefore, rather than going through the different rites and asking whether they had been performed, my questioning was often general, thus enabling the women to discuss the aspect they wished to emphasise. When childhood rites were discussed, it once again became clear that differences occurred in the rituals that were maintained. For example, Madhu mentioned that naming rites (*namakarana*) were not performed in her caste but ear piercing (*karnavedha*) was (interview 27), while the opposite was often the case. It was clear, also, that differing attitudes towards the performance of childhood *samskaras* were held by the women prior to immigration. For example, Meena had upset her husband's parents, before she immigrated to

Australia, by breaking family tradition in not following naming rituals when her children were born (interview 6).

Rituals marking the stages of childhood have continued for some within Australia. Often childhood rites which were performed in India were continued in this country. Kuna's son was taken to a temple in India for his first birthday, while rituals signifying the commencement of his education were performed in his home in Australia (interview 7). This was the only time this type of educational *samskara* was mentioned. Shamila has continued to perform *samskaras* for her children within the Australian context (interview 11).

For others, the performance of *samskaras* occurred for their children born prior to immigration but did not continue for children born after arrival. Sunita discussed the way in which rituals for teething, rice feeding and tonsure were performed for her children who were born in Malaysia, but were not undertaken for the child born in Australia (interview 30). This did not indicate a changing attitude, however, as she commented that things were just 'different' in South Australia. There was no temple and she had been ill. She did intend, in fact, for her daughter to go through the rituals for her own children.

Often the women had not yet been confronted with the decision of performing childhood *samskaras* in the diaspora. Their children may have had their childhood rites completed prior to immigration, or had been 'between' *samskaras*. Even when rituals were performed prior to immigration, however, a number of women commented on the importance of continuing a number of them in the diaspora. Although Rupa's children were born in India, she still considered what she termed the 'Brahmanic rituals', such as naming and first birthday rites, as being important to undertake (interview 12). Yashoda and Surika expressed their concern with the importance of continuing the tradition of the *samskaras,* without elaborating upon which specific rites should be continued (interviews 15, 16).

This concern for the continuation of the childhood *samskaras* was not held by all. Hema expressed the view that life cycle rituals in general were more important in India (interview 18), although Devi commented that the rituals, not so much lost their

meaning outside India, but that you tended to forget them (interview 4). Vijaya had not followed the childhood rituals as closely in Australia, as she had done for her children in India, because there was no one to celebrate them with in Australia (interview 5). Once again, the importance of rites as a social, family or community occasion was stressed. This opinion was reinforced by Madhu, who suggested that they were an excuse for a party (interview 27). Even where rituals were not performed, it did not necessarily indicate that they were not valued. Chanda, whose children were born prior to immigration, stressed that it was not that they were not important, but they had chosen not to keep them (interview 26).

Three of the women who did not have children stressed the importance of keeping up childhood *samskaras* (interviews 1, 2, 20). Of these, Sita mentioned naming, teething and menarche. It is interesting that this was the only mention of a puberty ritual for girls, once again demonstrating the variety of rituals which can be found within the *samskaras,* and the regional and caste differences which occur. It is important to emphasise that the variety which can be found within the subcontinent and the diaspora as a whole, can be found within the South Australian context.

As with pregnancy rites, personal choice, family traditions, and individual circumstances influenced whether or not childhood *samskaras* were performed. Mita and Poonam chose not to conduct any rituals for their children who were born in Australia (interviews 8, 13). Kavita, as with the pregnancy rituals, once again expressed regret that her husband's parents, with whom she had been living, did not have any rituals performed for her child (interview 3). It appears that she was very much dependent upon their desires, rather than on her own wishes. She and her husband did perform a special *puja* at the temple for her daughter's first birthday, however, and she has continued this on subsequent birthdays. Savita, as with pregnancy rituals, also found that the childhood *samskaras* were difficult to perform due to the family's isolation (interview 22).

For other women, the performance of certain rituals was important. Asha, who was pregnant and living in Whyalla at the time of the interview, suggested that, not only would she try to take her child to the temple in Adelaide, but also she wanted to be in India for its first feeding (*annaprasana*) (interview 17). For some women, the naming

ceremony was most important. Malati emphasised their importance for her community (interview 29).

This was certainly evident at a naming ceremony which I attended, organised by a couple in the same regional/caste group as Malati. The ceremony was arranged by the grandparents for their grandson. The grandfather explained to the 80-odd guests who attended that the ceremony was a combination of brahmanic ritual and popular ritual from their specific region of India. The father of the child performed specific 'brahmanic' rites which he needed to be guided through, while the mother of the child, a non-Indian Australian, was assisted in the 'popular tradition' by the female relatives and other women from the community, as well as a non-Indian female friend. The father of the child discussed the symbolic importance of performing the ceremony, even though he had little knowledge of what he needed to do, or what was being done. Quite a few family and friends had come to South Australia from interstate in order to help celebrate the occasion. It was clearly an important time, the celebratory nature of the occasion as well as the religious ceremony both being integral aspects. As was consistent with Nicholas' observation, the ceremony was held in conjunction with another family celebration (1995, p. 139).

Rather than being a strict set of rites which the individual needed to progress through, the childhood *samskaras* appear to have varying degrees of importance placed upon them. Chanda stated that you pick bits and pieces to perform (interview 26). Whereas naming was important in one community, and the emphasis was on ear piercing in another, first feeding was often important for a community.

Yashoda provided an opportunity for families in Whyalla to undertake childhood *samskaras* in the absence of a temple (interview 15). As many of the families considered her house to be a temple, newly-born children were brought there and *prasad* was distributed. First feedings were conducted there for many of the babies. In the absence of a temple, Yashoda's home was given the status of a substitute temple, and the gods and goddesses were tended to on a daily basis, even in the absence of those living in the house. A means of undertaking life cycle rites was provided for the community in the absence of a temple, and a community existed with which to celebrate. As with a number of the women who conducted prenatal rites within their

regional/ language group in Adelaide, Yashoda was providing the families in Whyalla with the opportunity to undertake childhood rituals.

One childhood ritual which was sometimes undertaken was that of tonsure (*chudakarana*). It was mentioned by several of the women, and included both boys and girls. It appeared that it was mainly performed, in other than symbolic terms, outside the Australian context. It was often a ritual that was conducted at a convenient time, when the family was visiting India. Hopkins reports that this rite, conducted generally during infancy, is performed in order '...to remove the final vestiges of birth pollution. This rite, known as mundan, is optional, but it is very common' (Hopkins 1971, p. 76-77). He suggests, further, that it can be performed during festivals (Hopkins 1971, p. 76-77).

Lata said that her son had not had his tonsure, although it was often done in their family, because it was never convenient (interview 23). She said that tonsures tended to be conducted at convenient times when the family retuned to India for weddings, but it has not occurred for her son. Nevertheless, on one of his own visits to India, he had his head shaved, due to the heat. Although Madhu's daughter had a tonsure to fulfil her mother-in-law's vow, she had not had a ceremony for her son (interview 27). However, she and her husband had shaved her son's head, not as part of a ceremony, but because it was good for the hair. Meena had a tonsure for her son while living in Fiji, but was unsure whether she would have done the same in Australia (interview 6).

In the cases where Brahman women had sons who underwent initiation (*Upanyana*), this was performed within India. This ritual did not apply to many, as the women either did not have sons, or were not Brahman. One Brahman woman who had sons stated that they had not had initiation ceremonies, although they had undertaken other childhood rituals (interview 12). Another expressed doubt as to whether they would proceed with an initiation ceremony for her sons (interview 7), while two stated that they would when the time came (interviews 16, 20). Nishthha's son had already had his Sacred Thread ceremony performed on a trip to India for the sake of the grandparents, as he was the only grandson (interview 24).

As with other childhood rituals, Brahman initiation was considered to be optional. Initiation was something that was undertaken within India, and appeared to be a matter of family choice, and had significance for the wider family. It appeared to be somewhat different from most of the other *samskaras* which could be performed in Australia, albeit in a symbolic form. This may be due to the close brahmanic connection and the implications which derived from it.

It was evident that a wide variety of childhood *samskaras* were performed within the diaspora. While a number were performed within the domestic sphere, others were undertaken at the temple and could include the assistance of a priest. It was also evident that the tonsure and initiation were usually performed on visits to India, and not within the diaspora. Individuals tended to pick and choose which rituals to maintain. Access to temples, family tradition, health, individual priorities, and the presence of family or community to participate in the celebration, were all factors that determined the performance of the rituals.

Pria summed up the attitude which was expressed by a number of the women when she stated that she thought it was important to keep up life cycle rituals 'The ones that I feel comfortable with again, I won't follow things that I 1. don't understand or 2. don't believe are necessary things...' (interview 25). It was clear that childhood *samskaras* held some significance for a number of the women within the Hindu community. Whether they were important as a rite of passage assisting the children through the different stages of life, is difficult to determine, however, although they appeared to be important in maintaining a connection with a Hindu, family, caste or regional heritage and as a social activity for family and community.

Marriage

Scholars have discussed the important position of the marriage *samskara* within Hinduism. Not only is it the most expensive and prestigious of the *samskaras* but, according to Louis Dumont, it is strictly regulated by the customs and values of each caste (1966, p. 110). He states that 'Marriage dominates the Hindu's social life and plays a large part in his religion' (Dumont 1966, p, 105). Although the ceremony itself can be understood as '...a sacrament which enables one to fulfil *dharma* (religious as

well as social obligations towards the family, community, and society), *praja* (progeny), and *rati* (pleasure)' (Kapur 1979, p. 122), these underlying assumptions are not necessarily accepted by those undertaking marriage *samskaras.* Even where the symbolism, which connects the rite to deeper concepts within Hinduism, is present, an acknowledgment and acceptance of this may not be.

Hindu marriage was a *samskara* that was practiced consistently by the women. Even where civil ceremonies had taken place some time prior to the religious ceremony, the latter was still performed. This applied not only to weddings between Hindus, but, also, where the bridegroom was a non-Hindu. The only exception was Poonam, who had a Sikh wedding as part of an arranged marriage to a Sikh (interview 13). Nishthha, whose son had both Christian and Hindu ceremonies, commented to his mother that it was only after the Hindu ceremony that he really felt married (interview 24).

All those who were married after coming to Australia, with the exception of Poonam, or who had children married in Australia, had the Hindu marriage *samskara*, often alongside other ceremonies. These ceremonies do appear to have been somewhat abbreviated in terms of what would be the case in both India and other diaspora communities. Malati made the observation concerning her daughter's wedding that 'In India it would last a longer time but we had a one hour ceremony' (interview 29) in Australia. This compared with Asha's Indian experience, where her wedding lasted three days (interview 17). It was evident that ceremonies had been truncated in order to accommodate time restraints. In order to comply with the Australian legal requirements, a number of Brahman men had become marriage celebrants and could, therefore, simultaneously fulfil both aspects of the marriage ceremony. This differed from New Zealand, where it was reported that non-Brahmans conducted the marriage *samskaras* due to an absence of Brahmans in that country (Kasanji 1980, p. 229).

Poonam's marriage arrangements differed from those of the other women (interview 13). She married after immigrating to Australia from Fiji with her family; however, her marriage was arranged to a Sikh man. Although the ceremony was Sikh, the charts were still matched to ensure compatibility. When asked if she had a traditional wedding she replied that she had, and it was only after inquiring whether it was a traditional Hindu or Sikh wedding that further information was gained. As to the difference

between the two forms of ceremony, Poonam suggested that it was small, such as circumambulating the sacred book rather than the sacred fire.

The members of Poonam's family were interesting and their history may, in fact, throw light on her marriage. Her grandfather was a Brahman who participated in the indenture system and, eventually, made Fiji his home. He had gone through his Sacred Thread ceremony, and had worn his thread throughout his life. He was treated with great reverence within Fiji but, on his return trips to India, Poonam reported that he was not welcomed back into the caste fold, and was treated distantly, including at meal times. Her father had not undertaken his Sacred Thread ceremony, and Poonam did not mention the caste of her mother or grandmother, although she stated that the number of indentured Brahmans in Fiji was small. It would appear that her family would have had difficulty being accorded the status of Brahmans in India, although she did comment that, on her trip to India, people immediately recognised her as a Brahman.

For the purpose of marriage, caste may have been problematic, and from this respect the arranged marriage outside the Hindu caste system, to a man of a similar, although different, background, may have been more acceptable than to someone from a lower caste. Looking at the marriage from this perspective, the arrangement appears consistent, although this may be reading too much into the choice, which may have been made due to the close relationship and respect that the families had for each other.

Sita gave an interesting account of her own wedding, which occurred after she immigrated to Australia (interview 2). The first stage took place in Australia where a number of her girlfriends came to her house and bathed her, for what she described as a symbolic cleansing. This was followed by a short ceremony at which a blessing was given. *Puja* was conducted and garlands exchanged before the official registration of the marriage. The next stage was conducted in Malaysia where, on an auspicious day, the gold for the wedding chain was melted. A Hindu ceremony was performed in India prior to the couple returning to Malaysia for a reception, which was followed by the couple's return to Australia.

Promila and Pria, who also married after immigrating to Australia, once again had more than one ceremony (interview 1, 25). Promila had planned a large wedding in

Malaysia, but a family death caused arrangements to be altered. The original wedding took place, without the knowledge of Promila's family, in an Adelaide registry office. A later ceremony was conducted by a Hindu priest, also in Adelaide. Pria married in both a Christian ceremony and a Hindu ceremony. Both women married non-Indians, who participated in the Hindu ceremonies in Indian dress.

The young unmarried woman who was interviewed expressed a strong desire to have a traditional wedding (interview 10). Tradition, in this sense, was not so much the traditional ceremony lasting several days, but the way in which the traditional ceremony had been adapted to the time constraints imposed by contemporary living conditions. It could be suggested that it is not only the religious significance of the ceremony that is important, but also the cultural aspect and, indeed, the beauty of the ceremony.

Often associated with marriage arrangements and ceremonies were the concepts of auspiciousness, and following on from that, the idea that auspiciousness, and suitability, could be partly determined by consultation with astrologers. The use of astrology, I found, was an area about which the women were sometimes apprehensive to discuss. I felt that it was assumed that I would directly connect the western understanding of astrologers who constructed star charts within the newspapers with the understanding of the role astrologers play in Hinduism.

For many of the women, astrologers were used in order for a family to determine the likelihood of success for a union. Further to this, an auspicious time was often obtained, by way of astronomical calculations, for the ceremony to take place. As part of the process leading to the matching of astrological charts for marriage, these charts were most often made soon after birth. Where no charts existed, they could be especially made or, at least, birth dates checked specifically for marriage. The use of these aids did vary amongst the women interviewed. I have used the word 'aids', as this was often the general perception of their role, that they could assist a smooth transition to marriage and increase the likelihood of a successful union.

There was no observable trend amongst the women, as to who did, or did not, have their astrological charts matched when they were married. The use of astrology, although initially extra-brahmanic, became incorporated into orthodox Hinduism. Hopkins states

that '...astrology gradually acquired a consistent orthodox rational and was integrated into the Brahmanical world view, making astrology an inseparable part of the new Brahmanical synthesis' (1971, p. 80). However, diversity in acceptance and application is evident. Giri Raj Gupta, while acknowledging the importance of astrology in mate selection, suggests that 'In southern India, among the lower and middle castes, astrology is not considered significant in this respect. It is being abandoned by the literate and urban populations' (1979, p. 78).

In South Australia, it was very much a concern of the individuals involved or, more specifically, with their parents. It was usually the desire of at least one of the families involved, which regulated the use of astrological charts. Sita's chart was not matched because her husband was against it (interview 2). Surika did not have a chart because her father did not believe in it but, prior to her marriage, her prospective in-laws had a chart made for her so that it could be matched to their son's (interview 16). A similar situation occurred with Nishthha (interview 24). Even in marriages to non- Hindus, charts could be matched. Promila, who married a non-Indian Christian, had their charts matched (interview 1). She sent details of her husband's birth date to her mother in Malaysia and this information, along with her own birth chart, was examined by a priest to determine suitability, as well as an auspicious time and date for the wedding. It is interesting to note that this was for the Hindu ceremony, although the couple had previously been married in an Australian civil ceremony, and were living as husband and wife at the time. Poonam, who married a Sikh man, still had her chart matched with his (interview 13).

One woman commented that traditions, such as matching charts, had been followed for the sake of the grandparents (interview 7), while another suggested it was her husband's parents who had insisted on it (interview 8). It appears that it was generally the older generations which determined the matching of charts and the arrangement of the marriage to coincide with an auspicious time. Weddings were a family affair. Three of the women interviewed who had married after immigrating had short ceremonies, civil or religious, performed in Australia prior to more traditional ceremonies in their countries of origin (interviews 1, 2, 8).

Of the women who had married or engaged children, three discussed their arrangements. Yashoda, whose daughter and son had both married in India, had matched charts for their son, but not for their daughter (interview 15). Their daughter's marriage had been difficult to arrange as she had a skin imperfection, and she had eventually married a non-Hindu. Aparna's son had recently become engaged, and the charts were checked at this time (interview 28). Malata's daughter had married a Hindu in Adelaide and, although they had charts, they did not match them (interview 29). She and her husband had not had their own charts matched for their marriage. It is evident, once again, that individual family choice and customs played a significant part in the use of astrological charts to guide marriage.

Choosing an auspicious time appears to be almost automatic when a time and date for a wedding are decided upon. Even when auspiciousness is not strictly followed for other occasions, it is almost a given for arranging a wedding ceremony. Indeed, it can be understood as a guide (interview 9).

It is evident that the Hindu marriage *samskara* has retained its importance for the Hindu women who were interviewed. Even though ceremonies have been abbreviated, they have not been discarded. It is interesting to note the occurrence of multiple ceremonies. The performance of civil ceremonies has gone together with the religious ceremony, rather than replacing it. Although it is difficult to tell the motives behind the continued significance of the marriage *samskara*, which may range from an aesthetic appreciation of the ceremony itself to cultural concerns, it would appear that it may go further than this for some. Nishthha's son's comment that it was only after the performance of the Hindu ceremony that he really felt married, and the way in which Promila sent details for the matching of charts, and the selection of an auspicious time and date for a Hindu ceremony after she had been officially married in a civil ceremony, indicate that the importance of the ceremonies, for some, goes well beyond cultural significance.

Death rituals

Rituals surrounding death are, once again, a celebration and an acknowledgment of a stage in the life cycle, and they assist the individual and the community in the transition which comes with the death of the body. As David Knipe states,

> This *samskara* declares the same end as all the previous ones. It celebrates the completion of a stage of life, in this case, the end of the life body. It refines, by eliminating impurities and rendering the entire material body into ashes or earth. And it promotes, by liberating the subtle body for another birth...(Knipe 1991, p 127)

As such, it is strongly connected with basic Hindu assumptions.

Death rituals were not generally discussed by the women when they were speaking about lifecycle rituals. This was possibly due to the nature of the question asked, as I may have seemed more interested in the *samskaras* which had been part of the lives of the women and their children, and due to the age profile of the women, death rituals were not always part of their diaspora experience. Alternatively, death rituals may have been more taken for granted, being a necessary ritual with little alternative. When death was mentioned, it was in a more general context, or when other concepts were being discussed. One instance where it was discussed in detail was in order to emphasise the absence of ritual activity. This may add weight to the argument that Hindu death rituals were assumed to occur, while most other *samskaras* were seen to be optional.

Mita talked about her father's funeral in order to demonstrate the way in which her own family, in India, placed little emphasis on rites. She said her father had requested that no rituals be performed at his funeral, and his request was complied with (interview 8). According to Mita, not only were rituals not performed, the women had broken tradition by attending the cremation ground. It was the unusual nature of the funeral that appeared to be worth mentioning by Mita, in order to confirm the family's attitude towards rituals. She did mention, however, that her brother lit the funeral pyre, and the body was cremated. Not all symbolism, therefore, was entirely absent

Rupa, the only widow to be interviewed, discussed the rituals that were undertaken for her late husband in strict accordance with Hindu brahmanic tradition (interview 12). It was most important for her that the brahmanic rituals were conducted correctly for her Brahman husband. She had asked two priests who acted in the community to conduct the rituals, and regional language considerations were evident in her choice. The ashes were then taken to India for disposal. Rupa's family and in-laws have continued to conduct *pujas* in India for her husband on a monthly basis, with the assistance of a

priest. She indicated that these needed to be done correctly, and that India was, therefore, the best place for them to be undertaken.

Promila, also, discussed the way in which her sister's ashes were taken to India from Malaysia after her death and cremation (interview 1). On a subsequent trip to India she had visited Benares where the sister's ashes were scattered.

Two women discussed the involvement of priests in the performance of death rituals in South Australia. Shamila mentioned the fact that the temple priest did not perform rituals for the dead or funerals, due to the fact that he would then be required to have a period of time away from the temple, as contact with death was considered to be polluting (interview 11). This was confirmed by Mita who discussed the way one Brahman, who often acted as a priest for the community, felt that he was occasionally treated as though he was polluted for some time after the performance of the *samskara*. She commented that the temple priest performed *samskaras* connected with life not death and, therefore, others were required to conduct *samskaras* associated with the latter. From this perspective there appeared to be a recognition, at least as far as the duties expected to be performed by the temple priest were concerned, that death carried ritual pollution. It was evident, however, that a number of Brahmans within the community assisted not only during death rituals but also for marriage. They, therefore, were involved in rituals for life as well as for death.

An insight into the way in which one South Australian family undertook death *samskaras* was provided by two ceremonies I attended. The first was a funeral conducted at the crematorium. The *samskara* was performed by a priest from the same regional language group as the deceased. The eldest son took the primary role and was guided through the ceremony by the priest. Symbolic acts were performed, such as the cutting of a lock of hair, to signify the tonsure, and the placing of a stick of incense to symbolise the lighting of the funeral pyre. It was interesting to note that the crematorium was so designed as to make the circumambulation of the coffin difficult, thus demonstrating some of the constraints under which rituals are performed in an environment in which specific requirements are not catered for. The modifications which Bilimoria has described were certainly evident within this ceremony. He stated

that, due to Australian regulations, symbolic gestures have replaced such actions as the eldest son lighting the funeral pyre (1996, pp 24-25).

As per the ritual, on the 9th day after the death, a second ceremony was performed, this time in the home, with a number of family members and friends attending. During the ceremony, *pindas,* balls of rice, were prepared and then mixed together to symbolise the joining of the deceased with the ancestors, according to the priest conducting the ceremony. This ceremony, in which the son and daughter-in-law were involved, was followed by a *puja* and a shared meal. Thankyou notes which were prepared and sent to mourners reaffirmed basic Hindu concepts by including two unacknowledged quotations which stated that

> Just as we put on fresh clothes after discarding worn-out ones, so does the embodied Self, discarding worn-out bodies, proceed to take up new ones.

and

> Death is indeed certain for one who is born; and for one who dies, birth, too is certain. Therefore, as regards this unavoidable sequence, you ought not to grieve.

Although unacknowledged the quotations were from the Bhagavad Gita verses 2.22 and 2.27 (Mascaro 1962, p. 50). Both these quotations, and the ceremonies that preceded them, demonstrated the Hindu assumptions of *samsara* which were embedded in them.

Bilimoria has suggested that the ashes of Hindus who have died in the diaspora are still taken to Holy rivers in India (Bilimoria 1996, pp, 24-25). Although this did seem to be a priority for some women, it was not so for all; however, as long as travel remains constant between Australia and India, the practice may continue. Meena, who was born in Fiji, said that it was traditional for her family to keep the ashes until a trip could be arranged to India. She commented, however, that she would not do the same with her husband if he died before her (interview 6).

Death rituals, generally, appeared to be more taken for granted than most other rituals. It was the non-ritual nature of Mita's father's funeral which appeared to be out of the ordinary, reflecting the beliefs of the individual and the family, although it was not completely devoid of symbolism, linked as it was it to the concepts of *samsara* and *moksha*. Generally, it would appear that funerals were conducted automatically along

religious lines unless there was a specific reason to do otherwise. There was some indication that death was associated with ritual pollution. The presence of a priest who was able to conduct the *samskaras* appeared to be an essential component of funerals in South Australia, as it is traditionally, even though this could be problematic for the individual priest. There was no indication that secular funerals, an increasing trend within the broader community in South Australia, have been taken up by the Hindu community. Although examples are limited, it would appear the both the death rituals, and the disposal of ashes, reinforce and reaffirm basic Hindu assumptions.

Summary

Although David Knipe has suggested that *samskaras* mark 'personal time' (1991, p. 121) and the journey of the individual through life, not only are they important for the individual but also, according to Van Gennep, Eliade and Pandey, they are of significance for the community. This was evident in the South Australian context in the manner in which rites were conducted within the community. Where a community did not exist, a number of the *samskaras* were not performed. Comments which indicated that they were not performed, due to the absence of others with whom to celebrate, not only suggested the importance of the social aspect of the rites, but reinforced their communal nature. The rites retain their significance for the individual as a member of a community, and affirm the individual's place within the community. Where the community was absent, much of the meaning behind the performance was also absent. Even though rituals may be understood as an excuse for a party, when the community is absent, it is not so much the party aspect that is missing, but the sense of the individual as part of a community. To paraphrase an earlier quotation from Pandey, *samskaras* purify and prepare the individual for their role as a fully incorporated member of a community (1969, p. 16). Therefore, when the community is absent, the *samskaras* lack an important component.

The manner in which a number of rituals pertaining to pregnancy and childhood have been sponsored by women within the community would certainly demonstrate the importance of the community in the performance of these specific *samskaras*. Pregnancy and childhood *samskaras*, also, illustrate the regional, caste and class differences which can be found amongst the *samskaras* generally, and the variety of

groups which constitute the community in South Australia. They also highlight the importance of the women from regional language groups within the diaspora in supporting and sustaining specific *samskaras* pertaining to women and children. Yashoda provides a good example of the way in which smaller communities can be supported with the performance of specific *samskaras* in the absence of regional language groups. These rites also demonstrate the important role women play in maintaining popular non-brahmanic rites which symbolise women's *sakti*, and the way in which the rite is focussed towards assisting other women. It is interesting to note that the popular rites which the women mentioned and appear to focus upon were concerned with mothering, both the process or becoming a mother and rearing a child. The creative and nurturing aspect of *sakti* was apparent within this.

The important place of the marriage *samskara* was evident. Secular and Christian ceremonies had not replaced Hindu ceremonies but had complemented them. There was the sense that the Hindu ceremony was, in fact, the real wedding or sacrament and that the others were ancillary to it. There was no indication that this *samskara* had diminished in importance. It is interesting to note the ready acceptance of a Hindu ceremony by non-Indian bridegrooms. A traditional Hindu wedding does appear to be an acceptable public expression of Hinduism in the diaspora. Indeed, its beauty and colour are seen by non-Hindu Australians to be an expression of Indian culture, rather than religion. This may, also, be the case with Hindus, although it would be difficult to account for its popularity of this explanation alone.

In marriage, parents often ensured suitability through the use of astrological charts. In this sense, the occasion of marriage is anticipated at birth with the construction of a birth chart. Auspicious times were also important. Those without charts could have them constructed for marriage, demonstrating the importance placed upon a successful marriage being one where as little as possible is left to chance. This also emphasises the place which marriage takes within the life cycle. As previously mentioned, it was also seen as a starting point in the discussion of *samskaras,* by the women.

The meaning of what constitutes the 'traditional' has changed. This was evident with weddings. When asked about traditional weddings, the women associated this generally with the performance of a Hindu wedding. The traditional Hindu wedding to which

they referred was of a short duration, rather than lasting several days. Therefore, what constituted 'traditional' was not, itself, static. Tradition did not constitute a relic from the past, but was connected with specific concepts, rather than repeating them exactly.

The return of ashes to India, and the manner in which some rituals were still ideally performed in India, indicates that the acknowledgment of India's sacred geography is still present in the diaspora. It also suggests that there remains a strong connection with family tradition and specific sacred space. Diaspora sacred geography and family tradition have not developed as part of the Australian experience, as had been the case in the other diaspora communities. For example 'some bodies of water in the United States are designated as sacred repositories' (Leonard 1997, p. 111) for ashes.

Samskaras as rites of purification and preparation, as well as of celebration, become evident. In the childhood *samskaras*, the naming ceremony takes place after purification has occurred for mother, child and house, according to Pandey (1969, p. 85). The ceremony itself establishes the child as a member of a family and a devotee of a family deity. In the first feeding ceremony, states Pandey, a

> ...prayer was offered that all the senses of the child should be gratified so that he may live a happy and contented life. But one thing was kept in mind. One in search of gratification should not violate the rules of health and morality because it would spoil the fame of the man. (Pandey 1969, p. 93)

Within this ceremony, therefore, preparation was being made for the journey through life. Although the tonsure ceremony is sometimes connected with dedication to a deity, Pandey suggests that it is primarily concerned with purification, prolonging life and ensuring quality of life (1969, p. 94-5). Even where the Hindu connection was not acknowledged, the act could still be performed, due to a belief that it was beneficial for the growth of hair. Purification and preparation could also be seen within such *samskaras* as those involving the bathing of the bride before her wedding, as well as the funeral ceremony where symbolic purification and tonsure were involved, just to give two further examples.

Differing attitudes are not only a feature of diaspora Hinduism, but existed prior to immigration. Individuals choose which *samskaras* they wish to undertake. The lack of

performance does not necessarily demonstrate that they are not valued or believed to be important, but that the individuals or the families have not chosen to perform them. The non-performance of specific *samskaras* in one generation does not automatically mean that the subsequent generations will not undertake them, as individual circumstance will determine this, with family, including grandparents, having input. Many of the *samskaras* are understood to be optional, although often nice to keep. Marriage and death appear to be the two exceptions to this, as there is little indication that secular ceremonies are replacing these specific rituals. Even when other life cycle rituals are not performed, these are still maintained (interview 6 and 27).

Although *samskaras* were understood to be celebratory in nature, an excuse for a party and something to share with family and community, their specifically Hindu aspect cannot be ignored. In the wider Australian society, although religious celebrations often mark marriage and death, there is an increasing trend towards secular ceremonies, which does not appear to be the case for Hindus. On a symbolic level, they act to purify and prepare individuals for a further stage in the life cycle. They connect with Hindu concepts of the individual as part of a family, caste, class and regional group. They are symbolically concerned with the passage of an individual through the different stages of life which involve different responsibilities and duties. Death *samskaras* are concerned with what occurs after death, and they reaffirm Hindu concepts concerning the destiny of the *atman*. The maintenance of *samskaras* within the diaspora also reaffirms the individual's place and future within the Hindu community, and is an active demonstration of Hinduism and Hindu concepts for the younger generations. They can be maintained in such a manner that they do not pose difficulties for younger generations within the diaspora. The *samskaras* appear to have significance for a group of women in the Hindu community in South Australia, and their format restates Hindu concepts and assumptions, and reinforces them on a practical level, linking Hindu assumptions to practices within the diaspora.

CHAPTER 11

WITHIN THE COMMUNITY: Caste space and regional space

Introduction

A considerable amount of scholarship on Hinduism in the diaspora has focussed on both caste groups and regional/language groups and the manner in which they function. It is my intention within this chapter to examine the two specific types of groupings within the South Australian diaspora. The manner in which they may or may not function and what implications, if any, this has for the functioning of Hinduism, its representation and its success in reaffirming identity in the diaspora.

Caste space

The questions I ultimately decided to focus upon concerning caste were formulated after considerable involvement in observation and informal discussions within the community. It was as a result of the information and the impressions gained from this that I decided upon the way in which I wanted to tackle the issue of caste.

I discovered that caste was often an area that the women were not willing to discuss in any detail, if at all. It was treated, at times, as an embarrassing subject, and it was assumed that I had a preconceived negative notion of caste and caste hierarchy. Arundhati Roy, when writing for the journal *Refractory Girl*, suggested that 'The makers of *Bandit Queen* know you have only to mention caste to a Western audience and their eyes glaze over with incomprehension and their tongues start clicking with disapproval' (1995, p. 48). I often felt that this was the type of reaction from me that the women were waiting for. This made it extremely difficult for me, as an outsider, to initiate a discussion of caste. I was sometimes under the impression that I gave offence

by bringing it up in conversations. I, therefore, needed to approach the topic with great sensitivity, and to take it only as far as the individuals wished.

I decided to use a question that would only lead into a discussion of caste where the interviewee wished to do so. I asked whether caste had any significance to them. Quite a few women picked up upon the issue, while many others did not. I made the decision not to ask about their specific caste unless it flowed into the conversation, as I did not wish to place more importance on the topic than they did themselves. A number of women did choose to mention this or, in fact, the caste of others, but it was normally in the Brahman/non-Brahman context, although individual castes were sometimes mentioned by the women. Once again, however, if women were discussing others, it tended to be in Brahman/non-Brahman terms.

Concepts of Caste

In *Homo Hierarchicus*, Louis Dumont starts his analysis of caste in India from the following definition,

> ...the caste system divides the whole society into a large number of hereditary groups, distinguished from one another and connected together by three characteristics: *separation* in matters of marriage and contact, whether direct or indirect (food); *division* of labour, each group having, in theory or by tradition, a profession from which their members can depart only within certain limits; and finally *hierarchy*, which ranks the groups as relatively superior or inferior to one another. (Dumont 1966, p. 21)

Within this separation, division and hierarchy, Dumont argues that there is also interdependence, coexistence and 'submission to the whole' (Dumont 1966, p. 41). The underlying principle, for Dumont, which necessitates separation, division and hierarchy, is the existence of the binary concepts of purity and impurity (Dumont 1966, p. 43). Separation and the division of labour enable specific castes and individuals to avoid impurities which living and working can incur. Hence, a hierarchy exists that is determined by the concept of relative purity. In other words, those castes and individuals that have avoided ritually polluting persons, substances and actions are at a higher position in the hierarchy of caste than those who have not. Dumont identifies a unity within the caste system in the way in which the system ensures the interdependence of castes.

The concepts of purity and pollution have been a strong theme within subsequent discussions of caste. For example, D. F. Pocock in *Mind Body and Wealth* discusses the

way in which the relative purity of a caste is measured against the impurity of other castes for the Patidars of central Gujarat (1973, p. 3). However, he makes the point that the status between castes is less relevant than status within caste (Pocock 1973, p. 9). In his discussion, the issue of change and the implications of it are addressed. He suggests that there is a breakdown in the 'ritual interdependence of the pure and impure castes' (Pocock 1973, p. 41) which will adversely affect the current political and economic interdependence of different castes. Pocock summarises the impact which modern urban living has had, and will continue to have, on the caste system, by commenting that

> In short, the specialization of labour according to pure and impure occupations, the hierarchy of caste and the discrimination that goes therewith, have little basis in modern city life. All that remains is caste endogamy, and even that is crumbling among the younger generation of the educated classes. (Pocock 1973, p. 162)

Therefore, Pocock understands the basis of the caste system as being undermined by the process of modernity, which is part of city life. Developments have already occurred within the caste system, and these are likely to continue, having major implications for the functioning of caste as a system.

Hilda Kuper is another scholar who provides a definition of caste which is based upon the concept of purity and pollution (1967, p. 238). Before discussing the issue of caste in diaspora Indian communities, she highlights some defining aspects of caste:

> ...caste is difficult to define, but it can, for our purpose, be crudely described by six criteria: first, a jati (the general term translated as *caste*) is a distinct and exclusive social unit, membership of which is acquired by birth and retained for life unless members are outcaste through breach of caste laws; second, membership imposes limited in-group marriages, either through caste endogamy or prescribed hypergamy; third, caste laws impose restrictions on social contact through eating, touching, or association; fourth, caste members claim a common origin and /or common traditional occupation(s); fifth, in any locality castes have positions of relative prestige, 'higher' or 'lower'; sixth and finally, the caste system includes a religious rationalization expressed through the dogma of karma (moral causation) and dharma (righteous conduct), which are reflected in the social position of the individual in his different incarnations. A mystical criterion, expressed in the concept of ritual pollution, underlies the entire structure and delineates each part. Caste, as I have described it here, is thus a system of both relationships and ideas. (Kuper, 1967, p. 238)

After setting up this working definition, Kuper uses it in order to understand the situation which she observed in South Africa. The concepts that she uses are, as

previously suggested, consistent with those of a specific group of scholars including Dumont.

Dumont's work has been criticised in more recent scholarship. Indeed, he has been understood as '...reproducing the Indological axiom regarding caste and the state' (Inden 1986, p. 440). Ronald Inden, although admitting that he was '...lured by the siren of caste' (1986, p. 440) in his early work, states that more recently he has concentrated on the manner in which the decline of Hindu kingship enabled caste, by default, to develop in its more modern form. Inden rejects the theory that '..."purity" (caste hierarchy) encompasses "power" (kingship)'(1986, p. 440).

Partha Chatterjee has criticised Dumont's understanding of caste, suggesting that it is a 'synthetic construction' (1989). The argument that the concepts of purity and pollution underpin the caste system, determining position within the hierarchical system, is also firmly rejected by Chatterjee. While drawing upon other scholars, he suggests that

> ...the essence of caste lies in differentiation into separate and discrete endogamous jatis; the attribute of hierarchy is a property which does not belong to the essence of caste, and in any case where hierarchy exists it is not purity/pollution which is the necessary criterion. (Chatterjee 1989, p. 184)

According to Chatterjee, there is not always a relationship between relative purity/impurity and hierarchy. It is further suggested that an area where popular religion challenges brahmanic Hinduism is in the practice and assumptions which act to subordinate specific caste groups. Chatterjee concludes that 'We must assert that there is a more developed universal form of separateness and dependence which subsumes hierarchy and equality as lower historical moments' (Chatterjee 1989, p. 208).
Dumont has also been criticised, though not due to his assumptions concerning purity, by M. N. Srinivas, who had written on caste and the process of sanskritization. It is, rather, in regards to his conclusions concerning the functioning of the village in rural India. According to Srinivas, Dumont, along with Pocock, has stressed the lack of solidarity within the Indian village, as caste has functioned as a 'sociological reality' (Srinivas 1998, p. xi) to the detriment of the village. Srinivas contests this assertion, as he suggests that Dumont's own western bias has resulted in the lack of understanding of the way in which the village functions as an economic, political and ecological and complementary unit (Srinivas 1998, xi-xii). The basis of caste is, therefore, something that is contested by scholars.

Regardless of its basis, the manner in which caste operates as a system is something that is, as Pocock suggested, in transition. This is certainly the case in the diaspora, in which historical circumstances have influenced the functioning of caste. When introducing a volume on caste in diaspora communities, which includes a discussion of caste in Guyana, Surinam, Trinidad, East Africa, South Africa, Mauritius and Fiji, Adrian Mayer makes a number of significant conclusions (1967). He states that, in most cases, caste does not produce significant groups (possibly due to insufficient members of caste groups) and, therefore, a viable multi-caste interacting society has failed to develop in these diasporan communities (Mayer 1967, p. 2). The historical processes which contributed to this development are summed up by Mayer, who concludes that

> Not only were ritual purity and occupational specialization dealt mortal blows by the circumstances of immigration and initial settlement, but the immigrants came from many different localities of India and were unable to reform the small-scale organization on which caste-group and subcaste-group behaviour had been based. (Mayer 1967, p. 3)

It is clear that most contributors were concerned with the process that occurred after indentured Indian labourers were brought to these countries for work.

Although the physical and social circumstances militated against the retention of a system of caste as it operated within India, it is not to suggest that caste ideals and practices have disappeared entirely. It is principally through marriage that caste has remained prominent and, as Mayer concludes, castes and subcastes

> ...continue to exist partly because of an endogamy which keeps them separate; partly also because in an intercaste marriage the child belongs to the caste of one parent and the separate caste populations are maintained by this ascription. (Mayer 1967, p. 3)

Therefore, the separation, which is a feature of caste as a system, can be seen within the marriage patterns. The interdependence, which is another feature of caste, was not generally present. Caste, in these diaspora communities, did not appear to determine other relationships outside marriage and, indeed, status derived more from '...education, occupation and wealth, and political power' (Mayer 1967, p. 8) rather than from caste. This finding is echoed by Jayawardena, who concluded that, in British Guiana, education, wealth and occupation, along with a fluency in English, determined status in the wider society, rather than caste (1965-6, p. 224). Further to this, caste was not evident in either commensality or endogamy within this region (Jayawardena 1965-6, p. 224). It was in the areas of commensality and occupation that Bharati reported the

decline of caste influence, although endogamy was found within marriage (1967, p. 288). Endogamy was still found by Kasanji in New Zealand, the only area where she observed caste as having importance (1980, pp. 224 & 234).

Hilda Kuper, in her study of caste in South Africa, discusses the absence of caste councils, social separation, and caste identification, although endogamy has been retained as an ideal, if not as a practice (1967). The only group that she reports as adhering more closely than others to caste was the Gujarati community in Durban (Kuper 1967, p., 243).

As the pattern of immigration to the United Kingdom was predominantly that of more recent chain migrants, the retention and development of caste differed from that of those diaspora countries mention above. Indeed, many studies focus on specific castes in this region, including those by Tambs-Lyche (1975, 1980), Michaelson (1987), Warrier (1994) and Knott (1994). They attest to the existence of significant caste groups within specific locations within Britain.

Rashmi Desai, in an early study of the situation in Britain, made some observations regarding caste, although, at that stage, few Brahmans were resident there (1963, p. 14). Then caste operated with relationships between Hindus residing in Britain and India; however, within Britain, it occasionally resulted in the retention of both similarity as well as difference, and could be utilised for acquisition of power within the community (Desai, 1963, p. p. 14-15). Harald Tambs-Lyche, writing at a later stage, concludes from his own study that

> There is no 'caste system' operating in Britain, but it is at least true of the Patidars of Charottar with whom I have worked in London that they have little to do with other castes. They do keep some contact with some Banias (merchant caste) and also with some Desai Brahmins, the latter a caste into which women can and do marry. (Tambs-Lyche, 1980, p. 8)

Within the diaspora, once again, marriage patterns strongly influence the social contacts and the retention of caste definitions.

Kim Knott discusses the Mochi caste in Leeds, describing it as a significant community within the city, although small in overall terms of the Gujarati presence in Britain. Most of the Mochis have immigrated to Britain by way of East Africa. The concentration of Mochis in Leeds is greater than in Gujarat, where they are a low-ranking caste of leather workers whose numbers are small (Knott, 1994, p. 214). The Mochis remain

disadvantaged in comparison with other Gujaratis within Britain (Knott, 1994, p. 227). They do act as a community, and maintain specific aspects of caste including,

> ...a considerable amount of caste activity, notably through endogamous marriage, active maintenance of a caste association, and continued involvement in shoemaking and related occupations. However, this is not indicative of a systematic maintenance of caste relations; Mochis no longer make shoes for members of other Gujarati castes, and those still involved with leather-related activities work in factories producing goods for the open market. Hence their relationship to their nominally hereditary occupation has become increasingly peripheral, while they have also developed much the same structure and pursue much the same goals, as do other Gujarati castes in Britain. (Knott, 1994, p. p. 227-8)

Knott goes on to suggest that Mochis have officiated in the temple in the absence of a Brahman priest and it appears that '...prejudice in the basis of potential pollution seems largely to have disappeared from inter-caste transactions' (Knott, 1994, p. 227).

Roger Ballard edited the volume *Desh Pardesh: the Asian Presence in Britain* (1994), which includes two of these specific studies including that by Knott. He summarises caste in the introduction to the studies and suggests that,

> Although caste systems have always been more flexible in practice than the formal ideology suggests, it is still widely assumed that commercialisation, urbanisation and migration would inevitably undermine the whole system. Much has indeed changed. In urban India the formal division of labour and the resulting structure of interdependence have largely collapsed, and such patterns are even more alien to life in the diaspora. Yet in Britain as in urban India, caste disjunctions and caste loyalties are still almost as active as they ever were. (Ballard 1994, p. 26)

Ballard attributes this to the adherence to caste endogamy. He suggests that this reinforces kinship networks which, within Britain, assist caste and kin members to access resources, including housing and employment (1994, p. 26). He also reports that, although traditional caste hierarchy has broken down, inter-caste rivalry has intensified. He states that

> ...many settlers are still almost obsessively concerned with issues of rank; members of "higher" castes still go to considerable lengths to preserve and maintain their status, while those further down the scale are if anything even more concerned to catch up. (Ballard 1994, p. 27)

Thus, in spite of the breakdown of a number of the traditional aspects of caste based upon interdependence, relative purity and hierarchy, separation is maintained to a certain extent through endogamy.

The Australian experience differs once again to that of those countries with a predominance of chain or indentured immigrants. Although caste identification was common in Australia during the early stage of recent immigration, Bilimoria suggests that the situation has since changed, as he states that, 'Thirty years on, caste is almost never discussed openly. Much less does it determine the makeup of social and religious gatherings' (1996, p. 28).

Caste is a complex concept that has embedded within it many different assumptions, although the nature of these are not always readily accepted by all scholars. It is clear that caste did, and can still, function as a system. This functioning appears to be dependent upon the specific social and physical environment in which caste members find themselves. It is, therefore, relevant to look at caste within the South Australian physical and social environment.

Caste and the South Australian Community

In my discussion of caste, I have chosen not to mention the individual caste names, as many of the women stated that there were very few from their caste in South Australia, often only two or three families, and, therefore, caste names could lead to identification. Another difficulty was apparent as caste names were used, at times, as surnames for some of the women. As I have previously stated, I did not feel comfortable in asking the castes to which women belonged. Many of the women stated that they did not believe in caste (interviews 7, 15, 21) or that it had no significance for them (interviews 2, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 16, 19, 24, 26, 28, 29), while others indicated that it had little relevance in the Australian context. As the Brahman/non-Brahman division appeared to be the most salient, this has been estimated for the purpose of this discussion.

The proportion of Brahman women was, indeed, high. I have estimated that, out of the 30 women interviewed, 13 came from Brahman castes while 17 were from non-Brahman castes. Of the 13 Brahmans estimated, 11 identified themselves, or were clearly identified by others, as being Brahmans. One of these, Poonam, from Fiji, identified herself as a Brahman; however, I am unclear if this would be recognised in India, as it seems that her grandfather was a Brahman who participated in the indenture system, and it is unclear, also, whether the maternal side were of Brahman origin. The other two women I have placed in this category were not clearly identified as Brahman,

although they were discussed as such during a casual conversation with a Brahman woman.

Out of the 17 non-Brahmans, five did not identify themselves as such. Two were from diaspora communities, where the proportion of Brahmans seems to be lower, hence my reason for placing them in this category. The other three women were from Whyalla and, as I had no positive reason to place them in the Brahman category, I chose the non-Brahman one. Two of these women identified themselves as being Sai Baba adherents and were adamant that caste had no significance for them, so I felt that I could not pursue the topic. I found it much more difficult discussing caste in Whyalla and, indeed, only one of the eight women interviewed mentioned their caste. There was a strong Sai Baba influence in the city, and a number of the women interviewed identified themselves as adherents, while the others attended the Sai Centre on certain occasions. I was under the impression that it was this influence in Whyalla that led to the women's lack of desire to discuss the issue.

When discussing the concept of caste, a number of the women stressed that caste had nothing to do with religion. Several mentioned that caste was a social system based on occupation (interviews 1, 2, 8). Caste was identified by only one woman as having anything to do with religion; in her general discussion, however, she tended to concentrate on the occupational aspect of caste (interview 12). She was very proud of her Brahman heritage, and lamented the use of the Gayatri mantra by all castes within the temple. She stated that it should only be uttered by Brahmans, and expressed concern, also, that priests were coming from non-Brahman castes when this religious role should be the sole preserve of Brahmans.

There were several areas in which caste could be perceived to have relevance for some of the women. Those mentioned were the selection of a marriage partner, customs and traditions, caste characteristics, socialisation, and the selection of an individual to officiate as a priest.

Seven women mentioned that marriage was better within caste, usually elaborating on their response by stating that castes had different customs or traditions, and that marriage within caste would mean fewer adjustments or potential conflicts (interviews 4, 6, 11, 12, 17, 18, 20). It was pointed out that this was most important where the newly married couple lived with the husband's parents (interview 17). One woman stressed that, where religions, rather than castes, were mixed, difficulties could occur and, therefore, marriage within religion was more important (interview 28). Most of the

women who, themselves, had undertaken arranged marriages appeared to have done so within caste. The prominent exception was Poonam, who married a Sikh (interview 13).

Many of the women avoided specific questioning on the topic of marriage within caste. If they were asked whether it were more desirable to marry within caste, they tended to state that they did not mind. Some of the senior women had children who had married outside the Hindu community, and they indicated their acceptance of this (interviews 12, 15, 24). I did think that for the topic of children marrying Christians my own status was a disadvantage. The women were careful not to offend me and therefore no detailed discussion developed on the topic, with the women stating that they did not mind and that they would have no control anyway. It is only from the women who were married to non-Indians that the impression was gained that the practice was not altogether desirable.

Nishthha laughingly suggested that it would be difficult to get children to accept arranged marriages today (interview 24), an impression I also gained from several other women including Hema (interview 18). One woman had arranged her son's marriage prior to immigration and I assumed that caste would have played a role in the selection of a spouse (interview 15). Meena's daughter, who had recently married, did so within caste, although the marriage was not arranged (interview 6). None of the women had actively arranged marriages for their children since immigration; however, Kumkum indicated that this had occurred within her extended family (interview 10). Attitudes towards marriage have been discussed previously, however, it would appear that caste endogamy remains an ideal for a number of the women although, in reality, this did not often eventuate for the younger generation.

Relatively broad attitudes towards inter-caste marriage in South Australia were commented upon by Kavita. After the interview, Kavita, in an informal conversation, lamented the fact that her brother did not live in Australia, as he had secretly fallen in love with a Jat girl, but, as he was from a considerably higher caste, he could not express his feelings (Journal, p. 93 -94). She said that sort of thing would be all right in Australia, but it was still unacceptable where they were living in India. She went on to reflect upon the way her own views on inter-caste marriage had changed since coming to Australia after an endogamous arranged marriage. It is interesting to note that Kavita, who separated from her husband some time after the interview, had been approached by a senior member of the community who was interested in contracting a marriage for her, and inquired about Kavita's caste and sub-caste (interview 3).

Caste characteristics were discussed in a negative context by two women, the first suggesting that the system of marrying within caste had resulted in some unfortunate, as well as positive, characteristics being perpetuated, even within her own caste (interview 5). In contrast, the negative aspects of Brahmans were mentioned by a non-Brahman woman, who suggested that Brahmans tended to believe in rituals more than in moral values (interview 27).

Caste did not appear to restrict social interaction. A number of women stressed the importance of mixing with different groups (interviews 3, 17, 20, 29), while others clearly took this line in their social interaction. Malati stressed that she mixed and ate with everyone and, even when she was living in India, she visited and ate with people of different castes (interview 29). Caste could, however, influence social networks. Pria, who did not seem to know a great deal about the functioning of the caste system, possibly due to that fact that she had immigrated to Australia as a toddler, mentioned her pride in the fact that she was a Brahman (interview 25). She went on to say that her friends were all Brahman, although she did not know whether this was a conscious or a subconscious choice that she had made.

Madhu's observations concerning the Tamil community in South Australia were of interest. Although the community originally met as one group for special functions and festivals when numbers were manageable, she reported that they had since split into smaller groups. This split, according to Madhu, has been along Brahman/non-Brahman lines (interview 27). This may well indicate that small communities are less able to sustain caste allegiance, which can resurface as the community expands.

Meena, who was born into a Gujarati caste in Fiji, was the only woman who socialised in her own caste, in a conscious manner, in Australia (interview 6). She discussed, at some length, the way in which her caste functioned within Australia. She said that there were 70 or 80 Gujarati families from Fiji in Australia, ten of them in South Australia. It appears that a network had been established, and she knew everyone who has immigrated to Australia or New Zealand from Fiji. The network included, on the more formal side, social and religious functions, which are held in Sydney and Brisbane where larger numbers are resident. There was also a directory of the names and addresses of caste members in Australia. She suggested that caste members had shared values and, therefore, there is a mutual desire to socialise with one another. However, she did stress that she also socialises outside the caste group, including with other Gujarati and Fijian Indians. One of her children had, in recent years, married a caste

member from interstate. Although this was not arranged, it appears from her comments that it was the result of socialising within the caste group.

In South Australia's small community, no interdependent caste system has developed. There was often a general lack or awareness of an individual's specific caste, including occupational links or hierarchy, except for some of the larger, more well-known castes (Personal Journal 1998, p 105). The general exception appeared to be the Brahman community. Rupa commented that individuals were automatically categorised as belonging to a higher or lower caste when first introduced (interview 12). Even where Brahmans did not treat others differently, they were, in a sense, set apart by non-Brahmans. Most people appeared to be aware of who were Brahmans, although their specific Brahman caste may not have been known. The Brahman community acted for other Hindus as priests for the performance of *samskaras* and special *pujas*.

Many of the women mentioned that they had acquired the services of one of the male Brahmans within the community to undertake special *pujas* at certain times, such as the *Satanarayan puja*. *Samskaras,* including those surrounding birth, marriage and death, were also performed by a Brahman priest. These men, who undertook priestly duties on a part time basis, would most likely come from the same regional language group as the family hosting the occasion. None of the women made the connection between their utilisation of the services of Brahmans to perform private *pujas* and the caste system. The community, in a sense, reinforces the role of the Brahman as a religious officiant and, hence, albeit to a very limited extent, one occupational aspect of the caste system and, it could be argued, the religious function of it.

The situation in Whyalla was somewhat different, as some occasions which would tend to be celebrated either by a Brahman priest or within a temple were conducted in the home of a devout woman who was an adherent of Sai Baba. This woman has been discussed in detail previously, as her house was treated by some of the Hindus as a temple and was used as a *bhajan* centre. She was responsible for marking special occasions with *bhajans* and prayers. Although I was informed by an Adelaide woman that she was a Brahman, this was never mentioned in Whyalla, and caste did not seem to be of concern, as her reputation and status appeared to rest on her own devout nature. She appears to have been greatly loved and respected within the Whyalla community. Within the larger Adelaide community, the traditional occupational role of the Brahman priest was upheld, but within the much smaller community of Whyalla there was more scope for individuals to be revered, and used in a religious role, due to their behaviour and religious piety. The limited size of the community appears to have provided an

opportunity for a female 'spiritual leader' to emerge, whereas in Adelaide, this role was taken over by the male Brahmans.

There was some indication that specific diaspora communities placed more emphasis on caste than others. The two Fijian women interviewed both mentioned their caste, while the women from the other diaspora communities did not. When discussing the importance of caste, Kulpana, from Malaysia, suggested that caste had not come to the fore within Malaysia, unlike in India, Sri Lanka and Fiji where larger communities existed (interview 9 & Journal, pp. 60-62). This may indicate that Fijian Indians were more concerned with caste than are the smaller diaspora communities, or that because a much larger Indian community was present in Fiji, forces to weaken the caste system were absent.

The lack of concern about caste within Malaysia, Singapore and South Africa was evident in the comments made by the women from these countries, who stressed that, within them, caste was of little significance (interviews 1, 26, 28). As I previously commented, none of these women mentioned their own caste. One Malaysian woman stated that the caste system was '...the worst evil in our society. It is not Hindu tradition. It is not Hinduism' (interview 30). Another elaborated that the lack of importance given to caste in Singapore was due to broad-minded attitudes (interview 28). A Sai Baba adherent from Malaysia commented that caste had no significance for her, and she suggested that everyone belonged to the one caste (interview 2). I found that the woman from countries other than India, Fiji and Sri Lanka did not seem to know a great deal about the functioning of the caste system. Criticism of the system was certainly not confined to these diasporan groups, however, as other women were also vocal in their condemnation of it. For example, Surika, who was born in India, discussed the negative aspects of caste, stating that she had seen the pain and hurt caused by it (interview 16). She suggested, too, that all of her family were of the same belief. Her dislike of the negative aspect of caste was genuine, but she did tell me that she was a Brahman.

The Australian-born woman stated in the interview that she did not know her caste, but she was aware that her mother married someone from a lower caste. Although I was somewhat surprised at the time, after informal conversations with her and her mother, I have little reason to doubt her. I sometimes found that, where the caste names were region-specific, they lacked relevance to other women within the Hindu community. This may be especially true for Australian-born Hindus.

It is difficult to determine the effect which specific religious groups have on the significance of caste within the community. A number of the women were Sathya Sai Baba adherents, while several others had been influenced by his teachings. This was discussed in some detail previously, but it is important to mention that Sai Baba's anti-caste teachings could have influenced the women's attitudes towards the system. Whether the anti-caste sentiments came prior to the women's involvement with Sai Baba, or because of it, it is difficult to say. As I have suggested previously, the women in Whyalla appeared to be strongly influenced by Sai Baba. Only one of these women volunteered her caste. The size of the community may, indeed, have been a factor, which influenced the lack of discussion of caste by the Whyalla women.

Two of the Adelaide women, a mother and daughter, had an Arya Samaj background. Although this sect was originally opposed to caste regulations, it does appear that caste was important in the mother's family whilst she lived in India. The mother, Lata, mentioned the traditional endogamous marriage arrangements for her sub-caste (interview 23). As she and her sisters had not conformed to this, comments had been made to the effect that her father should have been able to arrange better marriages for his daughters because of his position in the community. It does not appear, therefore, that this sect had a major influence against caste endogamy, in this case, at least. As Pocock states,

> It is common place in Indian history that the sect which opposes caste regulations becomes finally, itself a caste. Such has been the fate of the Lingayats of southern India in the past and, more recently, of the Arya Samaj. (1973, p. 151).

Whether caste and sub-caste endogamy referred to endogamy, for Lata, within the Arya Samaj, rather than within caste, is unclear, but this did not appear to be the case.

The women who attended Vedanta groups had differing attitudes towards caste. They ranged from being completely antagonistic to the concept of caste (interview 30), to discussing the inherent characteristics of individual caste groups (interview 5).

No clear conclusions can be draw as to the influence of specific groups on attitudes towards caste. Gandhi had clearly been influential in Kuna's upbringing and education, as her father had been a great admirer of him (interview 7). Two women did discuss openly the influences on their attitudes. As previously mentioned, broad-mindedness was given as a reason for Singaporeans' lack of concern with caste. Anjali, from India, speaking along the same lines, suggested that education made people broad in their

outlook towards caste, and concluded that her own liberal attitude was influenced by her education.

There was a general perception that caste had little significance within South Australia. Two women discussed the functioning of caste in South Australia during the interviews. The first concerned the previously mentioned fragmentation of the Tamil community along Brahman/non-Brahman lines (interview 27), while the second, also discussed above, regarded the automatic positioning of people within caste hierarchy (interview 12). However, the women generally down played caste in South Australia, or would suggest that some people may find it important, but they did not. A strong impression was given that caste was of little significance in determining social relationships, although it may have played a role in close personal friendships (interview 25). The women did not appear to know others' castes, unless they were from Brahman castes.

Kavita, with whom I had many conversations, willingly discussed the issue of caste, when I initiated it (Personal Journal, p. 105). She stated quite genuinely that people did not care about caste in Australia. She did not know to which caste her acquaintances belonged. During one of our conversations, she told me that her daughter was having trouble at school with another Indian child. When I quizzed her about their background and broached the question of caste, she said that she did not know what caste they were and it was not an issue for the Hindu families in the school or the local area. She said it did not have a bearing on status, nor did it determine social interaction. She also mentioned that the child causing the difficulties was from a poorly educated family, and the father was unemployed. It appears that the family was well-supported by the South Indian community in South Australia, in spite of this. When further pressed, Kavita indicated that they were probably from a relatively low caste, certainly compared with her, but it did not make any difference to the way they were treated in the community, or indeed, treated others.

It was evident from a further conversation that caste did not determine status amongst the Hindu community in South Australia. This conversation took place with a Brahman man at a private social occasion. He said he socialised with people in Australia that he would not normally even speak to in India because of their inferior caste status. He went on to suggest that money had become much more important than caste within Australia (Personal Journal, p. 103). This was in contrast to findings by David Pocock, where he suggested that, for a specific region of India, '...wealth is not freely converted into status as happens, slowly, amongst ourselves' (1973, p. 55).

Rupa, in a telephone conversation following our interview, stated that Brahmans were divided into two groups within the South Australian community. She distinctly placed those from the medical profession in the superior category, due to their wealth and status, well above Brahmans in the teaching profession, including those teaching at universities (Personal Journal, p 57). Although she was still discussing the issue in terms of caste, the way in which she ranked Brahmans depended upon wealth and occupation. It is important to state at this stage that she was a Brahman whose husband had belonged to one of the high-profile professions. It does appear that Australian, or Western, references for status are replacing the Indian reference of caste within the South Australian context.

Apart from the information that I received through interviews, I did observe caste functioning, on the level of support for an overseas student. Members of a particular caste in Adelaide were instrumental in assisting another caste member who had come to Adelaide to study. Caste seems to have been the common bond and a motivating factor for their relationship.

Summary

It became obvious that caste, in the small South Australian diaspora community, did not have the ability to function as it can in larger communities such as in India, or, indeed, have the same importance as in communities where chain migration has occurred. The separation, division and hierarchy, which Dumont identified as an integral aspect of the caste system, did not operate as a system of interdependence in South Australia. *Jati* specialisation was absent, although the men from the Brahman *varna* undertook ritual duties for members of the community. In both large and small community functions, as well as during private social occasions, different castes both mixed socially and consumed food together. Non-vegetarians dined alongside vegetarians and Brahmans alongside non-Brahmans. Therefore, separation and division were not obvious aspects of the community. Hierarchy did not appear to depend upon caste status, but Western concepts of taking status from occupation and wealth were taking over from caste status.

To suggest, however, that caste is no longer important in South Australia would be incorrect. Caste appears to be an issue for some in forming contacts and socialising on an individual level. It was at the communal level that caste did not generally determine the make-up of the group. Although this may currently be the case, this may be due to the relatively small community in the state. Only once was it suggested that a specific group, namely the Tamil speakers, had started to divide into the Brahmans and the non-

Brahmans. This had occurred because the size of the group had grown to a stage where the logistics of organising everyone together for specific regional functions was impractical.

Caste appears to retain importance more on an individual level than on a communal one. This was evident in the recognition by a number of women that marriage was easier within caste due to the similarity of customs. There was only one case, that of the Fijian from a Gujarati caste, where a caste group played a significant role within Australia, although not specifically within South Australia, once again due to the lack of sufficient numbers. The size of the community appears to influence the function of caste. At this stage, it does not seem to determine or limit, to any great extent, the social groups that are available to women. Whether this will change as the community increases in size is difficult to say. There are indications that it may, although the practices that have already been established may continue. Once again, my Brahman male friend commented that the newer immigrants were less inclined to mix with the wider, non-Indian community than were those who had been here longer (Journal: 76). This was possibly due to there being a larger Indian community with which to mix. Alternatively, it could be, in fact, because they may come from a different environment from that of the earlier migrants, or it may simply be due to the limited time they have spent in Australia.

A comparison between the Whyalla and the Adelaide communities, once again, proves interesting. Although caste was seldom mentioned in Whyalla, it was more freely discussed in Adelaide. The Whyalla community appeared to be at a different stage of development from that in Adelaide. There was much more of a sense of fusion in Whyalla, while the Adelaide community was undergoing a certain amount of fission into specific groups. These stages correspond to Raymond Williams' stages in the development of Hindu communities within the United States (1992)

Caste is an area that has undergone considerable change both within urban India and particularly within the Hindu diaspora. Although significant change has occurred and caste does not function as a system within most diaspora communities, including South Australia, aspects of caste have not entirely disappeared. It is difficult to determine whether or not Hindu concepts underpin the diasporan understanding of caste. The concept of the relative purity of castes does not appear to be one of the assumptions which is part of this understanding. This may be due to the belief that living outside of the sub-continent involves an inherent impurity that can not be overcome in these circumstances. The suitability of the different Brahman castes for religious duties has

been retained, however. Whether this is due to a belief in their traditional role within the community, or whether it is based upon something deeper, it is difficult to tell, as there may be implicit links involved to concepts of ritual purity.

It was interesting to observe that, apart from the temple priest, a number of the Brahman men that I came across who acted as priests within the community did not adhere to a vegetarian diet nor did they refrain from eating beef and drinking alcohol, although others did. Being a vegetarian, not eating beef, and separation from other forms of ritual pollution such as eating with those from a lower caste, did not appear to be important for a number of men acting as priests within the community, nor did it appear to be a consideration for those Hindus for whom they performed rites. A number of these men were also involved in the maintenance of the temple prior to the arrival of a permanent priest. It does appear that at least some of the concepts related to ritual purity lack relevance for the community. This perhaps gives weight to the women's insistence that caste is concerned with occupation. It does seem that the concept of ritual impurity and purity lacks relevance for most of the women even though, on a symbolic level, connections may still be present. Even where separation may be desirable, the physical and social environment of the diaspora is not conducive to it.

There was an indication, however, that caste as a social division reinforced through marriage had retained some importance. Whether this has a basis in Hindu assumptions is also unclear, although it may indicate that concepts of separation have not entirely disappeared.

Although a religious foundation to caste has been contested by some scholars, as well as by interviewees, at some level ideas concerning caste were incorporated into the worldviews of some of the women, although this did not generally appear to determine ideas of pollution or hierarchy. The diasporan environment was unable to support many aspects of caste which were found elsewhere. Marriage and socialisation within caste is difficult in an environment where few co-caste members reside. Ritual purity would also be difficult to sustain, even if it were considered to be desirable. Caste appears to be one area where redefinition has occurred for the diasporan community.

Regional Space

The purpose of this section is to examine the existence of regional/language groups within the South Australian diaspora and their functions and relevance for the women in

the Hindu community generally. The discussion is placed in the context of work that has been conducted within other diaspora communities. The relationship between regional/language groups and the pattern of social networks is discussed. This includes a discussion of regional cultural customs, formal and informal relationships, the importance of familiarity, support systems, fluctuations in involvement, the role of language maintenance and, an assessment of the distinctions between the Adelaide and Whyalla communities.

The importance of regional space in the diaspora

Some of the limited early work on the diaspora highlighted the way in which regional/language groups were important aspects of the communities studied. Maxine Fisher, in her thesis entitled *Ethnic Identities: Asian Indians in the New York City Area* (1978), discovered that '...categories referring to a person's natal language and/or home state in India were the most salient identities, particularly for Hindus' (Abstract). The profile of the Indian population in the United States mirrors, to a certain extent, that of Australia. Fisher describes it as primarily first generation, having arrived since 1965; predominantly professional; cosmopolitan; and fluent in English (Fisher 1978, p. 8). She states they are from diverse regions and castes, and are often familiar with a variety of Indian languages (Fisher 1978, p. 8). Her thesis emphasises the importance of regional/language groups for the New York Indian community, suggesting,

> ...New York Indians are urban in background. Though ties are also maintained with India, these ties are to families living in major cities where caste is less significant. Thus, except in the context of marriage, it is natal language and religion --not caste-- which are the important dimensions of Indian identity in New York. (Fisher 1978, p. 55)

She contrasts her findings for New York with the trends which were reported in Great Britain, drawing primarily on the 1963 work by Desai, where 'Both natal language and caste continue to be active dimensions of identity and social organisation' (Fisher 1978, p. 56).

Subsequent studies have added considerably to these early findings, while demonstrating the development that has occurred with increased immigration. In a recent study of the South Asian diaspora in the United States, Karen Leonard comments upon the extent of the linguistic groups and associations within the country (1997).

Annual national conventions for these groups can attract, according to Leonard, anywhere from 5,000 to 8,000 participants (1997, p. 94). Although she states that the linguistic groups can include various religious affiliations, she goes on to suggest that, due to their size and status, these groups can suffer internal divisions, and she suggests that caste can play a role in dividing allegiances within the associations (Leonard 1997, p, 95). While linguistic associations can form an umbrella group with subsequent divisions occurring within it, the opposite can also be the case. Leonard further suggests that

> Hindu and Hindu-related associations are forming federations and coordinating religious, cultural, and political events. The Los Angeles Federation of Hindu Associations (FHA) includes 37 organizations – many of them linguistic or cultural, judging from their titles. (Leonard 1997, p. 121)

This demonstrates not only the importance of the regional/ language group but also the diversity within it.

As mentioned above, Raymond Williams outlined strategies of adaptation, or more specifically the stages of the development of Hinduism, within the United States, from individual, national, ecumenical, and ethnic through to hierarchical (1992). The ethnic stage, he suggests, develops when sufficient numbers from specific regional/language groups have immigrated to individual regions of the diaspora. He states that it is a stage when ethnic indicators, which distinguish groups such as the Malayalees, Punjabis and Gujaratis, are activated. Ethnic symbolism is used by these groups, and includes dress, dance, music, food, deities and religious festivals. Williams concludes that

> This union of ethnic and religious elements in personal and group identity has a powerful attraction for first-generation immigrants, more powerful than that of the union of Indian national elements with either secular elements or with an ecumenical Hinduism. (Williams 1992, p, 241)

Thus the desire to identify and socialise with a specific regional/language group functions, also, to reinforce Hinduism and Hindu diversity.

Developments within Great Britain have been somewhat different due to the differing profile of the diaspora community. As has been previously discussed, chain migration constituted the major pattern of migration to this region. The first main South Asian

wave of immigration took place in the 1950s and 1960s, but it was the influx of South Asians from East Africa in the mid-1960s and early 1970s which changed the profile of the community (Knott 1991, p. 89 & p. 97). This African group was reported to still constitute 50 per cent of the diaspora community some decades later (Knott 1991, p. 97). Kim Knott, in a 1991 publication, reports that '...70 percent of the Hindu population is Gujarati, the majority of whom came from or were born to families from the countries of East Africa; 15 per cent are Punjabi and the remaining 15 per cent from other Indian states' (Knott 1991, p. 91). With such strong representation from one specific regional/language, it is not surprising that this forms an important boundary within Britain. Within the regional/language groups, diverse alternative affiliations also occur, one of the most prominent divisions appearing to be between those South Asians from the subcontinent and those who came to Britain as refugees from Africa.

Knott's findings concerning the Hindu community are of considerable interest, as she states that

> ...ethnic differences are reflected in religious organization and practices (often in different temples and diverse festival programmes) but that, within the ethnic enclaves, further differentiation occurs. Caste and sect, particularly, are significant factors in the reproduction of Hinduism on British soil. Some Gujarati caste communities have set up their own religious groups and have founded their own temples. (Knott 1991, p. 94)

In both Britain and the United States, affiliation and involvement with the regional/language group can have similar consequences, although the importance of caste varies considerably.

Michael Lyon, in his article 'Ethnicity in Britain: the Gujarati tradition', explores the manner in which language functions for ethnic communities (1972-3). He suggests that '...communality of language... is indispensable to collective organisation, in that all common-speaking members share the same stock of cultural meaning, and the means by which to plan mutual actions' (Lyon 1972-73, p. 7). However, within this commonality, he suggests that divisions occur along the lines of religion and caste.

A study conducted for a Master of Education degree at the University of Adelaide provides an insight into the role of language for the Indian community in South Australia (Murugaian 1988). In the study, Malathi Murugaian discovered that

relationships were often formed within specific ethnic groups, even where language maintenance had not occurred (1988, p. 26). Murugaian identified the strongest link as occurring between Hindu students and their ethnic culture (1988, p. v). She also concluded that maintenance of a regional language was more prevalent amongst those students with strong Hindu values (Murugaian 1988, p. v). It is interesting to note the statement that 'All respondents agreed that Hinduism as a religion was intimately bound up with their culture and that language was seen as being the most important vehicle of cultural transmission' (Murugaian 1988, p. 59), with non-Hindus being less likely to value their ethnic language than Hindus.

A number of individual comments by the students shed light upon the attitudes and are worth repeating. One temporary resident was quoted as stating that

> ...your whole way of life revolves around the religion that is Hinduism. You cannot separate the Indian culture from its religion as the whole philosophy and thinking is shaped by the religion. However, I am a Christian. I do not uphold any of the Indian culture. (Murugaian 1988, p. 61)

Another Christian student spoke in a similar vein:

> The religious differences between Hinduism and Christianity are quite marked. My Christian values therefore separate me from the Indian culture because the culture is part and parcel of the religion. The fact that I do not know my ethnic language does not affect me personally and I am not affected by it as the language serves an insignificant function when you do not identify with the various Hindu traditions and social customs. (Murugaian 1988, p. 62)

One Hindu student discussed the way in which participation in religious functions acted to reinforce and improve her proficiency in Tamil (Murugaian 1988, p. 16). Therefore, there appeared to be a strong connection between the importance of an ethnic culture, including a specific regional language, and the maintenance of Hinduism for the group within the study.

A combination of the family and the organisations within the Indian community was understood to transmit cultural values (Murugaian 1988, p. 170). Students were selective, however, as to the value of individual organisations, as one student's comment concerning the 'South Australian Indian Association'[sic] suggests. She stated that 'I did attend some prayer sessions and that is about all that I had to do with

their association dominated by Indian professionals leading a western lifestyle' (Murugaian 1988, p. 60).

Murugaian found that the resident students were more concerned with fostering cultural maintenance and values than were those students on temporary visas. She discussed the relationship between the Indian students and the wider community and concluded that

> ...the exposure to mainstream Anglo-Australian society only accentuated and strengthened the respondents' commitment to cultural activation of values related to the family and religion and the native language, in the case of the respondents who were devout Hindus. The Australian social and cultural environment had therefore been very influential as far as the respondents' ethnic identification was concerned. (Murugaian 1988, p. 165)

It was thought necessary, however, to confine Hindu activities to arenas such as the home, and away from the general community.

Therefore, the connection between the maintenance of Hinduism and the role of regional/language groups has been examined in a variety of locations, providing valuable insight for the study of the group of Hindu women within South Australia.

The experience of the women in the study

In Adelaide, it was evident that caste played a minor role in determining social and religious space for the women interviewed. Regional affiliation, as the aforementioned scholars discovered, was more significant.

One of the most obvious areas where regional/language divisions were evident was within the temple and religious functions. The division that has taken place appears to have developed more out of practicalities rather than a conscious segregation of regional/language groups. For example, the festivals and special days that are celebrated within the temple are often specific to or, have more significance for, particular regional groups. As Penny Logan comments in her article entitled *Practising religion: British Hindu children and the Navaratri festival*,

> One feature of Hinduism that festivals illustrate is its diversity, for the Hindu calendar is full of festivals, celebrated in different ways and for different purposes. Some may be confined to a small locality, whilst others have some claim to be pan-Indian in their recognition. (Logan 1988, p. 161)

Logan, whose work was concerned with the Navaratri festival, as the title indicates, describes this festival as the most popular for Gujaratis in Great Britain (Logan 1988, p. 161). This provides one example of the way in which a festival may have more significance for one particular regional/language group than for others.

The significance of regional cultural customs to individual groups, and the diversity of practices between them, is clearly found within South Australia. Meena, from a Fijian Gujarati tradition, emphasised Navaratri as an important festival and described the dancing which occurred during the celebrations (interview 6). On the other hand, Mita, from a Kannada speaking region of India, stressed the importance of Navaratri for south Indian women (interview 8). She discussed the decoration of dolls and little gods and goddess as well as cooking food and visiting friends. Even in Adelaide, where the same festival is celebrated by different regional groups, it may be celebrated in very different ways.

The celebration of festivals within the Marathi community provides an excellent example of the way a regional language group functions within the larger Hindu community. For Marathis, the festivals of Ganesha Chaturthi and Dashera hold important places, and special celebrations are held within private houses for the community. For example, Ganesha Chaturthi, which continues for five days in Adelaide, involves, on the first night, a special *puja* at the temple, while the community meet for the next four nights at a private home where elaborate preparations have been made over a period of several months. When the Marathi community first started to celebrate Ganesha Chaturthi as a group, there were apparently eight to ten Marathi families in Adelaide while it was reported that, at the time of the interviews, this number had increased to between 35 and 40 families. One Marathi family had taken on the responsibility of hosting Ganesha Chaturthi each year, while another family hosted Dashera for the Marathi community. The family hosting the Ganesha Chaturthi, initially, when numbers were more manageable, would host a dinner on one night for the Marathi community while, on an alternative night, non-Marathis were invited. Currently, too many people attend to be able to host a dinner, as 40 to 50 people were reported to attend on each of the five nights (interview 29).

The Ganesha Chaturthi that I attended was indeed a wonderful and impressive celebration. I attended on the third night of the festival with about 30 others, although the second night had been attended by 75 people. An artist had been commissioned three to four months prior to the festival to work on the main display. The idea behind the display was to place an image of Ganesha in different circumstances, so that the worshippers could imagine him within them. Each year, the theme is different, and the examples of those used in the past range from a night sky to placing Ganesha on a boat in front of the Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge. The latter theme, it was explained, was in order to imagine Ganesha within Australia. The year I attended, the theme was a temple, and the display was approximately three metres long by two metres high, elaborately decorated with a multitude of bright flashing lights. (It was interesting to note that I discovered, when attending an Indian Australia Association celebration at a later date that this display had been lent for the occasion.)

Most of those who were in attendance were Marathi, although I also spoke to two Tamil-speaking women from Sri Lanka. They explained that their community only celebrated Ganesha Chaturthi for one night, rather than for five. The seating arrangements mirrored those in the temple, however, with the two women who led the singing, which constituted the first part of the evening, sitting in the front. Various other women and children sang, mainly in Marathi. This was followed by a *puja* conducted by one of the Marathi Brahmans who acted as a priest within the community. *Prasad* was shared at the conclusion of the evening.

For Divali, one celebration is conducted with only those in the Marathi community attending, although the main celebration is with the whole community. This particular festival, I found, often involves three or four different occasions. Firstly, the family may celebrate at home with the family or group of close friends; secondly, with the regional/language group; thirdly, with the Hindu Society; and, finally, with the Indian Australian Association. In this way, the differing boundaries which assist in the construction of identity are demonstrated. Regional/ language identity was certainly an important identity for the women, where participation in common cultural symbolism occurred.

Another example was supplied by Devi, who stated that Durga *puja* was celebrated by all Bengalis (interview 4), while for other communities it does not appear to hold the same importance. It was suggested that, even when Bengalis do not celebrate other religious occasions, they always celebrate Durga *puja*, generally with other Bengalis. As previously mentioned, the Tamil community joined together to celebrate festivals; however, as this community is now quite extensive, further divisions appear to be forming (interview 27).

The diversity and specificity of celebratory occasions often resulted in the reinforcement of regional/language groups for social interaction. In a sense, the more the individual wished to mark these occasions of religious significance on a community level, the more socialisation within the regional/ language groups occurred. This is limited, however, by the number of occasions of specific importance to any region. Joint celebrations occurred in both the formal religious space of the temple, as well as at private homes and communal venues.

Pujas were often hosted by individual families, sometimes for special celebrations. Although anyone is welcome to attend the temple for hosted *pujas*, it is the responsibility of the host family to arrange for *prasad* to be prepared, and they participate in the rituals as a family (interview, 26). Friends are invited to attend and often volunteer to assist with the *prasad.* Although this is not confined to regional/language groups, often the host family will invite those from these groups. For example, for Durga *puja*, when a Bengali family is hosting the *puja,* those who are invited specifically may well be from the Bengali community, although not exclusively, as indeed, I was invited along by the host family for one Durga *puja* at the temple. Devi, a Bengali, commented that she goes to the temple when invited by friends for hosted *pujas* such as Durga *puja,* but does not attend at other times (interview 4), while Meena, who considered herself to be a cultural Hindu, also attended the temple when invited to do so. Therefore, individual contacts and networks can be influential in mobilising celebrations and temple attendance and, once again, regional/language networks play a strong part in this.

Apart from specially hosted *pujas* and festivals, there are gatherings at the temple on Friday nights and Sundays which are, in the perception of many of the women, divided

between Tamil speakers and Hindi speakers, although this is not necessarily the case in practice. This does, however, result in a division, in the minds of many of the women, not specifically in regional/language groups but between North Indians and South Indians.

At the Friday night gatherings at the temple, *bhajan* singing and prayers are conducted in Tamil (interview, 30). This is generally acknowledged to be a South Indian oriented evening. The Sunday morning sessions were conducted by alternating groups. Most comments I received on the Sunday morning sessions indicated that the women believed that one Sunday was conducted by North Indians, while the alternate week was organised by Sri Lankan Tamils. Interestingly, though, the session generally understood as being for Sri Lankan Tamils was a meeting of the Vedanta Society. One of the organisers was at pains to emphasise the inclusivity of this session which, she suggested, included a number of non-Indians as well as people from different regions of India (interview 30). There is certainly an attempt to integrate different language groups, but it was also evident that women not familiar with the dominant language tended to feel uncomfortable at times. This was brought home to me by a young woman, outside the group I had interviewed, who excused her rapid exit from the temple on one of my visits, as she said everyone was speaking Tamil, which she did not understand. Although Tamil may have been the dominant language during the evening, it was by no means the only language spoken, as English and Hindi were also used (Personal Journal, p. 98).

The number of people attending the Sunday morning session does vary. I was informed that between 25 and 30 attend the 'North Indian' session but, on occasions when this is hosted by a family, a hundred people may attend (interview 26). The Vedanta Society has a core of six or seven families, with between 20 and 50 people attending meetings (interview 30).

Belonging to a Sai Baba group may result in socialisation with a variety of regional/ language groups, but it does appear that, as the community expands, centres dominated by a specific regional/language group may evolve. This was certainly the case with the Sai Baba group, previously mentioned, which had installed the God Murukan, a popular God in south India, in their Sai Baba centre, thus reinforcing a distinct south Indian

flavour to the group. At the larger functions, socialisation across these groups can occur.

Regional/ language socialisation was on both formal and informal levels for the women interviewed. Mita discussed the monthly gathering of the Kannada speakers, which occurs at the temple. This involved singing from 5pm until 8pm, followed by a shared meal (interview 8). Other women discussed less formal arrangements. For example, no Marathi association, as such, existed, but Malati said that they met informally on a monthly basis (interview 29). As previously mentioned, the Bengalis socialised as a group, while other women discussed Gujarati and Punjabi gatherings (interview 6, 14). In contrast, Kavita, who was from Uttar Pradesh, said that she did not have a regional/language group with whom she mixed, and she believed that only south Indians formed associations (interview 3).

On a larger scale, the Fijian Association and the Ceylon Tamil Association catered for immigrants from those areas, although membership was not confined to them. The Ceylon Tamil Association certainly catered for those who wished to socialise with Indians who were descended from this regional/language group, which including a number of the diaspora women who were interviewed.

On an informal basis, there was a suggestion by some of the woman interviewed that they tended to socialise with others from the same region. It was not always a conscious decision. For example, Lata, when she came to Adelaide, started socialising with those she had known at university in India (interview 23). Easy entry into a social group was provided for her by previously established acquaintanceships.

Not all of the women were content to socialise with regional language groups and, indeed, they seem to have been deliberately avoided by two of the women. Kulpana, a Tamil speaker from Malaysia, said she had deliberately avoided belonging to a Tamil or a regional group (interview 9). Poonam emphasised the fact that she did not mix with any of the Indian community in Adelaide, although she did mix with family members when in Melbourne. She indicated that this was not a deliberate decision, but arose because she did not need to seek out the Indian community, as she associated with like-

minded people who were often connected to her employment (interview 13). She did not make a connection between her choice of social group and her divorced status: indeed, she stressed that other Indians were often over-accommodating to her because of it.

Relationships with regional/language groups were not always stable or positive. Rupa discussed her perceived alienation from her own group, but it was difficult to assess to what extent this had occurred (interview 12).

Involvement and affiliations could also fluctuate. For example, Aparna mentioned that she had been a member of the Ceylon Tamil Association at one stage, but was not currently a member (interview 28). This was not necessarily a change of attitude to socialising with a particular regional/language group, but seems to reflect the internal political structure that inevitably affects any organisation.

Regional/language groups were seen as an easy and familiar medium in which to socialise. They acted as a support group for both the younger and the older generations. For those women who had widowed mothers and mothers-in-law with poor or little English living with them, contact with those in a similar position was an important outlet. Often these older women were geographically distanced from their peer group and contact by phone, at festivals and private visits to others from the same regional/ language group was important to them. Three of the women had their widowed mothers living with them (interviews 1, 24, 28), another had her mother-in-law (interview 11) and one had her elderly sister-in-law (interview 28). I met several other women who were in the same situation, but whom I did not interview. Having relatives visit from India was a common practice, and one of the women had her mother visiting for the birth of her second child at the time of the interview (interview 17).

The regional/language group acted as a support system at certain times. Pria mentioned that, in the absence of her mother, various members of her regional/language group hosted a series of pregnancy rituals for her, which have previously been discussed. These, she suggested, were both social and ritual, but would normally have been hosted by members of her family, she thought (interview 25). The community was responsible for continuing the tradition for this younger member. In Whyalla, this role appears to

have been taken by one particular woman, who seemed to be the matriarch and spiritual leader for the women. She organised *bhajans* and prayers for special occasions including *samskaras,* as well as at other significant times, for those who wanted these occasions marked (interview 15). Therefore, with the embryonic community in Whyalla with their small population, regional/language groups had not developed and the community appeared to be more cohesive.

Not all the women had an affinity to a particular regional/language group, due to the peripatetic nature of their lives. Kuna stated that there was no one language group to which she felt an affinity, as she was from a South Indian tradition but was brought up in the north of India. A number of women had married men from different regional/language groups and, therefore, they found that they became involved with their husband's group as well as their own (interviews 8, 13, 14).

A common interest in music created the incentive for small groups to meet and sing. This sometimes took the form of regional/languages groups. Both Marathi and Hindi groups exist, as well as a group which sings Hindi film music (interviews 7, 23, 24).

Organised cultural groups exist. Rusak Ranjani is responsible for bringing out artists from India for concerts, often in collaboration with other organisations interstate. This group is not confined to Hindus, and currently has a Muslim president. Sruti combines concerts by local artists with larger functions featuring overseas artists. Sruti was described by one of the women as being a South Indian organisation and Arts India (which apparently no longer exists) was a breakaway group from that (interview 12). It does appear that the northern Hindi and southern Tamil division is, to some extent, evident in these groups, although their focus is somewhat different. Certainly, the women I have known who have been involved in Sruti have been from a Tamil-speaking background.

There are numerous dance schools and teachers in South Australia, and these can concentrate on the forms of dance which are related to specific regions of India. One teacher to whom I spoke, who held five dance classes a week, stated that she taught Bharat Natyam, which she learnt in Bangalore, as well as folk dancing from around India (Journal, p. 108). Although she suggested that the teachers often taught the style

of dance that was specific to their region in India, their students were very mixed. Another well-known teacher, from Bengal, it was suggested, taught dance from that particular region.

A number of language classes, for both children and adults, had been set up throughout Adelaide. Often the facilities at local schools were used on weekends: for example, at various times, Burnside Primary School was the location for classes in the Tamil language and culture, while Hindi had been taught at Linden Park Primary School. The temple was also a venue for language classes. An Indian woman in the State Library of South Australia had started a collection of books in different Indian languages. These measures were all taken in an effort to encourage second-generation Indian-Australian children to maintain an Indian language.

In Whyalla, these groups did not exist and the only regional group which had a gathering was the Bengali group. On the other hand, many of the men in Whyalla worked for a company which contracted Indian computing specialists for industrial and mining company BHP. I was told that these families tended to socialise (interview 20). Manju, from Whyalla, made the point that, outside India, her primary identity was as an Indian (interview 21). This may be due to the smaller community in Whyalla and, indeed, may change the larger the community grows. Regional language groups had only just started to develop in the community. Under Raymond Williams' stages of development, it would appear that Whyalla could be considered to employ a national strategy, where national identity is the most salient one, whereas a more ethnic identity appears to have developed in Adelaide (1992).

On a larger scale, regional/language groups are becoming more active for diaspora communities. One Marathi-speaking couple from Adelaide attended a conference, entitled Bruhan Maharashtra Munda, in Boston, in the United States of America, in 1997, which was held for Maharashtrians living outside of India (interview 29). It is held every two years, and is mainly for Maharashtrians who live in the United States, but it was also attended by Maharashtrians from Britain, and a few from India. In 1997 there were 3,700 participants when registration closed. Previously, between 5,000 and 6,000 people had attended, causing organisational problems, so numbers have since been limited. Artists were brought over from India and the cultural events included

plays and singing programs. Of the 3,700 people, 1,000 were youths who conducted their own functions.

In Australia, a similar but smaller gathering occurred. On the September long weekend in 1997, a Maharashtrian cultural weekend was held in Melbourne. Several groups from South Australia attended (Journal, p. 102). For many, the desire to participate in ethnic cultural events is certainly evident.

Summary

Affiliation and socialisation with regional/language groups were not uniform or stable; however, there was a tendency for socialisation to occur with like-minded groups. Shared interests within the Indian community encompassed diverse aspects such as working in the same institution or singing. A limited number of women socialised primarily outside the Indian community or regional/ languages groups. Affiliation to more than one group occurred, especially where exposure to more than one regional/language group had taken place prior to migration, or where marriage resulted in family affiliation to more than one group. Familiarity and shared culture did mean, however, that regional/language groups often provided an easy and rewarding environment in which to socialise.

The Adelaide and Whyalla communities presented different profiles, possibly due to their differing sizes. Within the Adelaide community, organised regional/language groups existed; festivals were celebrated; support was provided for visitors from India, as well as for the older generation; language classes were conducted; and senior women became mentors for younger ones. Even where socialisation did not occur on a daily basis, the regional/language group provided a valuable function for a number of the women in Adelaide. The formation of regional/language groups was an ongoing process, and some groups which formed some time ago were undergoing further division, while groups such as the Rosslyn Park Sai Baba group (formally the Wattle Park group), were becoming even more south Indian in focus.

The situation in Whyalla provided an interesting demonstration of a much smaller community, which seems to have echoed, to a certain extent, the early Adelaide community where, generally speaking, regional/language affiliations did not exist, nor

did the Tamil/Hindi division. Although one regional group was starting to emerge, the primary identity was as an Indian, although contract workers for BHP did seem to define themselves as a specific group, often for social purposes. It appears that the Whyalla community, as with the early Adelaide community, constructed their identity primarily along national lines, with less emphasis on regional-specific Hinduism. That said, the coalescing of the community around Sai Baba, a development which Williams describes as 'hierarchical', appears to be an aberration. I would suggest that the lack of leadership in the community's religious life afforded a charismatic woman the opportunity to fulfil that position. The nature of her beliefs appears to have influenced the development that has occurred within that city.

It would appear that the size of the community is an important indication as to the boundaries that are most salient. In smaller communities, such as Whyalla, a national identity was prominent, whereas, in the larger Adelaide community, a specific ethnic identity based on regional/language affiliation was dominant at certain times.

In Adelaide, the religious calendar and regional variations reinforced regional/language groups within the community, emphasising occasions with shared significance to specific groups. Durga *puja* for the Bengalis and Ganesha Chaturthi for the Marathis provide two specific examples. Festivals provided occasions where shared culture and, therefore, cultural symbolism, occurred. A desire to participate in these festivals, with their familiar cultural symbolism, acted to validate and perpetuate the regional/language group, therefore, reinforcing their significance within the diaspora. It appears that the boundaries that constitute this particular identity for many of the women were important aspects of their cultural construction. Conversely, a desire to participate in celebrations with familiar cultural symbolism, in turn, assists the maintenance of Hinduism in the diaspora and more specifically, Hindu diversity.

A more general division between those who identify closely with either Tamil or Hindi speakers, has resulted in both a perceived as well as a practical fission between these groups, as well as the fusion within them, although not always intentionally.

Regional language groups played an important role within the Indian community in Adelaide in both supporting the women and reinforcing cultural and religious practices

and, in turn, the desire to mark religious festivals, reinforced the regional/ language group as one of shared values.

Difference is reinforced, including religious difference, within the diaspora, due to the shared language and culture of regional groups. This reinforces a worldview that is part of the primary habitus or culture of the women, as part of a wider group. It reaffirms the diversity within Hinduism, with regional difference being maintained. Although there has been a trend, especially in the past, towards ecumenical Hinduism, with its emphasis on the more universal aspects of Hinduism rather than specific forms of Hinduism, currently regional specific celebrations have gained in importance. As many of these celebrations are based upon aspects of Hinduism or the Hindu pantheon, they reinforce Hinduism within the diaspora, certainly from a symbolic perspective. It is often around Hindu motifs that cohesion occurs.

CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSION

All the women mentioned in this thesis identified themselves as Hindu at some level. For most of the women, Hinduism was understood to be part of life and all encompassing, although, for a few, it was a culture devoid of a religious aspect. Therefore, orientation towards the divine varied considerably for the women, as did the practices relating specifically to a relationship with the divine. Even where the divine did not feature strongly for the women, they understood themselves as having a cultural connection to Hinduism, and there were practices they considered to be based on their Hindu background and heritage. Hence, a Hindu culture was part of their lives within the diaspora or, in Bourdieu's terms, their secondary habitus, incorporated aspects of Hinduism or Hindu culture. None of the women had constructed their culture or their secondary habitus entirely outside a Hindu framework.

Exposure to western concepts was not a new process initiated through migration to Australia. Varying degrees of exposure to westernisation prior to coming to Australia had occurred for the women who were immigrants, and this had resulted in western concepts being incorporated into both their primary and secondary habitus. Attitudes to what were understood to be traditional roles were continually being reassessed and redefined. The diaspora environment had not produced a sudden exposure to western values, but had continued a process that had commenced previously. Speaking in terms of culture, the women's cultural construction and reconstruction were part of a continuing process. In Bourdieu's terms, it was the secondary habitus of the women

which was constantly being redefined due to the social and physical environment in which the women operated. It is the act of living and operating within a specific environment which causes changes to occur in relationship with that environment.

On a practical level, Hinduism was maintained through a combination of worship at a home shrine, the celebration of festivals, attendance at the temple, performance of life cycle rituals, fasts, vows, and pilgrimage, as well as meditation and participation in the Hindu-influenced Sai Baba groups. Hindu assumptions were implicit within these activities, as well as in a variety of attitudes and views that the women expressed. The domestic and communal performance of both brahmanic and devotional aspects of Hinduism were understood to be important for the perpetuation of Hinduism in the diaspora, especially for providing an example for the younger generations. These practices and assumptions were not fixed, as external factors had an influence upon them, often resulting in their re-evaluation. However, Hinduism within the diaspora was not developing in isolation. New immigrants were continually reinforcing the local community. Visiting artists and religious leaders provided a link to both the subcontinent and other diaspora communities, with the latter often providing discourse on Hinduism as a developing tradition. Regular visits and pilgrimages to India were also an important aspect of maintaining Hinduism within the diaspora.

Many of the women had a clear concept of the ideal model for Hindu women, based upon brahmanic ideals. The women, however, often rejected a connection of their practices with the brahmanic ideal, and this model did not generally appear to be a part of the women's construction of Hinduism. Although there was little evidence that the women understood themselves as conforming to this model, they often understood themselves in relationship to it. A number of the women understood themselves as deviating from it in one way or another. In this sense, the model was a 'reality', although not necessarily to be followed. There were times, however, when the practices which were undertaken, and the assumptions embedded within articulated attitudes, appeared to be linked with the brahmanic model. The most prominent examples were the view that a woman joined her husband's family, and the adjunct role of women within brahmanic rituals. Where ideas concerning the duties towards in-laws, rather than parents, were changing, the instances where this had occurred were worthy of note according to the women, as it was outside the expected norm.

Similar actions may indeed be controlled or controlling, depending upon the intent in the actions and, therefore, intent within the practices may be a significant indicator of the way in which women understand their own actions. Many of the practices and assumptions of the women appeared to have a connection with a devotional framework, with the concept of *sakti* or the power of women being incorporated into their own construction of themselves. Thus, instead of performing duties that were directed towards liberation through being the ideal wife, the women, generally, by their own understanding of their actions and the intent within them, appeared to connect with alternative interpretations. Many of the rituals undertaken by the women expressed strong themes and symbols of devotionalism and also renunciation embedded in them, thus connecting to the concepts of alternative paths to liberation from that of *karma yoga* directed towards a husband.

In the context of their duties as a mother, the women often demonstrated their assumptions concerning the role of women, as motherhood was understood to be a pivotal role for them, with the role of women as mothers being more prominent than the wifely ideal. Even where the women had chosen not to have children, concern about their own ability to fulfil this role appeared to be more important than producing sons for their husbands. Marriage was understood to be a partnership between husband and wife, although it was often understood that women, due to their strength, were better suited for compromise. Attitudes towards divorce were perhaps the most revealing, as assumptions were evident concerning the superior power and flexibility of women. However, a marriage was not something which should be kept together under any circumstances, possibly indicating a rejection of the pairing of marital felicity with the prospect of liberation.

Although many of the women consciously rejected a brahmanic model of women, they did participate in brahmanic rituals in conjunction with their husbands. They understood themselves as having a complementary role or partnership with them. The widow who was interviewed stated that much of her ritual activity stopped when her husband died, because Brahman women could not conduct rituals on their own. Thus, the adjunct nature of their role was evident. The preparation and organisation of brahmanic rituals was performed primarily by male Brahmans, but the women assisted

by preparing food, organising the items which were required, and providing the songs, but they were never seen or described as having a leading role.

At a post-cremation ritual I attended, the husband of the deceased woman was constantly looking for specific objects to be used throughout the ritual, as the Brahman priest led the rites and the son and daughter-in-law of the deceased performed their roles. The husband muttered a number of times that his wife had been in charge of setting things up and he kept forgetting items. This specific example provided a good demonstration of the complementary role played by women.

The background work to the establishment of the temple took place with joint input of wives and husbands. Although some women were often instrumental in assisting with the development of communal sacred space, this was not achieved by women alone. Once the space had been developed, the women took a supplementary role, with the primary role being undertaken by men.

Apart from participation in brahmanic rituals with men as adjunct to their husbands, women also participated in devotional rituals in partnership with their husbands. Husbands and wives could worship together at the home shrine in the company of the whole family. To a certain extent, women were seen to undertake roles and rituals which have been described as part of the brahmanic model of behaviour for women, and therefore many of the practices which were undertaken by the women could be classified as being within a brahmanic framework. Once again, it is important to understand the intent or assumptions underpinning the actions in order to understand the meaning behind the actions.

Although the women incorporated brahmanic aspects of Hinduism into their worldview and the practices they undertook, it could be suggested that the women took control of their lives and the lives of the members of their family through activities which derived meaning from a devotional framework. Women were active agents and were powerful within this framework. Devotional Hinduism not only provided meaning in the diaspora but also provided a means of seemingly exerting control over their lives and those of family members. Women appeared to operate in a more active capacity in the devotional practices that were conducted separately from those of their husbands. The

women conducted their own rituals at the home shrine, without the mediation of a priest, which is often required in brahmanic rituals, and separately from their husbands. Women performed their own lifecycle rituals separately from brahmanic rituals, as demonstrated by the pregnancy and birth rituals, although sometimes alongside brahmanic rites, as in the case of the naming ceremony where the women performed what were termed popular rituals after the conclusion of the brahmanic rites.

The ability of women to exert influence and control through their inherent *sakti* was demonstrated by the manner in which women undertook rituals on behalf of the family or specific family members. These included fasting, *vratas*, and pilgrimage. These activities were connected to devotionalism and often demonstrated the ideals of renunciation. It would appear that *sakti* can either be controlled or can take control. As previously stated, it is important to acknowledge intent within an action, as the same practices could be subject to differing interpretations. Women can use their *sakti* to take control over the environment and the family through devotional practices or, alternatively, their power could be controlled and directed through association with their husband.

Women were often creative in finding alternative religious or spiritual space. An example of this was, when both the domestic space and community space were dominated by the husband, the wife found an alternative outlet in a meditation group. Alternatively, dance could provide the main focus for worship. Where devotionalism, with its emphasis on rituals performed at a home shrine, was not incorporated into the practices of the women, alternatives often focussed upon meditative techniques. The focus of worship could be re-centred upon something less concrete, such as a name representing the divine, rather than an image. Alternatively, the focus could be more obviously upon renunciation.

No one model of Hindu women provides all the answers when assessing this group of Hindu women in South Australia; however, the different discussions concerning women in terms of models does assist a greater understanding of them. On one level, they were seen to adhere to brahmanic expectations, but this was just one, perhaps minor, aspect of their cultural construction. On other levels, devotionalism played a strong role in their cultural construction, and often took a prominent place in the practices that

occurred. Regardless of the differing intent, a connection exists between Hindu concepts and many of the assumptions and practices of the women. Even where the women did not understand their actions as being undertaken as part of Hindu practice, a symbolic link to Hinduism was often evident. Hinduism was not only part of the primary habitus of the women, it had been incorporated into their secondary habitus, which was reflected within the practices and assumptions of the women. A Hindu framework, or worldview, was adaptable. It provided the flexibility to operate in the environment of the South Australian diaspora, and was something that had coped with adaptation without loss of meaning.

The assumptions and practices of the women were, indeed, complex and diverse, and reflected the history of the women. Their exposure to western-style education and higher education, often in urban areas, was reflected in both their assumptions and their practices. This history influenced the primary and secondary habitus for the women, with further reformulation of habitus occurring within the diaspora. Aspects of Hinduism, including brahmanic and popular Hinduism, had been reassessed. A Hindu framework had been retained, from which the women appeared to derive meaning for many of their actions. However, assumptions and practices were often being reviewed, with those that retained meaning being maintained, and those that had lost their meaning within the changed environment being modified or abandoned. Hinduism was in a constant state of definition and redefinition; however, it still provided a basis for the group of women in South Australia who were interviewed. It was incorporated into their habitus and cultural construction, which was forming and reforming within the diaspora.

It was obvious that not all aspects of Hinduism had retained meaning. Ideas surrounding caste, purity and pollution, diet, *vratas*, auspiciousness, and astrology, were being challenged, to differing extents, by the women. Many of them no longer understood these aspects to be integral to Hinduism and, indeed, they were often described as not being part of Hinduism. Where re-evaluation had occurred, often the explanation for not keeping up any particular aspect was that it was not really part of Hinduism, and it was often discussed in functionalist terms. It was not Hinduism that was being reassessed and rejected, but what were perceived as being the unnecessary aspects of it. Hence, adaptation had occurred, not with rejection of the essence of

Hinduism, but through re-evaluating its unnecessary aspects. Perhaps these were the aspects that did not fit comfortably within the diaspora and, also, may have been assumptions and practices that also did not fit well in urban, middle-class India.

Aspects of Hinduism that presented a problem in relation to the wider non-Hindu community were re-evaluated. This could mean that they became practices that took place away from the wider community, if they were still considered to be important enough to be kept up, or they could be abandoned or transformed. The flexibility and diversity that is evident within Hinduism enabled re-evaluation to occur within differing circumstances. Such activities as eating meat in public but not in the home, to use one specific example, were ways in which the principle was retained even where practices, certainly in the wider community, did not reflect underlying assumptions. Adaptation is possible, and was obvious. Hinduism, rather than causing unresolvable conflict in the environment of South Australia, by its flexibility enabled adaptation to occur. Those practices that were deemed to be important for Hinduism, which may have been problematic within the more general environment, were maintained out of the public gaze. Care was taken to adapt and be seen to adapt to wider social norms while, in private, practices may have reflected a different concern. Hinduism provided the opportunity for flexibility, rather than being a rigid and dogmatic system. Rather than presenting an insoluble dilemma causing conflict, the women were able to re-evaluate, and reassess their practices through linking them to a Hindu framework. Not only could Hinduism be maintained and provide meaning in the diaspora, it could also assist in women controlling their environment.

Interviewing women in both Adelaide and Whyalla provided an opportunity to compare different stages of development in two similar, although not identical, environments within South Australia. The Whyalla study provided an insight into the way in which development probably took place in Adelaide during the early stages of the development of the Hindu community. This was confirmed, to a certain extent, by both the women and men who told me about the early community in Adelaide. However, due to the different personalities involved and possibly to the general absence of the 'twice migrants' in Whyalla, differences were notable. The way in which the religious orientation of a single individual influenced the specific profile of Hinduism in Whyalla demonstrates the difference individuals can make to an emerging community.

Other than the strong focus on Sai Baba within Whyalla, it would appear that the lack of emphasis on regional difference is an important aspect of an emerging community. This is the case where regional diversity amongst the residents, rather than regional similarity, is evident. Identity tends to be on company, national and religious grounds, rather than on regional or language difference. This certainly appears to have been the situation during the early stages of the development of the Hindu community in Adelaide.

Regional difference is increasingly becoming more important within the Hindu community within Adelaide. Whether this will continue to be the case with the future generations of Hindus within the South Australian diaspora is difficult to say. As regional language may be a key to reinforcing regional identity, the initial lack of emphasis on teaching Indian languages to children, which was discussed by many of the early immigrants, may militate against regional identity. However, it does appear that, in more recent times, a reassessment has occurred, with a greater emphasis being placed on teaching Indian languages. It will be up to scholars to assess subsequent generations in order to identify further trends.

Regional practices and functions could assist in the maintenance of a regional identity for the women. There appeared to be a strong desire, within Adelaide, for more regional specific Hinduism rather than for an ecumenical Hinduism. Ecumenical Hinduism appeared to be appropriate to a specific stage of development in the community rather than a trend towards the future face of Hinduism. That stated, subsequent generations may, in fact, reduce Hinduism to an ecumenical form, due to the lack of knowledge of the diversity and regional difference within the religion. This development may be determined, in part, by the size and regional configuration of the Hindu community in South Australia.

Pilgrimage enabled a regionally specific form of Hindu identity to be maintained, confirming the place of the individual within a wider context. The development, within the diaspora, of extensive gatherings of regional groups, facilitated an affiliation to a specific area of the subcontinent, and hence diversity within the general community. Region-specific Hinduism appeared to be becoming more important, rather than less, within the Hindu community in Adelaide, certainly for first-generation immigrants.

The popularity of Sai Baba for a number of the women was a continuation of devotional Hinduism, which possibly provided an alternative focus or extension for devotionalism. This focus may have provided additional control, explanation, and meaning for the middle-class diaspora women. Sai Baba was not a replacement, but was worshipped in addition to other images. Perhaps there was heightened meaning attached to Sai Baba's teachings which were pertinent for the profile of the women who constituted the South Australian diaspora.

Practices and assumptions were continually being assessed and reassessed by the women as circumstances changed. Those that did not appear to be consistent with the changing social and cultural environment or caused problems for individuals operating in the specific South Australian diaspora were abandoned, modified, adapted, or conducted out of sight of the wider community. Those practices and assumptions which were reassessed or abandoned were often described as not being part of Hinduism. Hinduism was not being rejected, but those practices considered to be unnecessary were.

Even where practices were not directly maintained as Hindu practices, often a symbolic link to Hinduism existed in the actions of the women. Generally, Hinduism retained meaning for the group of women taking part in the study. There were strong links to a devotional model of Hinduism; however, aspects of brahmanic practices and assumptions were also present. Generally, the women appeared to exert control through a range of devotional practices and, through these practices, were active in providing a stable environment for the family. The role of mother, rather than the role of wife, was often considered to be the most important role for women.

Hinduism, understood as both practice and worldview, was flexible in adapting to the environment of the diaspora without losing relevance. Women were active within the process of adapation and reassessment while providing stability for the family through their practices. Rather than causing problems for the women in the environment of the diaspora, Hinduism, due to its very nature, enabled the women to adjust to the changing

environment. Perhaps the possibilities inherent in the Goddess enabled adaptation to the environment of the South Australian diaspora.

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A summary of the women interviewed

[details as at the time of the interview
-ethnicity is not included as it could cause identification]

Interview 1.
Promila is aged between 36 and 45, and has been in Australia for 15 years. She was born in Malaysia, and has studied in the west as a single woman. She arranged her own marriage to a non-Indian and is working in a professional position. She has chosen not to have children. Her widowed mother lives with her. She is a vegetarian.

Interview 2.
Sita was born in Malaysia, and studied in the west. She is between 36 and 45 years of age and is married to an Indian-Australian whom she met after immigrating. She arranged her own marriage and has chosen not to have children. She works as a professional. She has been in Australia for 15 years and is a vegetarian.

Interview 3.
Kavita is aged between 26 and 35. She was born in India, and had a marriage arranged to an Indian-Australian man. Her university studies were interrupted by her marriage and were never completed. She works in the house and looking after her husband and child. She is a vegetarian who has been in Australia for 6 years.

Interview 4.
Devi is from India. She came to Australia after her marriage to an Indian-Australian was arranged. She has been in Australia for 24 years and is between 46 and 55 years of age. Devi is a non-vegetarian and was undertaking higher studies at the time of the interview. There are no children from her marriage.

Interview 5.
Viyaya came from India with her husband and children 20 years ago. Her marriage was arranged. She is a non-vegetarian between 46 and 55 years of age. She works in a professional position.

Interview 6.
Meena is from Fiji and had studied in the west before migrating to Australia with her husband 20 years ago. She is a vegetarian who arranged her own marriage. She is between 46 and 55 years of age, is well-qualified, and has a position within a government department.

Interview 7.
Kuna and her husband came from India 5 years ago. They organised their own wedding and, although she trained and worked as a professional, she is currently looking after her family. She is between 26 and 35 years of age.

Interview 8.
Mita, who is from India, studied for some time in the west at postgraduate level, where she met her Indian husband. After completing her studies, she obtained work in

Australia, where she has lived for 22 years. She is currently between positions. She is a vegetarian between 46 and 55 years of age.

Interview 9.
Kulpana is from Malaysia. She studied at postgraduate level in the west before immigrating to Australia to take up a professional position 7 years ago. She is between 36 and 45 years of age and has chosen to remain unmarried. She is a vegetarian.

Interview 10.
Kumkum was born in Australia. She is a student between 18 and 25 years of age, and a non-vegetarian. She is unmarried and lives at home with her parents.

Interview 11.
Shamila, although being born in Sri Lanka, lived in Malaysia with her husband prior to migrating with him to Australia. She has been in Australia for 5 years. She is between 26 and 35 years of age, and is a vegetarian. She takes care of a young family, and she has never worked outside the home. She did not undertake any higher studies. Her marriage was arranged by her family.

Interview 12.
Rupa came to Australia from India 23 years ago with her husband, who has since died. Although well-educated she has never worked. She is a non-vegetarian. Her marriage was arranged and she is between 46 and 55 years of age.

Interview 13.
Poonam came to Australia from Fiji as a student 16 years ago. Her family have also migrated. Her marriage was arranged by her family while she was studying in Australia. She has since divorced. While looking after her child, she is working as a well-qualified member of a government department. She is between 36 and 45 years of age and is a non-vegetarian.

Interview 14.
Indra is from a Buddhist background. She and her Hindu husband arranged their own marriage in India prior to migrating to Australia 6 years ago. She is between 26 and 35 years of age and is a non-vegetarian. Although she has previously worked in private enterprise, she is currently looking after a young child at home.

Interview 15.
Yashoda and her husband migrated to Australia later in life, when their children were independent. She is over 55 years of age and has been in Australia for 9 years. She is well-qualified and currently working in Whyalla. She is a vegetarian and her marriage was arranged by her family.

Interview 16.
Surika came to Australia from India with her husband 6 years ago. Her marriage was arranged. She is between 26 and 35 years of age. Although she has obtained work in Whyalla, it is not to the level of her Indian training. She is a non-vegetarian.

Interview 17.
Asha and her husband came to Australia 15 months ago. She is looking after a young family in Whyalla and not working in the profession for which she trained. She is between 26 and 35 years of age, and is a vegetarian. Her family arranged her marriage.

Interview 18
Hema has been in Australia for 23 years after migrating with her husband from India after their arranged marriage. She lives in Whyalla and assists her husband in his work. Although she is highly trained, she has not worked within her own profession. She is between 46 and 55 years of age and a non-vegetarian.

Interview 19.
Anjali came to Australia 4 years ago from India with her husband. Their marriage was arranged. She is between 26 and 35 years of age and works in private enterprise in Whyalla. She is a non-vegetarian.

Interview 20.
Anita, who is between 26 and 35 years of age, did not have any children. She is from India and has lived in Australia for 8 years. She and her husband had a love match. Currently, she is working in private enterprise in Whyalla, and is a vegetarian.

Interview 21.
Manju and her husband had only been in Australia for 18 months. She was at home with a young family and was between 26 and 35 years of age. She has never worked, although she has university qualifications. Her marriage had been arranged in India prior to their time in Whyalla. She is a vegetarian.

Interview 22.
Savita works with her husband, with whom she migrated from India 22 years ago. She is between 36 and 45 years of age. She lives in Whyalla, and is a vegetarian. Her marriage was arranged.

Interview 23.
Lata works in a professional position. She met and fell in love with her husband in India when they were both students. They migrated 24 years ago. She is between 46 and 55 years of age and is a non-vegetarian.

Interview 24.
Nishthha has been in Australia for 30 years. She and her young family came to Australia for her husband's work, and she subsequently acquired work in the area in which she was trained. She is between 46 and 55 years of age, and a non-vegetarian. Her marriage was arranged.

Interview 25.
Pria came to Australia from India with her parents as a baby, 30 years ago, and is, therefore, between 26 and 35 years of age. She married a non-Indian. Her marriage was not arranged. She is a non-vegetarian and works in private enterprise. She had not completed a university education.

Interview 26.
Chanda came from South Africa 25 years ago with her husband. Their marriage was semi-arranged. She has worked in the area in which she trained, but has retired. She is between 46 and 55 years of age. She is a vegetarian.

Interview 27.
Mahdu migrated with her husband from India 16 years ago. She is well-qualified and works in a government department. She is between 36 and 45 years of age, and is a vegetarian. Her marriage was semi-arranged.

Interview 28.
Aparna migrated from Singapore with her husband 19 years ago. She is a vegetarian and works in the profession for which she trained. She is between 46 and 55 years of age. Her marriage was semi-arranged.

Interview 29.
Malati came to Australia from India 23 years ago. She is a professional between 46 and 55 years of age. Her marriage was semi-arranged and she is a non-vegetarian.

Interview 30.
Sunita has retired from her profession, as she is over 55 years of age. She and her husband migrated to Australia, from Malaysia, 23 years ago. She is a vegetarian. Her marriage was a love match.

Appendix 2

Letter accompanying questionnaire

Heather Foster
8 Short Cres
Beaumont SA 5066

To the Hindu Women of Adelaide

As part of a Ph D [originally a M. A.] at the University of South Australia, I am undertaking a study of the religious beliefs and practices of the women in the Hindu community in South Australia.

Hinduism is not well understood by Australians of European background and many Christian assumptions are made when studying non-Christian communities. I am interested in finding out about the variety of Hindu beliefs and practices which are present amongst women from an Indian Hindu background. My findings will be included in my Ph D thesis on the topic.

I would greatly appreciate your assistance in helping me to gather some very basic information to assist in my research. Would it be possible for you to complete the short questionnaire which is attached and return it to me? The completion of the questionnaire is anonymous. You are under no obligation to complete the questionnaire, however, your support would be much appreciated.

Thank you for your support and thank you to those interesting and welcoming women whom I have already had the pleasure of getting to know.

For more information concerning the Ethics policy of the University of South Australia or this project please feel free to contact

The Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee
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or
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Faculty of Education
Underdale Campus
University of South Australia
Holbrooks Rd
Underdale 5032
Phone: 3026611

Your sincerely,

Heather Foster.

Appendix 3

Questionnaire

[Initial inadequate wording in question 2]

(If you have already received this questionnaire from another organisation, please only complete one.)

Are you a migrant to Australia? Yes..... No.....

Are you the descendant of a migrant to Australia? Yes..... No.....

From which country did your parents migrate?.....

Are you married, single, widowed, divorced, remarried?.....

What is your age group?

Under 25.....Between 26 & 35..... 36 to 45..... 46 to 55..... Over 55.....

Do you attend the Hindu temple

1) for *puja* only Yes.... No.....

2) for *puja* and festivals Yes.... No.....

3) for festivals only Yes.... No.....

Do you attend any other religious groups? Yes..... No.....

If yes, which ones?.....

Do you offer *puja* at a home shrine? Yes..... No.....

If yes, at what times?.....

What rituals are performed?.....
.....
.....

Do you participate in any Indian social groups such as The Indian Australian Association or regional or language groups? Yes..... No.....

If yes which ones.....
.....
.....

Questionnaire
[Reworded questionnaire]

(If you have already received this questionnaire from another organisation, please only complete one.)

Are you a migrant to Australia? Yes..... No.....

Are you the descendant of a migrant to Australia? Yes..... No.....

From which country did you or your parents migrate?.....

Are you married, single, widowed, divorced, remarried?.....

What is your age group?

Under 25.....Between 26 & 35..... 36 to 45..... 46 to 55..... Over 55.....

Do you attend the Hindu temple

1) for *puja* only Yes.... No.....

2) for *puja* and festivals Yes.... No.....

3) for festivals only Yes.... No.....

Do you attend any other religious groups? Yes..... No.....

If yes, which ones?.....

Do you offer *puja* at a home shrine? Yes..... No.....

If yes, at what times?.....

What rituals are performed?.....
.....
.....

Do you participate in any Indian social groups such as The Indian Australian Association or regional or language groups? Yes..... No.....

If yes which ones.....
.....
.....

Appendix 5

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW

Heather Foster
8 Short Cres
Beaumont SA 5006
Phone: 3796353

Dear Potential Interviewee

To follow up from the basic questionnaire which I have distributed, I would like to conduct interviews with some of the women form the Hindu community, in order to collect information which could be used in the preparation of a Doctorate [originally a Masters] in Religion Studies at the University of South Australia.

Over the next 3 months I am hoping to interview a number of women who have volunteered. Each interview will take between an hour and an hour and a half and I am willing to do this either at your home or work or at my home or at the University of South Australia, Underdale Campus, which ever is most comfortable for you. I propose to tape the interviews. The tape will only be used by me to write a description within my thesis of Hindu beliefs and practices amongst some of the women in Adelaide. The tapes will not be made available to anyone else and will be destroyed when the time limit for keeping information expires. No information which would lead to identification of a participant will be used. You do have the right to withdraw from the process at any stage. Permission will be sought from you if any direct quotations are to be used.

Would you be willing to participate in an interview to share information? The interview will be confidential and no details which would identify the individual will be published. Detailed information will be supplied to anyone interested in cooperating in an interview. The participant can withdraw at any stage of the process. If you are willing to be interviewed could you please supply your name and address below and forward to me at the above address.

Thank you for spending the time to consider my proposal. If you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to meeting anyone who is willing to participate.

For more information concerning the Ethics policy of the University of South Australia or this project please feel free to contact

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Levels Campus
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or
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Phone: 3026611

Yours sincerely
Heather Foster.

Appendix 6

Outline of Interview

Practices

Communal practices

Temple attendance
Other forms of worship
Festivals
Dance

Lifecycle rituals

What life cycles rituals are practiced e.g. Sacred Thread, Naming

Domestic

What domestic rituals are practiced, e.g. Home Shrine,
Pilgrimage
Vows
Food (commensality, *prasad* etc)
Fasting
Consulting astrologers
Language used and when
Dress
Sacred texts

(Comment on who takes responsibility for maintenance of practices.)

Beliefs

What is Hinduism to you?
What direction do your religious beliefs take? e.g. *Bhakti* worship.

How do you perceive your role
what do you think is the duty of a wife? single woman?
what do you think is the duty of a mother?
what do you think is the duty of a daughter?

What do the concepts 'auspicious' and 'inauspicious' mean to you?

What do the concepts of 'purity' and 'pollution' mean to you?

What significance does caste have to you?

How significant is marriage to a woman?

How significant is the period before marriage?

What are the implications of divorce?

What are the implications of non-marriage?

Hinduism in Australia

What does it mean to be a Hindu in Australia?

What are some of the problems or advantages of being a minority religion?

Appendix 7

Hinduism in Nineteenth Century South Australia

Indians were present in South Australia from the very early days of the colony, which was founded in 1836, two years after the introduction of the indenture system supplying British colonies with cheap Indian labourers (Cumpston 1953, p. 40). It has been suggested that the first Indians to participate in the indenture system were tribal aboriginal men from Chota Nagpur, which now forms part of Bihar State, who were known as Dhangars or 'Hill Coolies' (Price 1974, p. 13 & 39, & Tinker 1977, p. 4). These men were thought not to have been encumbered by caste taboos (Tinker 1977, p. 4), and Charles Price suggested that they were 'Of Dravidian race and a Mannarese-type language they have a primitive nature religion only slightly affected by Hinduism, Islam or Christianity' (Price 1974, p. 13). I assume, however, that Price is perhaps using a narrow definition of Hinduism in this context.

The first mention of an Indian which can be found within the South Australian records is of a man called Mungra, who was described as Hindu. In 1838, his death was reported in the *South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register* (*SAGCR* 1838, Sept 8, p. 6). A significant amount of information is provided in the Coroner's inquest report published in the paper, and this report, as well as other articles within the following few months, provides a reasonable profile of the way in which the first Indians in South Australia lived. According to the report, Mr Joseph Bruce brought a number of Indians to South Australia for a 5 year indenture period. One of the witnesses claimed that Bruce had seventeen Indians working for him, although it is unclear if this included the dead man.

With the information provided, it is clear that Bruce was 26 years old in 1838 and had lived in India before taking up residence in a tent near Adelaide. He had reportedly been in the habit of taking opium in India and had drunk alcohol freely in South Australia. He was able to speak Bengali and had one of the indentured Indians to administer to his personal needs. This Indian was referred to as his 'Bengalee boy' (*SAGCR* 1838, Sept 22, p. 4). It appears that his other Indians, known as 'Hill Coolies', undertook manual labour for him and for others to whom they were 'lent'. In the report, it is clear that a Mr Baylden and a twelve year old boy called John Moody were also able to communicate with the Indians in Bengali. It would not be unreasonable, therefore, to assume that the Indians were all able to speak Bengali and, indeed, Bruce

had been resident in Calcutta before arriving in South Australia and would most likely have recruited workers from the area.

Mungra, according to the records, was a 'Hindoo' from the 'Donga' caste who worked from dawn to sunset, with two and a half hours off for meals. These meals consisted of rice and *dhall* or split peas. The Indians were accommodated in tents. The men cooked and ate by themselves and ministered to their sick. The report mentions the efforts which the other men undertook in order to assist Mungra when he was ill. Mungra was eighteen or nineteen when he died, according to the inquest report '...in consequences of the injuries inflicted upon him: but in what manner these injuries were received there is no satisfactory evidence' (*SAGCR* 1838, Sept. 8, p. 6). When an autopsy was performed on Mungra, it was found that he had seven fractured ribs. The inquest was unable to ascertain how the injuries occurred, as no report had been made of an accident or mistreatment. Mungra had been sent to work for a Mr McTavish when he became ill. Although the Jury was unable to determine the exact cause of the injury, they obviously had their suspicions as the following communication suggests:

> The following note was handed to the Coroner by the Jury, who stated that he would have great pleasure in laying it before his excellency the Acting Governor -
>
> "The Jury take the liberty of suggesting to the Coroner the propriety of communicating to the Colonial Government their opinion of the necessity of making some immediate arrangement for the immediate protection of the natives of India who may be brought to this province as labourers, by means of the appointment, either by the Government of India or the Colonial Government, of a trustworthy person conversant with their language and customs, whose duty it would be to see that the engagements entered into with these poor men are strictly fulfilled and their health and comfort duly attended to."
>
> Signed by the Foreman and Jury. (*SAGCR* 1838, Sept. 8, p. 6)

These sentiments were echoed by the editor of the *South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register* who stated:

> We are not now disposed to discuss the question of the importation of Indians as labourers. Our object is at present limited to a point which a perusal of the evidence given at the coroner's inquest on the body of a Hill

> Coolie will probably suggest to our readers, as it has done to the jury before which that evidence was taken. It is quite clear that these poor men ought to have some protection from the misconduct, neglect, or cupidity of their masters: and we have great pleasure in stating that his Excellency the Acting Governor has promptly determined to make formal communications on the subject to the Colonial Office and to the Indian Government. The result will, no doubt, be the prohibition of such importations altogether or the appointment of a qualified person to act as their protector, to whom in cases of ill-treatment they can appeal. (*SAGCR* 1838, Sept. 8, p. 3)

From this report, it is clear that the editor of the *South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register* came to the conclusion that Mungra died as a result of mistreatment and, indeed, concern about the general treatment of Indian labourers is expressed. Although one memo was written by the Colonial Secretary, this issue soon died.

Charles Price, when discussing the Indian indentured labourers, has suggested that little is known of them because 'they were not sufficiently dissatisfied with their contracts and conditions to provoke any public inquiry' (Price 1974, p. 42). It would appear, however, from the little information that is available, that it was a lack of English or the power to initiate an inquiry, and the reluctance of the authorities to follow through suspicions of ill treatment, rather than a lack of grievances, which militated against official information being gathered.

Joseph Bruce did not appear to be held in high regard in South Australia, and doubts about his conduct were no doubt confirmed at the inquest into his own death which occurred later that same month. At this inquest, Bruce is portrayed in negative terms. The following excerpt from the inquest, as reported in the *South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register*, throws light on his character. It was reported that the

> ...deceased had formed an attachment to a young woman named Ellen Flint, and whom witness understood had promised to marry him provided deceased would keep himself sober. About three weeks ago deceased came to witness's house and told him that he intended to shoot himself and Ellen Flint because she would not marry him.
>
> Ellen Flint deposed that she had known the deceased about four or five months who, during this time, had paid his addresses to her, and she had agreed to marry him when his affairs were more settled and if he kept himself steady. Saw deceased on Saturday evening last about six o'clock when deceased, as witness thinks, was sober. Witness told him of his

> being intoxicated the previous night, and that if he went on in that way she would not have anything more to say to him. (*SAGCR* 1838, Sept. 22, p. 4)

The Jury concluded that the '...deceased destroyed himself while in a state of temporary derangement caused by intemperance' (*SAGCR* 1838, Sept. 22, p. 4).

The profile which can be built of Bruce from these reports is of a 26 year old who over-indulged in alcohol, lived in a tent, whose affairs were 'not settled', and was subject to dramatic mood swings. It is indeed surprising that Bruce was able to arrange to bring to South Australia indentured labourers. He had responsibility for not only their welfare in South Australia but also their passage back to India after the end of their period of indenture. It would appear that the indenture system was, at this stage, an open one with no formal control of who could offer indenture packages to Indians or, indeed, any guarantee that the conditions could be complied with.

Bruce's death left his indentured Indians in a difficult and unenviable position, as it appears that no allowance had been made for this eventuality. Bruce died without making a will or any arrangements for those in his charge (State Records (SA) GRG 24/4, Sept. 21, 1838). The Colonial Secretary of the time expressed concern about the fate of the Indians who had been indentured to Bruce (State Records (SA) GRG 24/4, Sept. 21, 1838).

The situation was relieved, however, by the intervention of Mr E. B. Gleeson who had recently arrived in South Australia after leaving his Government post in Calcutta. Although he brought with him 24 Indian servants, it appears from a report into Indian labourers from 1843 that Gleeson took over Bruce's labourers. The report states that the men were to receive 5 rupees a month and, at the end of their period of indenture, they were to be returned to India (State Records, GRG 24/90/267, no. 64, Feb. 7, 1843). The report is unclear as to the number of Indians involved, and suggests that the men had entered into a new agreement with Gleeson for a three year period and this agreement was, itself, about to expire. On a sad note, the report states that

> As to the exact number imported I have not ascertained ...but I believe the number to have been small - and many of these have died since arrival here. (State Records, GRG 24/90/267, no. 64, Feb. 7, 1843)

The relief, however, was only temporary, as Gleeson became insolvent after the collapse of an Indian bank in which he was a part owner, and the Indians' contracts were once again unfulfilled.

E. B. Gleeson appears to have been very different from Joseph Bruce, as he immediately gained respect in the community, although, ultimately, most of the Indians he contracted appear to have fared little better than those brought to Australia by Bruce. It would seem that the 24 Indians he brought with him in July 1838, were indentured to him (Schmaal, n.d., p. 4). He also brought a young woman named Mary Thomas, as governess for his children. Mary Thomas had been brought up in a children's home in Calcutta, and she was probably the daughter of an English father and Indian mother. She was a staunch Christian and, after marrying a sailor who had been on the same boat, remained in South Australia, where many of her descendants are still resident (unpublished correspondence from Jack Cross).

It could be speculated that indenture was arranged or facilitated through the Australian Association of Bengal which formed in 1837 with its head office in Calcutta (*South Australian* 1838, 28 July, p. 3). The association aimed to

> ...promote more regular and frequent communication between India and the Australian colonies, by means of good vessels especially fitted for passengers. The association consists of the most leading and wealthy men in Calcutta where they have fixed their headquarters. Their object is to afford to civil and military officers and to wealthy residents in India a certain comfortable mode of immigration from India to Australia. (*South Australian*, 1838 July 28, p.3)

The association had a branch in Adelaide, and the ship on which Gleeson came to South Australia, the Emerald Ile, was owned by the association.

It is unclear whether other Indians were brought to South Australia during this period. In the 1841 census, E. B. Gleeson and his family are not listed and no Indians were recorded within section A, the district in which Gleeson resided. However, three Indians are recorded as residing south of Adelaide; they were Puznassa, Abdullah and Berasamee (State Records (SA) GRG 56/68/54, 1841, p. 246), all males under 21 years of age. These men may have been indentured to Gleeson and on 'loan' to another

resident; however, the names do not show up in any subsequent records pertaining to Gleeson, and it is probable that they had been contracted by someone else.

The indenture system was abruptly interrupted with a ban placed upon it in May 1839 by the Imperial Government in India (Cumpston 1953, p. 33). There had been problems with the physical transportation of the labourers, especially in the early days when food, water, medical attention and accommodation were inadequate, contributing to a high mortality rate (Cumpston 1953, p. 25). Other problems included difficulties with the fulfilment of obligations for the return passage, which was certainly found to be of concern in the South Australian experience. Although the indenture system was renewed, initially to Mauritius in 1843, and a little later to the other British colonies (Cumpston 1953, p. 40), Australians were wary of it, due to the strict terms which were placed upon those importing Indian indentured labourers, so that only small numbers were brought to Australia privately (Price 1974, p. 42).

Research, therefore, is focussed on the fates of the Bruce/Gleeson Indians. Although this information is difficult to find, some has survived. The insolvency records of 1842, which document a dark period for Gleeson before his success as the founder of the town of Clare, north of Adelaide, list the details of 24 Indian Labourers and the amounts which were owed to them (Schedule of Edward Burton Gleeson 1842, no. 39) (This list has been included as appendix 8, while subsequent lists are included as appendices 9 & 10). Although the list includes the names of twenty four Indian servants, the same number as Gleeson brought with him from India, it would appear that those mentioned in the insolvency papers were a combination of Bruce and Gleeson labourers. Seventeen or eighteen are unaccounted for within the insolvency papers. It would appear that Gleeson retained an additional 10 men, while it is clear that some had already died, possibly 7 or 8.

The population survey of 1844 lists 10 Mahomedans and Pagans in the Clare District (*SAGG* 1844, p. 91). Of those indentured workers that we have names for from Clare, it would seem that they were not listed as creditors in the insolvency records. Gleeson may, in fact, have retained those who he wished to and left the others in Adelaide. This would mean that, after Gleeson became insolvent, there were 34 surviving Indians, out of an estimated 41 or 42, in 1838. This figure is given credence by the 1844 survey which also lists a total of 32 Mahomedans and Pagans scattered through-out South Australia (*SAGG*, 1844, p. 91).

Due to the lack of compulsory recording of births, deaths or marriages in the early days of the colony, the only Indian deaths which were recorded were those who died in unusual circumstances, such as Mungra. Another death which was reported was that of a Muslim named Luscar, who died in the Adelaide gaol after being admitted in 'a state of intoxication' (State Records (SA) GRG 24/1, no. 372, Feb. 1, 1840). The body was collected by six of his countrymen and buried near the gaol.

The outbound passenger listings, which are available for the period July 1841 to May 1844, mention two Indian passengers who had departed for Mauritius (and possibly from there to India), on the *John Price* on the 1st May, 1843 (State Records (SA) GRG 41/10, July 1841 - May 1844). It could be assumed that they were two returning indentured Indian labourers, although this was during the period of Gleeson's insolvency, and it is difficult to ascertain if he were able to supply a return passage for his indentured Indians. No records exist which document the repatriation of other Indians. These passengers, in fact, may have been two of the three other Indians listed in the 1841 census, who were possibly indentured to another resident.

There are records, however, to confirm that some indentured labourers stayed in South Australia. Information exists for some of the Indians who accompanied Gleeson to Clare, but the difficulty which tracing these men involves is demonstrated by one particular man, who was referred to as Ram Jam, John Ramsay, Dan Ram, John Ram and Rham Jhan. Under the name Dan Ram he married a girl called Harriet Spendswick or Spendswinck (Registrar of Marriages Ref 47, 3 July, 1861, p. 235-6). Gleeson was a witness at the wedding which took place at the bride's father's house. This was in 1861, when the groom would have been about 43 years of age, and 23 years after his arrival. His death, however, was reported in the *Northern Argus*, in 1883, under the name John Ram. He died alone in an old shack at Sevenhills, near Clare. In the latter years of his life he lived on Government rations and charity from the Catholic order at Sevenhills (*Northern Argus*. 1883, 9 Jan, p. 3). Because he died 'suddenly', his death was recorded in the *South Australian Government Gazette* (1883, p. 854), under the name Rham Jhan. He was described as reportedly being once married to Stephen Spenwick's daughter, although no relatives were to be found at the time of his death.

Another sudden death was that of Henry Ramjee, who was originally one of the Indians who worked for Gleeson (*SAGG*, 1901, p. 376). In later years, he had been a hawker in

the Clare district dealing in skins and hides. He had lived in destitute circumstances until he died at the age of 94, in 1901. He was apparently survived by 2 daughters, Miss E. Ramjee of Fitzroy in Victoria and Mrs F. Williams of Broken Hill (*SAGG*, 1901, p. 376).

It can be verified, therefore, that at least 2 marriages took place and children were born. An amateur historian, Jean Schmaal, discusses 2 other marriages, one of a Gongo and the other, Babooca (Schmaal n.d, p. 6). No confirmation of these marriages has been made from the primary sources and no reference is supplied by Schmaal.

These findings contradict those of Price who, when discussing the Hill Coolies who came to Australia, had previously suggested that, although some returned to India, 'those who stayed apparently mixed very little with European-Australians, and intermarried not at all -the eight known to have wives with them by 1854 had brought them from India' (Price 1974, p. 42). Judging from the reference he uses, Price is referring here to eastern colonies of Australia, and his findings can not be extended to South Australia.

The original profile that can be built up of the Hindu and Muslim Indians in South Australia in the 19th century is of a small number of indentured males of between 18 and 21 years of age at arrival. These men initially maintained a life which was separate from the rest of the community, being self-sufficient for most of their needs and supported each other. They were supplied with appropriate food which they could cook, and communicated through the use of interpreters. They took care of their own health problems and their own dead. It would appear that they also maintained their religion. This is evidenced at a court hearing, where the case involving an Indian as prosecutor could not proceed because of the '...inability of administering an oath binding on the party...' (*SAGCR* 1839, March 23, p. 2), as they could not swear on the Bible.

Over time, it would appear that the men became dispersed, therefore making it more difficult to keep up their own culture. As previously suggested, some of the Indians who went to Clare attempted to integrate with the community. It does not appear, however, that this was ultimately successful, at least for some. Rham Jhan and Henry Ramjee, who had married within the local community, died alone, isolated and in poverty. This is certainly surprising in the case of Henry Ramjee, who had two

daughters living, one unmarried, who would normally be expected, at the time, to tend to her father. These men may be the exception, as it is possible that others integrated more successfully.

There is evidence that at least one of the men lived an isolated existence after leaving Gleeson's employment. On Friday, May 2 1856, an Indian named Mahomud was admitted to the destitute asylum. From the asylum records of that day, it appears that Mahomud, aged 35, was one of the Indians who came with Gleeson on the Emerald Ile. He was listed as being of the 'Mahomod' religion and from Calcutta (State Records (SA) GRG 28/4, 2 May, 1856). A Loll Mahomet was listed as being one of the Indians owed money by Gleeson.

As I have previously suggested, it is unlikely that Bruce and Gleeson were the only settlers who brought out Indian labourers, although it is doubtful that any one else brought them out in such large numbers. It is reported that a James Stein from the Burra-Burra area had Indian workers (*Indian,* Migration Museum, Adelaide, June 1993). Stein was the brother of the Countess of Fife, and one time member of the House of Commons. Whether he brought Indians out himself is, in fact, doubtful, as a local historian reports that he employed some who had left Gleeson (Schmaal, n.d, p. 7). Stein was another pastoralist whose efforts failed. Unfortunately, his 1848 insolvency records are incomplete and do not list his creditors, therefore no details of Indian labourers exists.

There were other reports of Indians in the records during the 19th century. Two Indians are recorded as being naturalised in South Australia, the individuals being listed as a draper and a basketmaker, although no further details are available (*SASR* 1900, p. 1-12). The only other woman mentioned, apart from Mary Thomas, was Mrs Andresia Noraine, who was admitted to the destitute asylum in 1855 as an out-of-health widow, 38 years of age (State Records (SA) GRG 28/4, 1855, p. 100). Her occupation was listed as a washerwoman, while her religion was stated as being Catholic. A death of more interest here, however, is that of Coupore (a Hindoo) aged 28, which occurred in an Adelaide asylum on 27th August 1900, which indicates that Indians, and possibly Hindus, did enter South Australia in the later part of the century, possibly as free labourers (State Records (SA) GRG 34/119, 27 Aug, 1900).

Although the records on sudden deaths list several other Indians, they appear to have been Muslims or Sikhs. (See index of 'Sudden Deaths' State Records). There is reference to a Hinda Singh, who was a hawker, who became lost in the desert and died at the age of 40, in 1908 (*SAGG*, p, 518, 10.9.1908). Although he is listed as a Hindu, this listing may indicate 'race' rather than religion, as 'Hindu' had become a catch-all name for Indians; however, at this stage Muslims and Sikhs were usually listed separately in official records. It could be assumed that he was originally one of the 'Afghan' camel handlers.

A number of references in the *South Australian Government Gazette* refer to Muslim and Sikh 'Afghans'. For example, when the camel driver Nunda Singh died in 1919, it was reported that his fellow countrymen burnt his remains '...in conformity of the custom of deceased religion' (*SAGG*, 'Sudden death's Register' 1920, p. 393), although the religion is not stated.

An interesting example of the way in which religion remained an integral part of life for Indians in Australia during the nineteenth century comes from the report of the Burke and Wills expedition of 1860 (Stevens 1989, p. 208). Of the four Afghans accompanying the expedition, one, Samla, was Hindu. It was reported that

> His life became a misery during the first few stages of the expedition as he slowly began to starve. Beef and bullock meat were distributed as food rations on the journey and, as a Hindu, this was abhorrent to him... "Samla had had nothing to eat but bread for days before he approached Landells requesting his dismissal on the grounds of religious incompatibility. After being given his wages the Hindu touched the ground, then his head with his fingers, blessed Landells and the men near him and set off for Melbourne with his eyes full of tears". (Steven 1989, p. 208)

A similar incident is cited by de Lepervanche, who reports that a protest in 1849 by indentured labourers who were being fed meat and flour rather than more expensive rice and dhall, resulted in the six men not only being sent to prison but also having to pay the court expenses (1984, p. 45). Their argument that, as Brahmans, they were attempting to avoid ritual pollution, was ignored in the wake of economic constraints outlined by W. C. Wentworth, to whom the men were indentured. Therefore, it was often extremely difficult for Hindus to maintain their practices within the Australian environment.

Although life for the South Australian indentured Indians was difficult and often precarious, a better understanding of their dietary needs was evident as they were fed rice and dhall as previously stated. Both Bruce and Gleeson had spent some time living in India prior to immigrating to Australia, unlike many employers in the other Australian colonies of the time. Both communication and an understanding of customs, including dietary customs, was enhanced because of this.

What an historical survey of the 19th century reveals is that, although Hindus have been present within South Australia, since the early days of the colony, it would appear that Hindu women did not constitute part of this early group, and that this situation did not change until well into the 20th century.

Appendix 8

Schedule of Edward Burton Gleeson no.39

[After the initial list, there is a supplementary list, and then a second list. It is interesting to note that the spelling of names changes between lists.]

Filed, 31st March 1842. Passed 17th. June 1845

List of Indian Servants owed money for 13 months work from 1841 - 1842.

Paunchoo	9 pounds
Luchman	6 pounds 10 shillings
Gungarom	" "
Maungoo	" "
Kyloo	" "
Sewar	" "
Ieetun	" "
Dasoo	" "
Bhadoo	" "
Lalloo	" "
Miengra	" "
Mohein	" "
Geemid	" "
Ramdhon	" "
Croppoo	" "
Moydeen	" "
Abrahim	" "
Buddroo	" "
Srobaine	" "
Loll Mahomet	" "
Katharoo	" "
Doorgah	" "
Curim Beal	" "
Schaich Ioffer	" "

Appendix 9

Supplementary Schedule of Edward Burton Gleeson to June 1845

Dismissed 12 July 1845

Maungoo	4 pounds
Dasoo	"
Crappoo	"
Budderoo (Indian servant at the Hutt River)	4 pounds
Luchman	"

2nd Insolvency of Edward Burton Gleeson

[first did not take some amounts into account]

Filed 17th April 1845. Petition dismissed 12th July 1845.

Paunchoo	1841-2	9 pounds	10 shillings
Luchman	1841-2	6 pounds	10 shillings
	1842-3	4 pounds	(disputed)
Gungarvm	1841-2	6 pounds	10 shillings
Maungoo	1841-2	6 pounds	10 shillings
	1842-3	4 pounds	(disputed)
Kiloo	1841-2	6 pounds	10 shillings
Sewar	1841-2	"	"
Ieetun	1841-2	"	"
Dasoo	1841-2	"	"
	1842-3	4 pounds	(disputed)
Bhadoo	1841-2	6 pounds	10 shillings
Lalloo	1841-2	"	"
Miengra	1841-2	"	"
Mohein	1841-2	"	"
Geemis	1841-2	"	"
Ramahon	1841-2	"	"
Crappoo	1841-2	"	"
	1842-3	4 pounds	(disputed)
Moydeen	1841-2	6 pounds	10 shillings
Abrahim	1841-2	"	"
Buddroo	1841-2	"	"
Soobain	1841-2	"	"
Loll Mahomet	1841-2	"	"
Katharoo	1841-2	"	"
Doorgah	1841-2	"	"
Curim Bux	1841-2	"	"
Schaich Ioffer	1841-2	"	"

Appendix 11

Length of Residency of Vegetarians and Non-vegetarians

Interview no.	Age	Long term	Mid Term	Short Term	Vegetarian
1	36-45		15 years		No
2	36-45		15 years		Yes
3	26-35			6 years	Yes
4	46-55	24 years			No
5	46-55	20 years			No
6	46-55	20 years			Yes
7	26-35			5 years	Yes
8	46-55	22 years			Yes
9	36-45			7 years	Yes
10	18-25	Aust born			No
11	26-35			5 years	Yes
12	46-55	23 years			No
13	36-45		16 years		No
14	26-35			6 years	No
15	55+			9 years	Yes
16	26-35			6 years	No
17	26-35			15 months	Yes
18	46-55	23 years			No
19	26-35			4 years	No
20	26-35			8 years	Yes
21	26-35			18 months	Yes
22	36-45	22 years			Yes
23	46-55	24 years			No
24	46-55	30 years			No
25	26-35	30 years			No
26	46-55	25 years			Yes
27	36-45		16 years		Yes
28	46-55	19years			No
28	46-55	23years			No
30	55+	23years			Yes

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